

**Job shadowing at Solidarité Jeunesse Vietnam**

**Project Title:** Steps 4 Local Engagement and Democracy - STEPs4LEAD

**Project Reference Number:** 602729-EPP-1-2018-1-BG-EPPKA2-CBY-ACPALA

**Sending Organisation:** YouNet (Italy)

**Hosting Organisation:** Solidarité Jeunesses Vietnam (Vietnam)

**Coordinating Organisation:** INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR COOPERATION (Bulgaria)

**Abstract of the project:**

The project idea is to empower youngsters from India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, the Philippines and Vietnam to become active actors in their local communities and to enrich their skills and abilities in policy making, decision taking, lobbying and advocacy, conflict resolution, active civic participation, strategic planning and management.

The project will be implemented in 6 phases:

I International trainings: A series of 3 international trainings will be held in Thailand, Greece and Vietnam covering the above-mentioned topics of the project. Each training will be attended by 2 representatives per partner, 2 international trainers and 1 local facilitator.

II Job-shadowing: 1 job-shadower per partner will be sent for 3 weeks to Asian or European country where they will exchange knowledge and will experience the process of civic engagement in all level of social life. Each partner will host representatives from one project partner and respectively will send one representative to another partner country. A structured programme including not only meetings but trainings and counselling sessions will be elaborated for each job-shadower depending also on his/ her interest and fields.

III Online Learning Platform and webinars: 10 webinars will be scheduled each month for representatives in the international training courses, the national training courses and all other young people and stakeholders who have not had the chance to attend a project training but are interested in the topic. Webinars will allow as many interested stakeholders as possible to benefit from the project activities and the partners' expertise.

IV National trainings and setting the LEAD Youth Councils in each partner country. After taking part in the first 3 phases of the project each partner will organise 3 two-day national trainings for its members to build their capacity on topics of importance for the community development subject to the current project. Each national training will gather 20 local participants. As a result a youth LEAD Council will be established in each partner country.

V Local community actions. At least one community action will be planned and implemented by the members LEAD Youth Councils. The community action should have an impact over more than 250 representatives of the local community.

VI International LEAD Platform: The event will be held in Bulgaria for 7 days as 2 representatives per partner will attend. The first 3 days the participants will meet and share experience with youngsters from 3 Bulgarian universities (Sofia, Blagoevgrad and Plovdiv). The next 3 days an event will be organised offering to various stakeholders' workshops, information sessions, partnership building space and sessions sharing social innovation practices. A press conference will be held. A one-day evaluation meeting with a focus on future cooperation will be organised.

This report aims to summarize my experience gained while shadowing Ms An Mộng Linh from the 6th to the 21st of January 2020. Ms Linh is the Incoming and Long term project coordinator in SJ Vietnam since 2017.

Linh studied business English and was asked to join SJ Vietnam team after being a entrepreneur. Her main goals and responsibilities are rooted in the activity of hosting the volunteers. She takes care of the selection, the documentation, the logistics, the relation with the hosting organisations and work as a mentor and as a tutor for the volunteers since she fix issues related to their emotional and practical wellbeing. There may be some difficulties related to social work in Vietnam but I saw in Linh a very committed worker, passionate in what she does and I think she is able to find his job rewarding. Her job does entail some predictable daily routine but her schedule may changes due to outside factors.

My experience in Vietnam started on the 4th of January, when I landed in Hanoi. In my first weekend I had the chance to get my first impressions on the capital going for a visit with Takanori and Huong. Takanori is a long-term volunteer coming from Japan who supports Miss Linh in the office and Huong is a local volunteer. We get to visit the city center: the old quarter, Hoan Kiem Lake and the Museum of Revolution. I also had my first impact with the local cuisine! Bam-mi for breakfast (bread filled with eggs, pork paté, vegetables and chili), Phở (broth with rice noodles and beef or chicken) and iced egg coffee (coffee with whipped eggs). I also met and spend time with my three roommates: Cheima from France, Cloe from Belgium and Anannya from India. All of them are long-term international volunteers.

### First day of Job Shadowing: 6th January 2020

My first day of activity starts with a **morning orientation** with Mr Nam. The atmosphere in the office looks very calm as everyone seems to work independently, resulting in a quiet workplace. Nam is the Group-camp and Workcamp manager at Solidarity Jeunesses Vietnam. He is in charge of the short-term projects organized by SJ Vietnam in cooperation of partner organizations and institutes in/around Hanoi designed for both national and international volunteers.

#### *About SJ Vietnam*

*Nam introduced me to the beginnings of the NGO that started out from the curiosity and openness of a Belgian guy named Pierre. When Pierre came to Vietnam and visit Long Bien Bridge he saw the living conditions of the inhabitants of Fisher Village, people who had left their hometown and moved to Hanoi in search of better opportunities. Many years ago they came to find jobs but couldn't and began to live there. They don't have any governmental support, so no education, no medical support and even no address. They make a little money with some part time jobs. Pierre was in contact with Vietnamese university students and together they agreed on putting their efforts and energies into the project of providing some education for Fisher Village's children. Ms Do Thi Phuc, was among the founders and she now is the director of SJ Vietnam.*

*Back then (we are talking about 2004) SJ Vietnam was a non-formal group of friend willing to have a positive social impact. Its first accomplishment was to open a youth center to teach Vietnamese and Mathematics to Fisher Village's kids. Its activity continued and they*

*progressively implemented other projects, became an independent NGO and opened another office in the South of Vietnam.*

*Nowadays SJ Vietnam organizes **workcamps, Middle and Long-term Volunteer Projects, Training courses, seminars and conferences**. SJ Vietnam is an active member of **International Volunteering networks** and it also sends Vietnamese volunteers abroad and is the only Sending Organisation in Vietnam.*

*SJ Vietnam's goal is to develop international volunteering in order to*

- Work towards a society of justice, peace and solidarity.*
- Break cultural misunderstanding between people and nations.*
- Improve local and global environment, provide informal education, help to reduce poverty and strengthen human rights*
- Encourage young people to participate actively in the society in which they live.*

*For 2020 SJ's workcamps and group-camps will involve more than 300 youngsters in an experience that connects solidarity, intercultural learning, and community life to help disadvantaged, street, poor people and disabled children, needy children and disabled, old, homeless people for community development and capacity building for their partners/target groups.*

*Furthermore it will host volunteers in 8 different Mid/Long term projects organized in Hanoi, Hai Phong, Nam Dinh, Phu Yen, Hai Duong, Dong Thap, Ho Chi Minh city, Ben Tre, Lao Cai, Tay Ninh and around Vietnam with topics related to environment, education, disadvantaged people and society to support sustainable development.*

The morning was concluded with Nam's introduction to Vietnamese history and culture, a basic Vietnamese lesson and some do's and don'ts for my stay in the country.

After sharing our lunch in a local restaurant Miss Linh told me about the schedule, the planned activities of the job shadowing and a future project of SJ Vietnam regarding its communication. The Vice director of a local online newspaper called ICT life is partnering SJ Vietnam to design a header for the NGO on their website. This dedicated section will increase the visibility of SJ Vietnam and present its purpose and the opportunities to apply to volunteering projects for Vietnamese and other countries youngsters. ICT life is also involved in a project that aims to sustain woman and children belonging to ethnic group established in the North of the country that are a cultural minority.

From 6 pm to 7:30 pm Cheima held her English class with local kids aged from 6 to 14 years old. In her project she is meant to facilitate non-formal language class to help students improve their English skills by organizing different activities such as talking about one topic, debating, playing some English games, asking students to perform role plays, some outdoor lessons in a park, in the museum. Cheima holds her classes 4 times per week: 2 times with the kids and 2 times with university students. In this particular class she held a class talking about discrimination and created exercise to improve the pronunciation.

## **7th of January 2020**

The second day of Job Shadowing has been pretty eventful. It started at 7:30 am when we left the office after meeting with Chuyen (a local volunteer) and Cheima and Cloe, two long term

volunteers respectively from France and Belgium. Cheima and Cloe are studying psychology in their home country and are volunteering in centers that host children and teenagers with mental difficulties based in Hanoi.

I went with them to visit one of those centers called Phuc Tue. We went through bus and once we arrived we saw the beginning of the day of one of the classes of the center: the kids were doing some gym and breathing exercises with the director and founder of Phuc Tue: Mrs Huong.

*About Phuc Tue Center – project site that hosts Middle and Long term volunteers*

*The mission of Phuc Tue Centre is to help disabled children become more independent in their everyday life by building their self- confidence. At the centre they aim to help educate and recover mental health, as well as provide development and vocational skill training to help integrate these individuals into the employment community. This not only allows these individuals to feel independent in their everyday life but this will also diminish the potential burden on the family and society*

*Currently, the centre has 60 disabled children with ailments including Down's syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autism, children who have been victims of Agent Orange, as well as other mental illnesses. The Centre has applied the specific education measures which are suited for each individual and has used psychotherapy methods in attempts to rehabilitate the mentally.*

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Since there are many hosted kids with autism the girls prepared an activity about emotional intelligence. They are used to work with one kid at the time. The purpose of the activity was to work with emotions to strengthen several abilities such as:

- to recognize emotions with the expressions;
- to associate the expressions of others with an emotion;
- to reproduce these expressions;
- to name the emotions and to be able to talk about situations when some emotion has been experienced;

The long term volunteers are also working on a database to register some information about the kids that can be useful by future volunteers.

I then met with the director of the centers that explained to me, with the translation of Chuyen, what Phuc Tue does daily. The center was founded by the Mrs Huong herself, a former teacher that decided to open it after retiring to dedicate her energies to kids with autism in Vietnam.

Mrs Huong had a member of its family with autism and experienced what it was like to not know anything about that disease in past times. The name Phuc Tue derives from her father's and means "happy mind".

The kids are divided in three classes according to their capabilities and the education provided there goes from kindergarten to primary school. I was particularly impressed when Mrs Huong told me about Agent Orange, a pesticide massively used against civilians during the war with the USA that caused many environmental and health problems on Vietnamese people and that had left a mark even in present generations since it caused genes alteration. I was also surprised to see how the kids can understand and speak some English as I played with them.

In the afternoon we came with Linh, Taka and Chuyen to an amazing cafe to design a training day together for around 20 local participants on sustainable development. We then came back to the office where I did some research on Salto Youth and digitalised what we thought.

We then spent some evening time with the local volunteers!

### **8<sup>th</sup> of January 2020**

The day was spent in the office where I completed my read on the incoming project of SJ, did some research on sustainable development tools and finish preparing the file for the training day with 7 non-formal activities.

The learning goals of the training day are:

- What is sustainable development in different fields
- Why it is important in Hanoi and other provinces in Vietnam
- How can they contribute in their daily life to SD because self improvement helps sustainable development
- Inspire volunteering activities for young people because of its huge beneficial impact

We thought about two different name games depending on if the majority of participants know each other or not. In the morning we plan to use a tool that aims to creatively present the general concept of sustainable development. Through group work and reflection, participants will understand the links among the 3 pillars of sustainable development: economy, environment and society.

The last morning activity of the training will be a Kahoot.

After lunch we will do an energiser to be ready for the afternoon activity that will last from 60 to 90 minutes. Through it we will discuss about environmental problems in Hanoi and in the different hometown and villages of the participants in order to find new solutions to those problems. Recently, SJ Vietnam implemented a workshop on the topic of Promise and Commitment and this activity might be a chance to find a link with that topic.

The afternoon will end with 45' minute of "World Caf  " rooted on Global Goals

Goal 1: No poverty

Goal 2: Zero hunger

Goal 3: Good Health and well being

Goal 4: Quality education

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Goal 6: Clean Water and sanitation

Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth

Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities

Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities

Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production

Goal 13: Climate action

Goal 14: Life below water

Goal 15: Life on land

Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Instead of doing the activity on local solutions to environmental problems and the World Caf  , an alternative might be to do an activity called "the city you want to live in" that lasts for the

entire afternoon. Its purpose is to understand what sustainable city means, to investigate the needs of the people who live in the city and to reflect on your own responsibility and how to make our cities sustainable.

The training day will end with a debriefing session with questions such as: How do you feel ? What did you do today ? What did you learn today ? How can you better yourself through this experience? What will you do if this happens again? Would you change something of the activities to improve them?

The debriefing will help them to reflect, communicate and maybe reframe what they have experienced during the day. Last but not the least we improved the training draft proposing several “plan B” activities for the facilitator to choose the one they prefer or that they consider more adequate to the group !

To finish the day we went to eat “banh xeo”, a crispy fritter made with very tiny shrimps that has to be eaten with salad and paper rice.

### **9<sup>th</sup> of January 2020**

In the morning I created the content usable for another activity that could be implemented with every youngster coming in SJ but focused on Vietnamese sources of energy.

Its aim is to debate in order to learn the advantages and disadvantages of different energy sources, while developing reasoning, research and speaking skills of the participants.

We prepared fresh spring rolls with the colleagues for lunch and then went to visit another project site on Miss Linh’s motorcycle ! The project site is a vocational school called Hoa Sua.

Anannya my Indian roommate has been volunteering there for a month. We gathered with her, her mentor and her tutor in order to do her final evaluation that was absolutely positive. The mentors really congratulated Anannya for her kind, smiling and enthusiastic attitude as well as for her willingness to give her best in all the activities. During her time in Hoa Sua School Anannya helped to edit and improve some content of the website, to create articles and posts for the Facebook page and designed English classes for the students. With them she got to know some traits of the cultures of ethnic minorities that live in the mountains in the North of the country that differ very much with the one of Viet community in their language and costumes. The group was also very glad on how the relationship with the volunteer went.

### *About Hoa Sua School – project site that hosts Middle and Long term volunteers*

Hoa Sua was founded by Mrs. Pham Thi Vy who was born and grown up in Ha Noi and has been serving for more than 30 years in the education system of Ha Noi City before deciding to launch her project of a school accessible for everyone but with a focus on disadvantaged youth at her retirement. She wanted to continue her commitment to youth and education so this is why since 1994, Hoa Sua School supports vulnerable youth who include orphans, street children, children of war invalids, children of extremely poor families, ethnic minority youth, hearing-impaired and physically disabled youth, as well as abused and trafficked women.

The school's mission is help to disadvantaged and disabled youth through offering them vocational training with opportunities of finding good job in future to become independent and respected in their society.

## Job Shadowing Report - Steps 4 Local Engagement and Democracy - STEPs4LEAD

The Hoa Sua School for Disadvantaged Youth has developed an innovative model to help reduce poverty in Vietnam and meet the demands of the tourism and service sectors. This is accomplished by providing free vocational education for disadvantaged youth and youth with disabilities, and practical skills-based training with close links to local enterprises using an effective, sustainable business model.

After visiting the School I spent the evening in Anannya's company going to one of the main malls of Hanoi: Time City. Every day at 7 pm a fountains and lights show takes place and we could admire it. We also tried Vietnamese pizza!

### **10th of January:**

On this day I completed my reading on Hoa School and accompanied Nam and the workcamp group to to buy the sticky rice that would serve as a main ingredient to prepare Chung Cake. Chung Cake is the traditional savoury sticky rice cake that is prepared during the Tet period. It has pork and green beans in it and is slowly cooked on the fire after being well packed in big leaves of Là Dong, similar to banana leaves.

I tried another vietnamese speciality – rice noodles with fried tofu, pork and fermented shrimp paste and in the afternoon did some research on conflict management, emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship.

Since I applied for an EVS opportunity in India in the afternoon and took care of some dissemination for a training course I attended in Denmark in December 2019 I talked a little bit with local volunteers about Erasmus+ and other funded opportunities for young people. The Vietnamese government currently doesn't financially support social work, at least in the field of international volunteering. After this experience in Vietnam I personally wish the Asian countries will keep cooperating to create a network that will be strong enough to be heard by the institutions.

### **11<sup>th</sup> of January 2020**

In this day – Saturday – I travelled with Cloé to Tam Cốc-Bích Động, a village situated in the province of Ninh Binh. We biked all day to visit the surroundings where the nature happens to be very beautiful. It is situated in the Red River delta and sprinkled with rivers, rice fields, very high limestone formations, caves and a flooded cave karst system.

We then went to the Bích Động Pagoda which is built into the side of a cliff. To reach the area you must cross a pond filled with lily pads and go through a stunningly beautiful ancient gate. Not only the cliff reveals several temples nestled on it but it has a system of graceful stairs that brings you inside caves or that connects to other little valleys nearby.

We then went to the spectacular Thung Nham Bird Garden. With its wet forest ecosystem on an area of about 334.2 ha, including 19 ha of primary forest the garden is home to about 46 bird species and an important nesting place.

We ended our day gathering with two Vietnamese friends and a French girl we met long our way.

### **12<sup>th</sup> of January**

This Sunday started with very early alarm to reach the peak of the Hang Múa Temple. The 500 stairs were worth to be climbed since the views of the valley below was absolutely breathtaking. We greeted the impressive dragon statue at the top of the mountain and went down to see the Mua Caves.

In the afternoon we reached Trảng An where the landscape can be explored with small boats. We cruised along the scenic countryside and through several caves along the river with a woman as our guide who was killed enough to row with their feet!

### 13<sup>th</sup> of January

The workcamp officially started! The group of volunteer is composed by 3 Koreans, 2 Chinese, one Danish and one Swiss. Nam did the orientation and we started to work: the goal of the workcamp is to prepare 120 chung cakes to offer them to the families of Fisher Village and to the kids at the Phuc Tue Center. We started the first part of the preparation that consists in cleaning carefully the leaves of Da Long in order to preserve the taste of the cake and folding them. I also learned about the well-preserved tradition of Vietnamese people to make and eat *bánh chưng* during Tet. It finds its roots in a legend regarding Lang Liêu, a prince of the Hùng dynasty (c. 1712 - 1632 BC).

It was said that in choosing a successor among his sons, the monarch decided to carry out a competition in which each prince brought a delicacy representing the sincerity for the ancestors on the occasion of the *tết*, whoever could introduce the most delicious dish for the altar would become the next ruler of the country. While other princes tried to find the rare and delicious foods from forest and sea, the eighteenth prince, Lang Liêu, who was the poorest son of the Hùng king, could not afford such luxurious dishes and had to be content with everyday ingredients, such as rice and pork. Finally, he created one cake in the square form of earth called *bánh chưng* and one in the round form of sky called *bánh giầy* from these simple ingredients. In tasting the dishes offered by his son, the Hùng king found *bánh chưng* and *bánh giầy* not only delicious but also a fine representation of the respect for ancestors. Therefore, he decided to cede the throne to Lang Liêu and *bánh chưng*, *bánh giầy* became traditional foods during the *tết*.

### 14<sup>th</sup> of January

On this day we concluded the second phase in the preparation of our firsts chung cakes which consists in wrapping its ingredients in the leaves using a mold of square form as the base for the wrapping.

Firstly the giang strings and two lá dong leaves are placed as the square base for the bánh chưng. After that, glutinous rice is stuffed in lá dong, followed by mung bean and finally another layer of rice so that bean can be respectively in the center of the cake. We did a vegetarian version of the cake without the use of pork as traditionally.

All placed ingredients are carefully wrapped in lá dong and bound by giang strings in the square form. To keep the cake from mold or being spoiled, bánh chưng should be carefully wrapped as tight as possible.

The prepared cakes are tightly arranged in large pot, the pot is filled with fresh water and boiled for hours until they are done from the inside stuffing to outside. After cooling and unwrapping, the rice skin of bánh chưng turns green because rice has absorbed the colour of lá dong. One bánh chưng is often divided in 8 parts, usually by using the very giang string which bound the wrap of the cake. As a cake formed from several ingredients, the taste of bánh chưng varies from part to part with different flavours of glutinous rice, pork, bean and even the wrapping lá dong. Bánh chưng is often served with pickled onions or vegetables, chả lụa and nước mắm. After unwrapping, bánh chưng can stay good for several days while a wrapped one can be kept for two weeks.



### **15<sup>th</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> of January**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> we dedicated ourselves to the workcamp alternating the first phase of cleaning and folding the leaves with the second phase of molding the chung cakes. We also prepared some dances to perform for the children of Phuc Tué Center.

### **17<sup>th</sup> of January**

On this day we went to offer our cakes to the kids at Phuc Tué. It has been a very special and emotional moment with the exchanging of gifts, dancing and connecting with them there. That will be one of the memories of Vietnam I'll keep forever.

### **18<sup>th</sup> of January**

Today was free and I went with two volunteers to the Museum of Vietnamese women. It is really well designed as it allows the visitors explore different aspect of the lives of Vietnam through its women, not only belonging to the Viet culture but also coming from ethnic mountainous minorities. Pregnancy, childcare, marriage and traditionally feminine tasks of labour, art, religion and though historical times of invasions are narrated in 4 floors.

### **19<sup>TH</sup> of January**

On the morning we went to Fisher Village to give our second half of cakes. We met with a woman who's somehow a leader of the community who helped us to distribute the cakes to around 20 families. We've been invited by a women named Ánh in her house on the river and talked for some time with her. She shared with us a little of her story, explained that her biggest dream and happy memory was related with her children going to school and showed us how she weaves little spoons with wool. This little production is part of a project with a Japanese Associations that then sells the spoons to devolve the profits to the village and Ánh is the leader of it.

### **20<sup>th</sup> of January**

This day was entirely dedicated to the preparation of the webinar on conflict management and resolution. I finished the research, tried my speech, agreed with Taka and Linh on the timing and the content and also tried the Zoom platform.

On the evening we've been invited to Linh's house to share the dinner with her family. We visited her village, helped a little bit to prepare the ingredients for hotpot and had an amazing time together.

### **21<sup>st</sup> of January**

This Tuesday we prepared and implemented the webinar. Linh started introducing her activity and the association. She then left the word to Taka who talked about his experience as a volunteer in Vietnam. Since the main topic was discussed in the frame of an international project I choose to start talking about cross cultural awareness quoting the difference between National and Organisational culture according to Hofstede studies.

After that I talked briefly about Emotional Intelligence as a useful topic to be explored when it comes to clear communication trying to answer three basic questions.

- 1) What is emotional intelligence?
- 2) What are the three brains?

### 3) How EQ can be useful in youth work?

I talked about conflict management explaining why does it happen and what can be the appropriate solution related to every different level of the conflict.

I introduced two very popular techniques for communication (the sandwich model for constructive feedbacks and the use of active listening) and then talked about I-messages and the arguing technique of Steel Manning, that is the attempt to re-express your target position's so clearly, so vividly and fairly that your target says "thanks, I wish I'd thought of putting it that way".

Then I talked about the Five fingers model of Steve Zuieback. As youth or social worker our daily lives are certainly filled with activities where we intervene as group facilitators. According to Zuieback what we need is 1) to define both the rational and experiential outcomes we expect to achieve after facilitating 2) a set of sequential high quality questions 3) our ability to surface values and beliefs 4) our observation and sensory acuity.