



Marianist International Volunteers

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New MIV placement in Congo

Our first MIV volunteer in Kenya

A spanish MIV volunteer in love with Kenya!

Correspondence

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**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

Greetings to the Marianist Family around the world,

Once again, although the year seems to have started a few weeks ago, there are only a few days before we celebrate the Christmas Season with our loved ones in the different parts of the world where we are living, working, or serving.

This year has been very important for the MIV: in the first place, we have finally materialized the agreement among the MIV, the Marianists of the Province of France, and the Catholic Delegation for Cooperation (DCC), by means of which our first MIV/ DCC French volunteer, Sébastien, has already arrived in Congo, where he will be volunteering for a year. In Argentina, we have started working on this partnership with the DCC, but we still need to define some of the details of this agreement. We remind you that thanks to this partnership, our volunteers from France, like Sébastien, are screened and trained by the DCC before their departure. During their term as volunteers, they are covered by the insurance provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, and upon their re-entry, they receive a grant from the State of France until they find another job, in case they can't recover the one they had before leaving. This is something very interesting and necessary both for our volunteers' sake, as well as for our responsibility in selecting and training our volunteers, so that, when our volunteers start their service, certain personality problems and relationship conflicts can be avoided, or prevented.

On the other hand, during 2007, the MIV has joyfully helped seven people from different countries and backgrounds (from Malawi, two from France, two from Spain, Colombia and Haiti) to volunteer in different works of the Marianist Family around the world. Even if they may not seem to be that many of them, there is a lot of work behind each of these experiences, with the volunteers' applications, translations, visa documents, air-tickets, etc. As usual, we need your support to help us publicize this information among all the people you know who may be interested in international volunteerism, so they can consider the MIV among their choices. It is not the mission of the MIV to recruit and send volunteers, but rather to publicize the information about our possibilities

of international volunteerism, and to facilitate the communication among the parts involved (former, prospective, in-service volunteers, placements, etc.), but it's always a shame for us to learn that sometimes members of our Marianist Family end up volunteering with other programs because they have NEVER heard of the MIV, thus they never take it into account in their discernment process. This is why we ask you once again to help us circulate this information, and we remind you that the MIV also accepts candidates who are not part of the Marianist Family. This was the case with *Ciro Duarte*, a Colombian guy who fell in love with the Marianists after he volunteered with the MIV in Brazil, to the point that today he's living in China, and he's been in contact with the Marianist brothers there to continue his journey of prayer and service, and to apply some of the things he lived as a volunteer in Brazil.

We hope that you enjoy the reading of this newsletter, and that this New Year 2008 will strengthen us in our mission to make a real difference in this world today.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2008!

José Luis Pérez

MIV Coordinator

**May we accompany this new birth of Baby Jesus
with a stronger commitment to make a difference
in this world, as we work for Peace and Justice in
the mission that the Lord has entrusted us.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2008!**





A french MIV volunteer in Congo

I arrived here in Kinshasa about 2 months ago. My arrival was a little tough at the beginning, with a little bit of a temperature, and the discovery of a whole different country from mine. Little by little, the situation started to change. My fears started to disappear, and they became a real joy to discover a new country and a new culture. The different activities in my mission with the Marianist community have progressively helped me become a

part of this project: I'm currently teaching at the Saint Rapahël School in Limété. As a general rule, we work with the children who have a genuine motivation to learn and widen their knowledge. Unfortunately, these kids are fully aware that they live in a country where it will be very difficult for them to make a living in the future. Upon completion of their studies, many students will not be able to find any job.

At the Formation Center Mont Gafula, we have focused on only two models of computing teaching tools. We are now requesting this material, which is of great need for us here. However, I have already started working on the pedagogical contents of the syllabus. We will also contact different Congolese CEOs to discuss the content of our training programs, and to see what skills a graduate from our institute needs to develop in order to work in these companies later.

Since my arrival, I have also had the chance to meet some scout guides from Congo. As opposed to the Scouts and Guides movement in France, the Catholic Scouts and Guides here have not become one sole institution. These two Scouts movements have suffered all the political and economic difficulties of the country. After being banned for many years, they are now beginning to shyly come back to the surface. The Scouts leaders lack formation, as well



Beginning of the Year for the Catholic Girls Scouts of the DR of Congo



A groups of kids who followed us.



**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

as financial and material means. Congo in general has great needs of means and formation. People receive a very basic education here and some people just none. The high rate of unemployment and the inexistence of an efficient safety system in their social life both aggravate the difficulties of the country.

I have witnessed to a very moving scene these days. We were walking on our way back from a visit to a Scouts group when we walked past a

sort of hut in a slum. There was a family gathered in the outside. The kids were lying on the ground, and they cried: "mom!!!" She was the only one who was sitting, while she was working. It was clear that the kids would not have absolutely anything to eat that night, and in all likelihood, they hadn't eaten anything the previous days either.

Unfortunately, this kind of scene is very frequent around here. The toughest thing about this story is

to reckon that there's nothing we can do to change it. This is very disappointing and frustrating, but it's also true that we can't carry the burden of the whole world on our shoulders.

However, life here also offers many nice surprises to us, as well as warm meetings with the local people. Despite all the difficulties of life here, the joy of life of the Congolese people is really amazing. There's never one single day in which I don't experience

a new discovery, something new to see!

It is a real joy for me to find myself here and to play a little part in the development of this country. I'm very happy with my decision to have come here to volunteer. And in spite of some hard moments at times, I still feel as motivated to work here as I felt when I left my country.

Sébastien Marot / MIV volunteer from France in Congo (2007-2008)



A visit to a scouts group with Dario, an Italian volunteer for an Italian NGO, who will give us a hand with the scouts activities. To the right, there's Serge, the diocesan coordinator of the Catholic Scouts of Kinshasa, and to the right, Carlain, the group leader.



A visit to the land for the future school of Mont Ngafula, with Christophe and Janvier



Our first MIV volunteer in India

Carmen Gómez Chaus, from the Canary Islands, Spain, has volunteered in India with the MIV this year, working with the streets kids Marianist program REDS. Her words express all the feelings that invaded her throughout her experience, and like many other former Marianist volunteers, she's looking forward to volunteering again some other time in the future.

The experience couldn't be any better...



it was a great gift and a privilege. I have no words to express what lived during these three months.

I think it was really worth waiting so long to make my dream come true, even though not everything was equally beautiful... It's a hard experience, which makes you question some of your own issues, values, thoughts, feelings, relationships... in other words, your whole life turns upside down!

You need to order your thoughts and to learn with your heart. The values are different, in India money is not worthy, and a whole new language needs to be learnt. You need to be carried away, to trust, and to be always aware of all that you are learning! You need time to understand how everything works, and to learn all about Indian theories. It's incredible, because so many things which are impossible for us to overcome are just a daily challenge for these people. I received daily lessons of courage, joy, enthusiasm, work and dedication from all those who surrounded me, from the

younger kids to the elderly people I would come across in the streets.

I hope to be able to share my time with these people again, people who have no material richness, but who have a deep sense of joy that many of us, who have more than we really need, ought to learn

from them. We rarely think of how privileged we are, since many of these people could live simply with what we throw away every day.

India... all you need to do is let yourself be surprised, and everything will be surprising! Even the most insignificant





**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

thing will leave a trace on you...
Thanks again to the MIV for having
given me this opportunity, for its support
and guidance.
I truly hope that the MIV will make
more dreams come true, and give others
the chance to relive our dreams one more

time! The trace that this experience has
left on me is a source of encouragement
for my everyday life today. My
memories of India are always present in
my mind and heart, and they did not
come to an end the day I came back to
Spain! This is a feeling I experience

every day, something I truly miss, and
something that fills me up, as I think of
going back to India some time in the near
future... hopefully with Javi and
Alvaro, so that the new experience will
be a really whole one.

Carmen Gómez Chaus / MIV
volunteer from Spain in India (2007)





An MIV volunteer from Spain has fallen in love with Kenya!

This past summer, in July and August, I went back to Nairobi. I needed to feel again all the things I had experienced and made me so happy the year before. I missed everything: the Marianists, community life, the people, the language (I'm currently learning Kiswahili J), but above all, I strongly missed my kids from the Our Lady of Nazareth School, where, one more time, I was blessed to be able to work. This year I had some little fears though: I didn't know how everything would turn out to be. I had created in my mind, consciously or not, oh so many

expectations during my life in Valencia that I feared that I would not be able to accomplish all these dreams that my mind and my heart had created. But my greatest concern was that I may not feel God's presence as strongly as I did the first year. I now smile as I think that, thank God, and never better expressed, all that I had imagined before this second year turned out to be just a minimal part of all that I finally lived: God did want to accompany me one more time during my experience in Nairobi, and I was immensely happy again, surrounded by my kids.



Sometime in January of 2006, I received a request from a young teacher at the Marianist High School in Valencia, Spain. Maria Lis-Vinuales was teaching English at the time and had heard about Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School in Nairobi from Nacho Pereda, a teacher at the same school who had volunteered at OLN in July of 2005. She asked if it would be possible for her to come for a six weeks experience. Although that time of the year was going to be very busy for us, we agreed, and Maria arrived in early July. She spent the next six weeks at OLN, a large primary school (1600 students, aged 5-14) in the middle of the Mukuru kwa Njenga slum area which is home to about 250,000 people. From the first day, we knew that this was going to be a wonderful experience for her and for the students. Rarely have I found a volunteer who was able to move in so easily and be so much "at home" in such an environment. Maria loved the students and they loved her. She was

able to make two important contributions during her time with us: (1) she formed a very fine girls' basketball club; and (2) she was able to meet with groups of the older girls and talk with them about important issues facing them as young women. The students loved her. Maria returned for a stay of ten weeks this year and will again travel to Kenya for ten days just after Christmas. Because of some important fund-raising that she has done for us, we have been able to construct a new 16-door toilet block for the girls, we have gotten sports uniforms for the basketball team, and we have been able to add some important equipment to our new computer centre. Maria's visits with us have been moment of real blessings for us. And, she says that this experience has changed her life. God surely works all things together for the good of those who love Him.

P. Martin Solma SM / Coordinator of Maria Pilar Lis (MIV volunteer) in Kenya



**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

Last year was my first experience, and as such, like the first love, it was unforgettable, but I can assure you that it was totally SURPASSED! Everything I lived the first year was so amazing that I thought it was impossible to live and enjoy again. Well, I realized that happiness can always be surpassed, as there are no limits for God, or for an experience as a volunteer. Nairobi has something that really fills me, something that makes me cry of joy every minute I remember my days there, something special that turns me into a better person, SOMETHING THAT



REALLY MAKES ME HAPPY!
I can't wait to go back there now, so much so that I already bought the ticket to go back after the Christmas Seasons again. I only have 10 vacation days, but I need to do this. I need my kids, I need to see them, to live with them, to share with them. I SIMPLY NEED THEM. And now, I can truly say that GOD IS THE CENTER OF MY LIFE!

María Pilar Lis / MIV volunteer from Spain in Kenya (2006, 2007 and 2008!)



The MIV offers the possibility to volunteer for six months to a year or two in pastoral ministry and/ or development projects animated by the Marianist Family in different parts of the world, such as the ones presented in this newsletter. For further information, contact the MIV Coordinator, Mr. José Luis Pérez at joseluisperez@sinectis.com.ar