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Volunteering****FAQS****FOR VOLUNTEERS****FOR HOSTING  
ORGANIZATIONS****STORIES****WHY OV?****EN FRANÇAIS****EN ESPAÑOL****PRESS ROOM****ABOUT US****CONTACT US****Online Volunteers of the Year 2005****Ana Maria da F.M. Saravia (Brazil) - Shine a Light, la red internacional pro niños de la calle (USA)**

*Contribution to achieving MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Millennium Campaign: "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Ana Maria has invested her language skills to translate diverse research work on street children in Latin America from Spanish into Portuguese. Her host organization [Shine a Light](#) connects organizations serving street children in Latin America and uses digital technology to leverage local successes into international solutions.

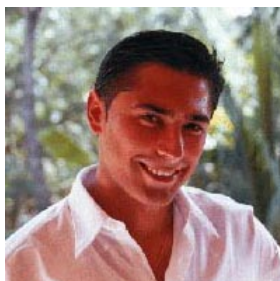
The challenge in researching street children, and even more so in translating such research, lies in understanding the argot of Latin American street gangs, with its own set of codes in each country, and obscure to mainstream society. Ana Maria approached her Portuguese translation of a study on Colombian street gangs by first spending several weeks researching the gíria, or slang, of the gangs in her native Brazil. She successfully attempted not only a literal but also a cultural translation, and found ways to connect the discourse of Colombian gang members to that of their Brazilian peers in the favelas of Rio and São Paulo.

After numerous translations for Shine a Light, a task she started in 2003, Ana Maria is now working on the translation of a DVD-based curriculum for teachers in refugee camps – her largest endeavour to date. In order to apply on the point and culturally appropriate Portuguese terms when e.g. subtitling documentary videos that were made by refugee teenagers in the Colombian capital of Bogotá, Ana Maria has again immersed herself in the vocabulary and culture peculiar to the refugee and migrant communities.

Ana Maria's translations are helping to overcome the barriers between hispanic and lusophone community workers. They have made findings and experiences obtained in Argentina, Colombia and Mexico available to Brazilian organizations and have facilitated experience sharing and reciprocal learning.

By volunteering online with an organization that is far away from her home, and engaging in assignments that deal with projects in other Latin American countries, Ana Maria has also learnt a lot about the social situation in her own country and neighbourhood.

*"In short, being an online volunteer with Shine a Light has made me become aware of realities I was comfortably blind to and has also made me realize that I can contribute a few keystrokes a day to help some committed people who in turn will help others."*

**Carlos Jiménez (Spain) - UN Volunteers Egypt**

*Contribution to achieving MDG8: Develop a global partnership for development, Millennium Campaign: "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Carlos has been the driving online volunteer force behind the [website](#) of the [Volunteer Network Egypt](#), a portal aimed at increasing the awareness on volunteerism in Egypt and raising the visibility of volunteer organizations in the country.

The portal was timely launched on International Volunteer Day (IVD), December 5, 2004. Its successful launch can be attributed to a considerable part to Carlos's skillful and committed coordination of a team of eleven online volunteers from seven countries, spread over the Arab region, Asia, Europe, and North America.

In putting together the online volunteer team and distributing the different tasks at hand, Carlos made sure that each volunteer was assigned the part of the work that best matched her/his individual skills and interests. He carefully managed every aspect of website development, always maintaining his dedication to the project despite of difficulties along the way. When some team members dropped out during the development phase, Carlos, regardless of the extra hours it meant, jumped in to ensure that the task was covered so that no missing piece would delay the website launch.

His intense involvement in the project motivated him to thoroughly analyze and evaluate his experiences and the challenges linked to a project performed entirely by online volunteers. He produced several reports and published his findings in a university journal: [United Nations Volunteers - Online Volunteers: La nueva dimensión de la tecnología](#)

As a father of a young daughter, with a job in the morning and university studies in the afternoon, there was no way for him to fit in his dream of volunteering on-site in a developing country. Now, as an online volunteer, his personal circumstances have no impact in his ability to be part of a development initiative. Most importantly, he is realizing his dream.

*"El voluntariado online ha puesto en nuestros manos la posibilidad de que desde nuestros hogares, desde nuestro trabajo, podamos entregar mucho más que un donativo, participando activamente como protagonistas, en el trabajo por el desarrollo sostenible."*

*"Online Volunteering gives us the opportunity to contribute - from our homes, from our workplaces - much more than a donation. We can actively participate, as protagonists, in sustainable development."*

### **Elizabeth and Tim Rose (Canada) - Childcare and Adoption Society Zambia**



*Contribution to achieving MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Millennium Campaign: "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Elizabeth and Tim, mother and son, have successfully researched and identified donors of sports equipment, such as children's soccer shoes, shorts and shirts, soccer balls, tennis rackets, basketballs etc. that are now being used by Zambian street children. Their host organization, the [Childcare and Adoption Society Zambia](#), runs two transit homes for homeless children, many of them orphans due to HIV/AIDS, and endeavours to re-integrate them into families.

Having selected their online volunteering assignment together, Elizabeth took over a coordinating role, while her son Tim promoted the children's sports project at his high school and mobilized his personal networks in Canada to find equipment donors. Through their combined efforts, they not only successfully identified donors, but they also collected the donated items, organized their shipment, and found sponsors to cover all costs involved.

With the donated equipment, the organization is now able to involve more children in organized sporting activities, giving them hope, life skills, recreation, and a friendly social environment. Peter Mulenga, director of the Childcare and Adoption Society Zambia, who recently collected the three containers of sports equipment at the Zambian main port, points out how Elizabeth and Tim have positively influenced people in both their and his community. By campaigning for support in their Canadian town, "they have been able to teach the importance of the spirit of online volunteering in their community", while at the same time they have contributed to a better life of several homeless children in Zambia.

For Elizabeth, the online volunteering assignment was a way to reconnect with Southern Africa, where she spent her childhood years.

*"The Internet is a great way to develop personal relationships and have one-on-one impact, rather than simply making a donation to a large faceless charity."* (Elizabeth)

As Tim has cerebral palsy and spastic quadriplegia and is using a wheelchair, he simply cannot "just" go to Zambia and volunteer on-site. As an online volunteer, he found himself actively involved in a development project that he had not imagined before to ever be able to be part of. Despite of his disability, Tim is aware of his privileged situation of a comfortable home and a first class education, and is committed to further help people less fortunate than himself. He recently decided to start studying human rights and law, inspired by his online volunteering experience.

*"I felt I could really add value through the simple use of a computer, by applying my creativity, organization and marketing skills - and of course a little gentle persuasion to get others to go along with my plan!"* (Tim)

### **Haingonirina Angie Ramaroson (Madagascar/USA) - DatelineHealth-Africa Inc. (USA)**



*Contribution to achieving MDG6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, Millennium Campaign: "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Haingonirina, or "Angie" as she is known by her friends and her host organization, regularly updates the DatelineHealth website with credible news, reports, and data on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. She has expanded the reach of the disseminated information to include not only Anglophone, but also Francophone Africa. [DatelineHealth](#) works to provide free access to health information and to raise health awareness in Africa.

For the past six months, Angie has continuously researched, evaluated, and compiled HIV/AIDS information from various websites, and posted the relevant articles to the DatelineHealth portal. Having initially been assigned to monitor the major HIV/AIDS websites, she decided to broaden her weekly radar to also review lesser-known but still informative sources. This has increased the amount and scope of HIV/AIDS information on the DatelineHealth site.

Shortly after starting her assignment as a "web surfer", Angie realized that the large Francophone part of the African population was unable to benefit from DatelineHealth's resources, as the website provided content only in English. She subsequently took the initiative to include information in French in her regular updates so that French speaking Africans could turn to the DatelineHealth website to learn about HIV/AIDS.

Akintola Odutola, president of DatelineHealth, is proud to report that Angie's contributions have increased the content on the website by as high as 70 percent each month. Her information on HIV/AIDS helps shape individual and community opinion, and contributes to empower Africans, English and French speaking, to improve their health situation.

A Madagascan, Angie lived in Burundi for 15 years before moving to the United States, where she now works as a computer engineer. Aware of the many challenges people in Africa are facing, she is, after several other online volunteering assignments, particularly happy to now contribute to addressing the problem "that many Africans, including even educated leaders, do not understand or deny the impact of HIV and AIDS".

*"Online Volunteering is an opportunity to get involved in far away communities with problems or issues close to your heart. It's a chance to change their world and your world as well."*

#### **Jay Martin (Australia) - UN Volunteers (UNV) Vietnam**



*Contribution to achieving MDG8: Develop a global partnership for development, [Millennium Campaign](#): "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Jay has translated volunteer experience stories, training materials, and other documents from Vietnamese to English for about two years. She has made content developed locally by [UN Volunteers in Vietnam](#), UNV staff, and affiliated Vietnamese volunteers available to a world audience.

From September to December 2004, Jay was online every day to coordinate the translation of the online diary of a young Vietnamese woman, "Mai's Journey". Mai was the winner of the UNV sponsored contest "Youth Initiative to Promote Volunteerism for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)". She traveled through the poorer provinces of Vietnam to spread messages about the MDGs, to inspire young people to volunteer for development, and to report via her online diary about what life is like for the inhabitants of these regions.

In order for people outside of Vietnam to follow Mai's experiences "in real time", the diary entries that Mai was busy producing in Vietnamese required daily translations. Jay, while being an online volunteer translator of the diary herself, successfully coordinated and motivated a team of five fellow online volunteer translators, spread across different time zones between North America, Vietnam, and Australia. With exam times for three of the team members, and much more work than initially anticipated, Jay still managed to always keep the team in a good spirit and ready to continue updating the [English version of Mai's diary](#).

Translating in an online team was not a new experience to Jay, as she had in the past shared the translation tasks for UNV Vietnam with another online volunteer, Buu Cao. As a [team](#), they had efficiently delivered translations of excellent quality while at the same time enjoyed discussing online and learning from each other.

Jay had spent many years studying Vietnamese at the university, both in Australia and in Vietnam. She found the Vietnamese online volunteer translation task an ideal way to practice her language skills, and to contribute something back to the people of Vietnam, who were so hospitable when she lived in the country.

*"Translating is very time consuming, so I know I can save them [UNV Vietnam] a lot of time by helping out like this, and they can devote that time to other activities that have to be done in Hanoi, that I can't do. That's a good use of everyone's resources."*

#### **Mohammad Ashaq Malik (India/Eritrea) - Nile Basin Society (Canada) + UN Volunteers (UNV) Syria**



*Contribution to achieving MDG7: Ensure environmental sustainability and MDG8: Develop a global partnership for development, [Millennium Campaign](#): "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Two of his host organizations, the [Nile Basin Society](#) and the [UN Volunteers programme in Syria](#), have nominated Ashaq as Online Volunteer of the Year.

Ashaq has volunteered online with a dozen development organizations and has engaged in about 20 assignments during the last four years. Most of his assignments have been related to writing and news research, as journalism is one of his areas of interest and expertise.

Ashaq has contributed news items on various development issues concerning the Nile basin countries to the Nile Basin Society website. On an almost daily basis, he researches a variety of other websites for relevant content, and has so far posted more than 350 articles. This way, he has helped to raise awareness, locally and globally, on development issues peculiar to the Nile riparian countries, in particular on issues related to water management and agriculture.

Though originally from India, Ashaq has an in-depth understanding of politics and issues of the Nile region, so that Nabil El-Khodari, director of the Nile Basin Society, felt comfortable to grant him moderator privileges on several discussion threads of the organization's interactive forum. Nabil can now invest the time he would spend on the discussion forums in offering free web page design and hosting to Nile Basin NGOs, a formerly neglected activity.

With the UNV programme in Syria, Ashaq has shared many ideas for UNV/UNDP communication and programming. He has provided ideas for slogans to promote UNDP and to increase awareness of development issues in the country. Several of his suggestions have been taken up and are now being integrated into UNDP communications activities. In addition, Ashaq has drafted two proposals for studies on volunteerism in Syria, both representing unprecedented exercises for UNV Syria. Ashaq has just accepted a new online volunteering assignment to help research book donors for a Syrian library on Volunteerism for Development.

Ashaq wants to spend his time constructively, and looks for new assignments once a previous one is finished. Engaging in the different development projects with their various issues and approaches is a

source of inspiration for him, as from each assignment he gains new insights and expertise, confidence and encouragement.

*"There are people in this world who want to do something good in life. ...The Online Volunteering service is a great platform to serve humankind and get experience, inner satisfaction and enjoyment as well."*

#### **Online Volunteer Team: Charles Forrester (Australia), Kashif Kamran (Pakistan), Priscilla Lynch (USA), Taru Agarwal (India) - UN Volunteers Syria**



*Contribution to achieving MDG8: Develop a global partnership for development, [Millennium Campaign](#): "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

A team of four online volunteers, collaborating across three continents, has jointly drafted a detailed report on proceedings, outcomes, and recommendations of a discussion forum on volunteerism, held on International Volunteer Day 2004 in Damascus, Syria. The team spirit and exemplary way of volunteering together inspired Stefano Cordella, [UN Volunteers Syria](#) programme officer and team coordinator, to nominate the entire group for the Online Volunteers of the Year Award.

**Taru** was the first online volunteer to apply with UNV Syria.

At the time, in late 2004, she was sad she had to discontinue her volunteer engagement with a local NGO in New Delhi because of frequent job-related travel. Debating if she should at all accept her new role at work, she found this online volunteering assignment and was happy to be able to combine volunteer engagement with being on the move. As professional copy editor and project manager for content development, Taru felt she could well contribute her skills to a report writing assignment and became the author of the report articles.

**Charles** soon joined the team.

He was already experienced in volunteering online, having contributed to two other host organizations previously. In his online volunteering assignments, he was looking to combine his editing expertise with the opportunity to test and practice the skills that he wanted to gain more confidence in. Charles had studied Arab and Islamic Studies at the university, and was glad to participate in a project situated in the Arab culture, so he could deepen his knowledge of the Arab world. He took on the task to process the conference notes, that were only roughly translated from Arabic to English, and to edit and clean them up into presentable English, to be further used by Taru for creating the report articles.

The next online volunteer to get on board was **Kashif**.

Shocked by TV reports about the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia on December 26, 2004 that left millions of victims and people affected, he was thinking of ways to help. He didn't just "want to give money once and then forget about it", but instead wanted to "participate physically with soul and heart". He soon realized that, without any rescue background, he should probably leave the disaster management work to the professional organizations that were already involved in relief efforts and rather invest his IT and business skills where he could really make a difference. With his web search for opportunities he came across the Online Volunteering service and was intrigued by the UNV Syria assignment because of its purpose to promote voluntary engagement. So, he became the designer of the UNV Syria report.

The last support came from **Priscilla**.

Priscilla also found UNV Syria's online volunteering opportunity while searching the Internet for relief organizations she could contribute to in support of the Tsunami affected areas. She was delighted to find a way to volunteer and at the same time contribute her professional skills as a technical writer, and all that without leaving home. Furthermore, she was excited about the opportunity to cooperate with an international group of people, as her previous exposure to people from other countries was limited. Priscilla was the final editor of the report.

Although the team was spread across different time zones and interacted exclusively by email, all members agree that, during the three months of online volunteer collaboration, communication was never a problem. They all regularly kept each other informed on the latest developments, and shared all issues with the team. Everyone had the opportunity to provide feedback, that was jointly debated, and results were eventually accepted by all. Each of them enjoyed cooperating in an international team, complementing the others' expertise, and jointly learning from each other, all towards the same common goal.

The final report serves to inform the Syrian government about the abilities, ideas, and opinions of Syrians on volunteerism in their country and will be used to promote, foster, and develop volunteerism in Syria.

*"UNV Syria can benefit from the professional and diversified work resources present in the form of online volunteers. For instance, Priscilla's eighteen years of editing experience contributed to the report's readability, flow, and consistency."*

#### **Sandrine Cortet (France/USA) - PEOI (USA) + RESPECT International (Canada)**

*Contribution to achieving MDG2: Achieve Universal primary education, [Millennium Campaign](#): "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

Approximately 1200 French-speaking students in refugee and non-refugee schools, as well as many French-speaking adult learners around the world have so far benefited from the activities of the Refugee Education Sponsorship International ([RESPECT](#)), and the Professional Education Organization International ([PEOI](#)) respectively, thanks to Sandrine's contributions. Both organizations have nominated Sandrine as Online Volunteer of the Year.

Sandrine's first assignment with PEOI in autumn of 2002 was a translation of an online Macroeconomics course from English to French. PEOI produces free online courses and makes them available on the Internet, with the mission of bringing professional training to people who cannot afford formal secondary





education.

After translating several hundreds of pages of content, John Petroff, PEOI director, offered her to manage the French online volunteer team for the organization. Sandrine was excited about the opportunity, and recruited and coordinated a team of about 50 French speaking online volunteers. The dynamic team of translators, graphic designers, and public relations volunteers was successful in producing French online courses and attracting French-speaking students to benefit from the new learning opportunities in their language.

One of Sandrine's online volunteer team members at PEOI, who happened to live in her neighbourhood and became a friend in person, introduced her to RESPECT, a non-for-profit organization that connects refugee and non-refugee students via pen-pal exchanges, and raises awareness on refugee issues. In the spring of 2004, Sandrine happily took over the online volunteer role of a French translator of the RESPECT newsletter, when her friend was not able to continue.

At the time, Marc Schaeffer, RESPECT International director, had refugee schools from the Francophone Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in his network. It was difficult for him to facilitate letter exchanges for these French-speaking African students as he didn't speak French himself. Sandrine first offered to translate sample letters but soon took over to coordinate the entire French letter exchange programme, making the need for translations redundant.

She went on to take the initiative to invite partner school French classes in France, Canada, and even Russia and Brazil that are now linked up with refugee students in DRC, Tanzania, and Cameroon.

Assuming more and more networking activities, Sandrine currently helps set up a French branch of a RESPECT distance-learning programme for refugee students. Starting off from newsletter translations, Sandrine has achieved in less than a year that RESPECT today is a truly bilingual organization.

For both organizations, Sandrine added value by networking, bringing people together online, motivating and inspiring others to productively and gladly engage and contribute. Having previously worked as a Human Resources manager, Sandrine's online experience has enriched her with a whole new perspective of working with people.

*"Online volunteering gives the opportunity to be involved in completely different universes and to meet amazingly talented and dedicated people from all over the world working on the same project while everyone is distant. ... Life is short and it is not enough time to build a perfect world, but at least we can try to make it better."*

#### **Sonia Ignatova (USA) - Action Against Poverty International, Inc. (USA/Nigeria)**



*Contribution to achieving MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Millennium Campaign: "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*

With dedication, ideas and initiative, Sonia has brought committed teams of online volunteers engaged in various new activities in support of Action Against Poverty International's (AAPI) mission to alleviate poverty among women and children in rural Nigeria.

When Sonia applied for a grant writing assignment with AAPI, she was already working as an expert in international development with a non-profit organization in Washington DC. Soon after joining AAPI as an online volunteer, Sonia's thoughts, inspiration, and enthusiasm started going far beyond her initial assignment. She proposed to redesign the AAPI website, and to develop a new logo, brochures, flyers, and a newsletter. As Nnanna

Okereke, AAPI's president, was supportive of her ingenuity, she took the initiative to successfully realize all her ideas.

One of Sonia's visions for AAPI is a strong and sustainable volunteer network to assist the organization in their efforts to improve the situation of the poor population of Arochukwu, Abia State of Nigeria. Nnanna was pleased to promote her to the position of online volunteer team leader, as he was convinced of her sense of responsibility, having experienced her responsiveness and dedication.

Sonia by now has increased AAPI's online volunteer base from initially four to over thirty people. She has created several small online volunteer teams working on different projects, such as the website and public relations material.

In addition to sharing her existing knowledge in international and non-profit work with AAPI, Sonia has also started seeking new knowledge about Nigeria, in order to understand the context of AAPI's activities better. She regularly passes on relevant information to her fellow online volunteers, and makes sure they all are aware of the importance of their contributions to an organization that works to improve the livelihoods of poor women and children with very limited resources.

Sonia turned to Online Volunteering as a great opportunity to make her professional skills and experience available to even more development organizations. She herself is "amazed at how far an idea can go if shared with a team of devoted online volunteers".

*"I myself know that online volunteering requires a special kind of dedication – the kind that makes you work late at night and wake up in the morning thinking of yet more ways to help your organization, even though you have never met the people you are working with or the people you are helping."*

#### **Stephan Bren (USA) - Mgbala Agwa Youth Forum (Nigeria)**

*Contribution to achieving MDG6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and MDG8: Develop a global partnership for development, Millennium Campaign: "No Excuses, Promises Must be Kept"*



Stephan has provided the Mgbala Agwa Youth Forum ([MAYF](#)) with a [professional website](#), that the organization is very happy with, and that has been favourably commended by several visitors. MAYF operates a resource center on prevention, control, and management of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases in rural Nigeria.

Stephan approached his website development assignment just as he would have dealt with any business project. As a starting point, he took the basic ideas of the already existing MAYF website, that had also been developed by online volunteers. Stephan re-designed its structure from the ground up, applying standard design guidelines and instituting a typical development and testing process, to arrive at significant improvements with regard to site usability, scalability, and maintainability. During all development stages, Stephan has made sure that the new website truly represents a team effort. He closely involved MAYF staff in every step, ensuring that the site would perfectly meet their needs and expectations, and included contributions from fellow MAYF online volunteers.

Since the completion of the website, Stephan dedicates about an hour per week on maintenance tasks, a time commitment that is more than sufficient because of the stability of the site. With this arrangement, he is happy to still stay involved with MAYF, while he can dedicate more time to his newborn baby daughter, who he often carried on his lap while developing the MAYF site.

A Swedish development organization recently found the Mgbala Agwa website via a search engine. Its professional design caught their attention, so that they investigated further the activities of the organization. As a result, MAYF is now developing a joint programme with this Swedish organization in their local community in rural Nigeria.

*"It still amazes me to think, that through the Internet, I have had a positive impact on an organization half way across the world! ... The Online Volunteering programme has provided me an opportunity to volunteer my skillset, computer information technology development, in ways I couldn't have imagined previously. It has enabled me to accomplish a desire to contribute to meaningful causes while still being able to meet my own family and professional obligations by working from home."*