National UN Volunteer Brunilda Peqini shows children (in the picture with Izaura) how to prepare bouquets with paper flowers in the Youth Center of the Municipality of Elbasan in Rrapishta. (Photo: UNV, 2012)

Strengthening the values and spirit of volunteerism

Volunteering for the first time in a summer camp for children, she saw it as a kind of psychological and social training for children, helping them to socialize. This helps them to overcome shyness and to express themselves through games and different activities.

The summer camp “The Star of Desires” was an initiative of the municipality of Elbasan in collaboration with local NGOs. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme also joined to help and support the initiative, involving five young women as volunteers. The
women, mainly students and local activists, were a great help for the camp.

Many games and social activities were organized during the summer camp, helping the Roma children to improve their skills in drawing, acting and dancing. They enjoyed playing games and handcrafts and were also brought on excursions to the beach and the park. For four weeks, these volunteers helped to take care of the children and of the welfare of the camp.

The initiative has also helped to strengthen the values and the spirit of volunteerism. Mariana and Tasha, two of the volunteers, expressed that this was a very beautiful experience that they wanted to share with their own community in Cërrik.

For Alketa, who also volunteered, it was a very valuable experience because she learnt a lot of things about Roma children. What she most appreciated were the different games that they organized, the handcrafts and the drawings with the macaroni, but especially that the children were very polite and kind to her. Volunteering at the camp has helped her to gain additional experience with both children and handcrafts.

Another of the volunteers, Hafize, said that it was a nice experience and that the skills she learnt in the camp will serve her in the future for teaching the children of her community. Albana, volunteering for the first time in a summer camp for children, saw it as a kind of psychological and social training for children, helping them to socialize. [This helps them to overcome shyness and to express themselves through games and different activities,] she said. Albana was very pleased to have had the opportunity to know the problematic situation of Roma children. Now her desire is to help them in the field of education so that they can go to school equipped with books.

This initiative not only helped the marginalized children to learn, play and receive psychosocial support, but it also promoted their desire for a better future by raising their awareness about education.

---

**Bio:** Brunilda Peqini is certified as an Italian language teacher. In 2008 she started working as a UNV Community Facilitator in the two-year project "Empowering the vulnerable communities of Albania", followed by the "Empowering the Vulnerable Local Communities" project from 2010 until today. Over the years, she gained experience by supporting Roma families in Cërrik, Peqin and Elbasan in getting access to public services such as civil registration, education, vocational training and health care.
Sustainable Development Goal: