



Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL)

Enabling YOU to make a difference in OUR world ...



Recognizing the impact of community volunteers

Tijuana, Mexico, 18–22 October, 2012

Building the capacity of community volunteers

In January 2011, a link was established in Tijuana, Mexico, between the World Vision (WV) Early Childhood Development (ECD) process and GULL's action learning system. A number of volunteers who assist WV in Tijuana, began their GULL journey at that time and on 20 October, 2012 they attained their GULL professional Bachelor degree. This news item draws on their experiences and achievements and on photographs from the GULL and WV recognition ceremony which the volunteers organized themselves in their community hall.



(Above) An early childhood development centre in Tijuana, Mexico and some of the volunteers who pioneered GULL's action learning process in their community.

Mexico, Oct 12

(Below from left) Discussing next steps: Luis Armenta Fraire, Integrated Ministry Director, WV Mexico, Elinor Alexander, Capacity Building & CoP Advisor, Education & Life Skills, WVI, Richard Teare, President, GULL, Patricia Hartasanchez, Life Skills Innovation Advisor, WV Latin America and Salvador Vazquez, Regional Education Advisor, Latin America.



Significant outcomes: Personal and community change

Dr Patricia Hartasanchez reflects on the outcomes achieved by the WV volunteers:

At the outset, the ECD with GULL participants (WV volunteer workers) didn't have much self-esteem and they didn't feel that they had the capacity to work with others or to facilitate change. However, when we began the community projects, we were amazed to find that they had many ideas. So instead of staying solely with the early childhood theme, they decided among other things, to build a bridge that made the journey to school much easier and safer for children and to establish a health and nutrition project for a large number of elderly people. It was amazing how they obtained the funds to implement these projects - they also worked on their own environment - for example, they mobilized many people in their community to clean a river and some of their neighbourhood streets.

Seven of the participants were women and as volunteers, they do not receive a salary and yet they have become excellent leaders in their community and outstanding role models and ambassadors for WV and the GULL process.

(Right) GULL participants pose with their certificates after the ceremony. Edward Mooney, GULL's Chairman (right of the picture) travelled from San Francisco to support the event.



Mexico, Oct 12

Meet Juanita and her family: Change agent and role model



Patricia continues: One of the volunteers (Juanita, aged 67) is working with 300 elderly people and it is beautiful to see how this group is learning together about nutrition and family nurture. Can you imagine this? People in their 70s and 80s experiencing a new, active form of learning and achieving personal growth? This large group is now helping their own sons and daughters to be better parents by demonstrating newly developed grand-parenting skills.

In so doing, they are helping to change the mindset and attitudes of their own children in relation to parenting and education. **Juanita comments:** “The first changes I was able to make were personal and family-related. There were many changes and these greatly helped to improve the relationships between family members.

When I started with the GULL professionalization process, my children and grandchildren were encouraging me in terms of improving my work in support of early childhood development and the elderly. Now I know that our family relationships are stronger and by sharing what I learnt during my GULL journey I can see significant changes in my family and in the wider community.”



(Above left) Juanita tells her story (above) Juanita with her proud family.

Mexico, Oct 12

Recognizing, certifying and celebrating significant change

Patricia continues: It was remarkable to see how this group who began the journey with a low level of self-confidence, were able to speak publically and with great confidence about their many accomplishments and the ways in which they had been able to help their community. Juanita for example, was previously very shy – she had never spoken-up or addressed gatherings of people but now you can see a big difference! In fact, the group decided that Juanita should be their spokesperson and she was the first to receive her certificate. The fact that the group were being publically recognized caused them to cry tears of joy. They were so happy that they had completed the journey that they had started together and their testimonies all reflected significant change. Individually and together they had accomplished many things that are relevant to their lives and it was important that their families and the wider community were able to hear these stories and witness them receiving their certificates.



(Left) Richard Teare with happy GULL graduates and (right) the groups shares a celebratory meal together.



Mexico, Oct 12

Pioneers and now Ambassadors for lifelong learning

A concluding observation by Patricia Hartasanchez:

“Personally, I am really pleased that these people are going to continue the journey and that the ceremony was in a sense, a new beginning for them – they really want more and they can see the potential that exists inside their community. Now they want to do new things and they are enthusiastic about the next steps. They are excited about continuing with GULL, engaging more people and broadening their impact via new projects. So finally, they understood that GULL is the vehicle that is enabling them to help others. Now they want more and they want to draw in more people to experience the GULL process. “

(Right) WV Mexico volunteers and staff pictured with Edward Mooney and Richard Teare (GULL), Elinor Alexander and Marla Grassi, WVI and with Patricia Hartasanchez, WV Latin America.



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