

2009

PRYVOROTTIA HIKING CAMP YOUTH FOR YOUTH



Edouard Portefaix

Intern at the Chornobyl Recovery
and Development Programme

17/08/2009



Introduction

My **position** in the camp was a little “special” - neither a “classical participant” nor a UNV. I didn’t feel confused, but on the contrary, it enabled me to take part in all the activities while keeping distance in order to be able to assess the activities or to keep a critical point of view.

International communication

I was a little afraid of taking part in such a camp due to my very poor Russian. But finally I didn’t face any important communication problems that prevented me from asking something or from organizing activities. A large half of them can speak very poor English. They learnt it at school, but also through films, music and ads.

They **need to practice** but I think they don’t have the **occasions to do it**. At the beginning they didn’t dare speak but when they witnessed one or two of them **daring**, they also tried. They were very **curious**, asking question about me (family, my studies, my hobbies, what I am doing in Ukraine and why did I come here...) and about my impressions about Ukraine and sometimes how do we - western young people – see their country. They could have better English but they don’t see the point in learning it is understandable: if you don’t go abroad or if you don’t meet foreigners...



What did I do?

I organized little informal **French clubs** everyday with little groups (there was one formal the first day but it was more difficult on the camping places the following day, but it's easy when you are walking). The evening before going back to Pryvorottia, I was asked to organize a **dance club** by participants (I showed my team some rock moves in one afternoon and Edman introduced Turkish dances). So we practiced rock and Madison dances one hour in the darkness (with flashlights). We didn't expect that we would have had to perform it in front of spectators in the YC. But we finally improvised; the results were not so bad. It was not easy within so short time but they took the risk! I was very proud of them – even if they were too afraid of trying Madison!

I also took part in all everyday life activities of the camp ranging from games, volunteering activities to cooking. During the **interviews session**, I followed one team. There was always at least one English speaking participant on whom I could rely. Even if it was not always easy I could have a global understanding of what was going on.

When it's come to the interview work, meeting unknown (and sometimes reluctant!) people is not so easy a task. They had to show good communicative skills to convince people to answer their questions or just to be pictured. They also got different points of views from different people. This is a concrete way to show them rural world's problems and the different attitudes toward them (the situation was different in the two villages we visited, different size, different attitudes from the administration). On the other hand, these interviews were beneficial to old people who are not used to talking about their life, future and have an external point of view on their own life. It was also very instructive for me. I read documents at the CRDP on this topic: it was deeply interesting **to see if the reality fits with my ideas and my expectations**. Besides I met the responsible for the **district administration** who provided me with information on local policy and on the resettlement of people from the exclusion zone and all its integration challenges.

Teambuilding activities and games are very close to those I did in **France**. The **pedagogical approach** is also similar. I also learned new games and activities that I could use in France!



Little recommendations:

- ✚ Get one or two foreign participants in next camps. But to be beneficial for both sides - Ukrainian participants and foreign volunteers - the foreigners should have a great feeling with young people, good communication skills and above all, a strong motivation!

During the debriefing meeting on the camp, Yaroslav explained that he was glad and surprised to see he could have common interests with French young people (he also played the guitar). To my mind,

“It was very interesting for me to see that I have common interests with a French young man” (i.e. music and guitar)

Yaroslav, Tchernigiv Oblast

Yaroslav stressed a significant point: Participants experienced that a **foreigner** was not different from them and moreover they can have **common interests** and take part in the **same activities** even they do not share the same language or culture. It's was also positive for them to meet young people from different parts from Ukraine.

✚ I think that one of the **evenings** (evening time was free) could have been devoted to a **collective activity or game**. It is easy organizing and you can also commit participants for the preparation. Moreover such a game could raise the issue of **healthy lifestyle** as an example (through a team game that would include quiz, theatre, posters drawing, teams confrontations etc...)

- ✚ During the camp, I noticed an **outstanding participant**: Ksenia Batalina. My judgment is off course biased because she is one of the participants with whom I had the most important links, but given my own experience, I think I am not mistaken. As an example, she took initiatives on her own to clean dirty places when we arrived at a new camping place while the priority of most of the others participants was to swim, she also often gave impetus to launch collectives songs or thanks to the staff. Besides she has a great charisma and is a natural leader. To my mind, she could be a great youth leader if she gets trained. To a lesser extent this last point could include Edman (Crimea) and Youlia (Chernigov).
- ✚ When the medical assistant make me visit the health building (very instructive) and introduced me to medical staff members, I saw posters from UNICEF and the URC. The URC provides them sometimes with some medicines. It could be interesting to conduce action with the URC youth programme (first aid certificate and HIV prevention and healthy lifestyle awareness sessions).

I wish I have...

...Had a better Russian, even I am satisfied with the results I got with my poor skills. It could have enabled me to have a better and faster understanding of the activities and above all the explanation sand the expectations of the interview work.

...Made a little survey or a few interviews of participants to **assess the benefits of the camps** – in a more precise way than in the camp debriefing (what did you learn? do you think you'll try volunteer experience after? what could you do in your centers, but it would have been difficult, most of the time you get aware of the benefits later, moreover it was not a training camp!).

...Witnessed the UNV's preparation of the camp and all the **preliminary work**.

Cooperation prospects ?



At the end of the camp, Natalia told me, half-joking, that **next year camp** would be located in **France!** More seriously speaking I could be worth discussing:

What is the most beneficial to Ukrainian young people: meet foreign people in Ukraine or go abroad and meet other young people in another country?

If such a camp in France is envisaged for how much time for the stay? How many Ukrainian young people?

How share the schedule between visiting the countries and the camp period?

I have connections with **French youth organizations** (all French scouts as an example), that would be interested in taking part in such an **international camp**. Moreover, it would also be possible to welcome Ukrainian people in French families freely.

But as usual it **all comes down to money**: how could we find the (significant) funding for such a project? There is **"Youth in action"**. I can also apply for some grants from French municipalities, departmental council or regional council, but I have to create a **NGO specially designed for this project**. It could be interesting for me and it would be possible to commit Ukrainian youth leaders or motivated young people in this association in order to provide them with an associative experience: decision process, accounting...

This is just food for thought, but **impossible is nothing!**



To put in a nutshell...



As a conclusion, this camp is certainly **one of my best experiences ever to many extents**. Before leaving I met an inhabitant of the village and her daughter. I didn't know her but I think she attended the performance at the YC. She told me not to forget them and my experience here, and wished I would go back to Pryvorottia (translated for me). I won't forget anything. It was also for me **a good introduction** to the work I will do this month with the Oxford **Volunteers for Chernobyl Scheme!**

I hope that the participants will keep contact among each other and meet again to organize projects but they will of course need the support of youth leaders or UNV to do it.

I thank all participants, the originators' team which worked on this project (and also developed the interview work) and all people that contribute to its realization, and also Wendy Shapiro who invited me to this camp!

