

BALKANS PEACE PARK PROJECT

REPORT

SUMMER PROGRAMMES 2012

July and August



4-week Programme in Thethi (2nd- 27th, July – fifth year in Thethi)

The Village

The village environment has changed considerably since 2008. One of the guest houses in the village is now developing into a hotel for 40 guests. The old wooden bridge into the valley is now a substantial concrete one. The number of bars/restaurants has increased from none to seven. There is now pharmacy/first aid post in the village permanently staffed with a qualified nurse. A proper mains electric supply has been recently installed.

Staffing and Class organisation

Classes were held for two hours daily for children aged 5 – 15 years old. Students aged 11 – 15 were divided by gender into two. Environmental education was integrated within the English classes, devoting one hour each to English language study, and environmental education taught by our Albanian colleagues. Total registration was 37.

2-week Programmes in Vermosh and Lepushë (30th July – 9th August – pilot programmes)

Staffing and Class organization

During the course of Vermosh SP, there were 7 international volunteers, 6 Albanian interpreters from Students for Free Enterprise (SIFE) based in Tirana and linked to the programme through Voluntary International Service (VIS), our local partner organization in the region. Additionally a logistics coordinator helped the run the programme, and. Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV) also gave their immense contribution to the SP, one working with the adult Group. They created a video “Welcome to Vermosh” with the students contributing. The video could be used for marketing purposes for attracting tourists and

potential volunteers for the future. A copy of it has been shared on You Tube and Face Book.

40 students attended in Vermosh, 30 in Lepushë, each divided into four groups:

- Group 1: Very young (6- 9 years)
- Group 2: Young (10-13 years)
- Group 3: Teenagers (14-18 years)
- Group 4: Adults (over 18)

Curricular

The whole two weeks consisted of teaching English. As a pilot project, there were no Environmental Classes this year but these will be of primary importance for 2013. Music was incorporated into the Programme and a musical performance formed part of the Closing Ceremony. 3 British volunteers framed their classes around creating a stage show by students of Albanian folktales performed in English for the final day celebration.

A field trip was organised to a local attraction by teachers and PCVs with students for a social walk culminating with games and singing.

Day Trip to Plav/Gusinje

All teachers and volunteers from both schools, Vermosh and Lepushë went to Plav and Gusinje (over the border in Montenegro) one weekend. Montenegro is easily accessible at only 8km from Vermosh. Contacts were made in Plav with the mayor who had worked in 2003 for B3P's cause and was very enthusiastic and keen to help set up a Summer Programme there also in future.

Visitors

Davide Caliandro from VIS and Shkelzen Nacaj, Vermosh Headteacher visited the school. Betsy Lewis from the American Embassy planned to visit but was unable to. However, she ensured that the US Embassy posted our news on their Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/usembassytirana?ref=hl#!/media/set/?set=a.10151011470995838.423397.74591195837&type=3>

Conclusions and Recommendations

During the course of this year's Summer Programmes, there has been good collaboration and support between the teachers. Great team-spirit and a high level of flexibility and adaptability contributed to the warm relationship of all the people involved.

The focus on environmental work, instruction and activities, is very important for the children themselves, their families and the development of tourism.

For next year, there are plan to take up invitations to extend to other villages in the Peace Park region (Valbona, Tamara). Along with English and Environmental Education, and an explanation of the larger Peace Park concept, Summer Programmes in the future will focus also on practical activities, trainings and new initiatives involving young people and empowering the community.