

YOUTH EXCHANGE

Overview

Young people around the world are growing up in challenging times. Many come from communities plagued by economic troubles and ongoing conflict. To address these and other problems, today's youth need guidance and support. Youth exchanges are designed to empower the next generation by giving them the knowledge and skills to navigate local issues. These programs help young people understand their world, develop leadership skills for civic engagement, build lasting friendships across cultures, and cultivate the ability, confidence and motivation to make a difference in their communities.

Success Story

While on the Iraqi Youth Leaders Exchange Program, students gain an appreciation for teamwork and for the growing role of social networking in organizing people to make change. Many alumni have started their own online groups to promote volunteerism and community action.

In Sulaymania, one such group is Volunteers 4 Kids, which has been active in demonstrating the importance that involvement can have upon one's community. The alumni have visited elementary schools to teach students about environmental awareness and English, plant trees, and create art murals. Their desire to give back to the community is a direct result of recognizing needs in their society and acting to positively address them.

Approach

World Learning is a leader in international youth exchange programs that foster greater understanding and respect between young people in countries around the world and the U.S. The program is designed to encourage cultural exchange and strengthen ties between youth in different countries with their American peers.

Our dynamic, experiential curriculum focuses on leadership, global issues, peacebuilding, dialogue, activism, civics, and volunteerism. Both short- and long-term programs are available. Youth are accompanied by adult mentors on short term programs, which are based in the U.S. or other countries, and last from one to five weeks. Long-term programs convene for one academic year in the U.S.

World Learning has developed an effective model that helps participants of our youth exchange programs develop a stronger sense of civic responsibility, establish relationships with peers of different ethnic, religious, and national groups, and acquire the skills and thought leadership to transform their communities and countries.

Our youth exchanges do not end when participants return home. Many participants go on to design and organize action projects in their home communities, creating a multiplier effect as these youth engage friends and peers. This extends the program's impact into the local community and often inspires additional projects. World Learning's Youth Program staff continue to provide resources and support participants post-program via the Internet and with in-country reunions.

For more details please contact Deputy Director of Youth Development Team at World Learning, Cari Graves at Cari.Graves@worldlearning.org



“This program helped me explore who I am, and I am a leader.”

“Before my participation in this program I would never think that I can lead or give a good idea, and that's because I did not know myself and my potential, but this program helped me explore who I am, and I am a leader.”

Participant from the Iraqi Youth Leaders Exchange Program

“I am learning to be a leader. Because I've learned to be confident, teamwork, to dialogue and give a speech, to be an agent of change, and to get people involved in social causes.”

Participant from the Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action) Mexico Exchange Program

“I learned that I still have to do a lot of things in my country, be more socially engaged and participate more in volunteer work; most important are the new ideas, because this gives us a strong way to change our country; that we could improve our leadership skills and this program made me stronger; people are the same all around the world.”

Brazilian Participant from the Youth Ambassadors Program

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