



# BUILDING BRIDGES



*"Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."* - Margaret Mead

## GIRLS LEADING OUR WORLD 2008

*submitted by R. Gottesman and M. Kirby, Dominican Republic PCVs (modified for space)*

Are girls leading our world? Absolutely. Ireland, New Zealand, Finland, the Philippines, Chile, Mozambique, Switzerland, Liberia, and India all currently boast female leaders. However, based on the success of Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) 2008, the Dominican Republic is sure to be next on the list. In April 2008, Peace Corps Volunteers serving in the Dominican Republic submitted a proposal to the Peace Corps Partnership Program for \$3,936 to help fund this year's Camp GLOW. The community contributed 29% of the total cost of the camp (\$5,512.24), and the remaining amount was raised by over 25 donations to this Partnership Program project. By May 2008, the camp was fully funded and ready to be implemented.

From July 14 to July 18, 24 Peace Corps Volunteers and 53 Dominican young women from across the country joined forces in San Cristobal to learn about what it means to grow up as a woman in the Dominican Republic. The goal of the program is to provide female Dominican youth with the information, affirmation and encouragement they need to make healthy life decisions, believe in themselves, and to dream big. A normal day for these young women includes cleaning, cooking, mopping, washing clothes, looking for water, and taking care of younger siblings. During Camp GLOW, this was replaced by self-esteem, sexual education and other gender-related workshops, craft-making, sports, group building exercises, a talent show, and a professional panel. Camp GLOW is a balanced mix of educational workshops and fun creative activities.

Specific workshop topics included Self-Esteem, Team Building, Body Image, Women around the World, Creative Expression, Nutrition and Exercise, Healthy Friendships, Reproductive Health, Sex and Gender, Income Generation and Life Planning. Additionally, Condoms and Teenage Pregnancy and Relations between the Dominican Republic and Haiti were workshops given by 2nd year campers. Artistic activities, such as crafts, drawing, dance and theater were used in one-third of

all workshops. For example, after learning about body image and how it is formed, campers were asked to create life-size self-portraits. They traced one another's bodies on huge poster board, drawing a line down the middle to divide the body in half. After drawing their self-portrait, they were asked to write society's perceptions of their body on one side and their own reflections and feelings about their body on the other side. During Reproductive Health, these young women learned how to do a breast exam with the help of flour-filled balloons. Two

Peace Corps Volunteers from the Community Economic Development sector led an Income Generation workshop, where campers learned how to make popular products in the Dominican Republic. The Life Planning workshop led the girls through exercises on goal setting and reflecting on their dreams. This concept was illustrated by creating dream catchers, which every girl was able to bring home to their community. In addition to workshops, each afternoon participants chose from a variety of "free time" activities, including swim-

ming in the pool, yoga, volleyball, designing a diary, or cooking banana bread.

One of the most successful events of the week was a Professional Panel, which included a diverse mix of business people and health workers. Campers had the chance to ask panel participants questions regarding their success and challenges in their careers.

Not only were the girls exposed to new information and had the opportunity to ask questions in a safe, all-girls environment, they also made new friends from across their country. The teenagers who participated in Camp GLOW 2008 left San Cristobal with much more than a dream catcher and a new journal. Campers returned to their communities with a new sense of self, confidence, and the energy to teach other young women in their communities what they had learned at Camp GLOW.

*Campers returned to their communities with a new sense of self, confidence, and the energy to teach other young women in their communities what they had learned at Camp GLOW.*



## THE OFFICE OF PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES IS ON THE MOVE!



The staff of the Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI) have traveled the world this past year attending conferences and visiting countries of service. Michelle Cangelosi, the OPSI Director, had the great pleasure of traveling to a selection of countries where Peace Corps Volunteers serve. On her first trip as the Director, Michelle visited Partnership Program projects in Mali, which made strong and positive first impressions. One project was initiated by a women's group to create a commu-

nity garden and a nearby well. This project had far reaching benefits including improved health and nutrition, and an influx of income for the community. Michelle has since had the opportunity to visit several other countries and projects, and without fail, returns with glowing stories. "Representing the Partnership Program is truly an amazing gift because I not only get to see Volunteers working on their projects but I can look into the eyes

of community members and see what an impact their projects truly have on them."

In May 2008, staff members, Matt Smith and Amy Meldrum, set up the bright new exhibit at the Seattle Peace Corps Expo. They were able to meet with several Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who were interested in remaining active with Peace Corps through the Peace Corps Partnership Program. Matt mentioned that he "could see that this Program really spoke to people's desire to stay involved with Peace Corps." Michelle Cangelosi also attended the 2008 Volunteer and Service Conference in Atlanta, GA, as well as annual conferences for both Rotary International and Kiwanis. "Being able to reach out, in person, to groups and individuals with similar goals is such a great opportunity for us to highlight what our Volunteers are doing everyday around the world."

The OPSI staff seek out any opportunity to market the Partnership Program to interested individuals or groups. Lara Fedorov, a Program Specialist for OPSI, related that "many of us have been Peace Corps Volunteers and know from firsthand experience the importance of community-initiated projects. We want to make sure that as many people as possible know about the Partnership Program and understand that they can be a part of the Peace Corps by supporting one of these projects."

## FIGHTING HIV/AIDS THROUGH EDUCATION AND FUN: CAMP HEAL

*submitted by Kristen A. Schaefer, RPCV Ukraine (modified for space)*

**"Now I know that it is okay to stand in the same room with someone who is HIV-positive...We must do something to make a difference...It isn't fair that these people must live like this...We have made a project for our town to teach people not to be afraid."**

Such phrases were heard during one of the last sessions at Camp HEAL last August where campers shared what they had learned during their time at the week-long camp devoted to teaching Ukrainian children to become peer educators in their communities. Listening to these words, tears came to my eyes and I knew that this was an experience that I was never going to forget.

The camp was the idea of four Volunteers who attended the Peace Corps Ukraine-sponsored PEPFAR conference together with their Ukrainian counterparts in October 2007. After learning about the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ukraine and the lack of knowledge among youth, we decided that training kids to educate their peers was the best way to get the message out about HIV/AIDS.

Camp HEAL (Human Trafficking, Education, AIDS/HIV, Leadership) was designed and implemented in partnership with the Dzerzhynsk Office of Social Services and funded primarily through the Peace Corps Partnership Program. With local partners contributing 25% of the total cost, we were able to raise \$3,351.00 from generous donors across the United States.

On August 6, 2008, 30 children from all over Ukraine

traveled to Svatagorsk in Eastern Ukraine to attend the camp. The campers attended lessons about healthy living, self-esteem, peer pressure, counter-human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, leadership, and peer education.

At the end of the week, the campers and Volunteers developed projects to implement in their communities to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and fight discrimination. While everyone was sad when it was finally time to leave, there was hope that the newly trained peer educators would make a difference.

Throughout the rest of my Peace Corps service, I worked with my students who attended the camp to organize seminars and trainings in our school and to bring the issue of HIV/AIDS to the forefront of discussions in our school and community. The projects that resulted from Camp HEAL showed me that our peer education model worked. Our campers were able to design projects that made an impact in their specific communities.

Camp HEAL is one of my fondest memories as a Peace Corps

Volunteer. Not only did I gain valuable experience planning and implementing a summer camp while working with others, I know that the training that we provided made a difference in the lives of students who attended the camp. Those students took home knowledge and passion to educate and overturn misconceptions, and develop programs to help to spread the message about HIV/AIDS.

