

10th Asia-Europe Young Volunteers Exchange

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF): **Press Release**

Press release no.:110831_PR1118

31st August 2011

Young Volunteers promote Public Health Dialogue through Forum Theatre in South India

A group of 21 young volunteers from 14 ASEM countries are currently engaged in a creative dialogue with several local communities in southern India. They are enthusiastic volunteers for "Health on Stage". This project aims at generating awareness on public health issues through the use of forum theatre. Participants work closely with the communities in the slums of Bangalore, at the heart of the industrial belt in Chennai and within a tribal village in Mysore.

"Health on Stage" is an initiative by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS). It is hosted by the Field Services & Inter-Cultural Learning (FSL India) in Bangalore, Chennai and Mysore in South India (20 August - 1 October 2011).

The first phase of the project (20-28 August) has just been concluded. During this training phase, volunteers familiarised themselves with the pressing public health concerns of the local communities. "Water-related diseases are common in all three locations," says Rakesh S Soans, President of FSL India. Volunteers were trained on inter-cultural learning as well as introduced to the applications and methodologies used in forum theatre. With this necessary knowledge and skill, volunteers will organise theatre performances with and for the local people. "The most challenging as well as exciting part will be when international volunteers and local participants address water-related diseases," adds Rakesh.

Direct interaction with the local communities and creative performances will take place during the field implementation phase (28 August - 26 September). "Forum Theatre has been used mainly for protest art in India until now," according to Jaya Iyer, Indian forum theatre trainer. "Young volunteers will now focus on public health, with all its social and cultural dimensions in the specific locations. The performances are unique, courageous, and, like all creative acts, offer the potential of real change."

All participants will later converge in Bangalore (27 September - 01 October) for an evaluation. Based on what they would have experienced in the field, they will examine and make recommendations on how to make the best use of forum theatre in promoting dialogue on water-related diseases.

"Health on Stage" is the 10th chapter of the Asia-Europe Young Volunteers Exchange (AEYVE) programme. The 10th AEYVE marks ASEF's and CCIVS' decade-long Asia-Europe cooperation in Voluntary Service (VolunAet) as well as FSL's celebration of its 10-years existence. It is a joint effort of the organisers to commemorate the United Nations Volunteers' (UNV) 10th Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteering (IYV+10) and the European Year of Volunteering.

For more information about the project visit <http://tinyurl.com/3ojh9bx>

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About the Organisers:



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM*). ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since implemented over 500 projects, engaging over 15,000 direct participants as well as reaching out to a much wider audience in Asia and Europe. www.asef.org

* ASEM now brings together 46 member states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam) plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. www.aseinfoboard.org



The Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service was founded in 1948. CCIVS is a co-ordinating body for international voluntary service organisations and it counts more than 250 member associations in 96 countries, including 5 international networks and several regional structures and platforms. It acts as a link to establish relations between the members and international institutions such as the EU, different UN agencies or foundations. CCIVS fosters the development of regional networks through the organisation of international projects and seminars and the production of publications and training tools. (www.ccivs.org)



FSL India (Field Services and Intercultural Learning) is a Non-Governmental Organization registered under the Indian Trust Act in 2001, as a non-profit body. It is a charitable, non-political, non-religious youth organization. FSL-India is a member of the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS-UNESCO), Network for Voluntary Development in Asia (NVDA) and cooperates with the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organizations. FSL-India networks with like-minded organizations to promote Youth mobility and intercultural learning and acts as a support structure for other youth and social organizations in India. The Head office is located in Bangalore, with centres in Kundapur, Chennai and Kerala. FSL-India receives about 1300 international volunteers every year through the support of international partners. (www.fsl-india.org)