

GLEN INTERNSHIP 2011: SAKARTVELO



ONE EUROPE
ONE WORLD!

FINAL REPORT

Title: **Sustaining the Community Education Centre in Eastern Georgia**

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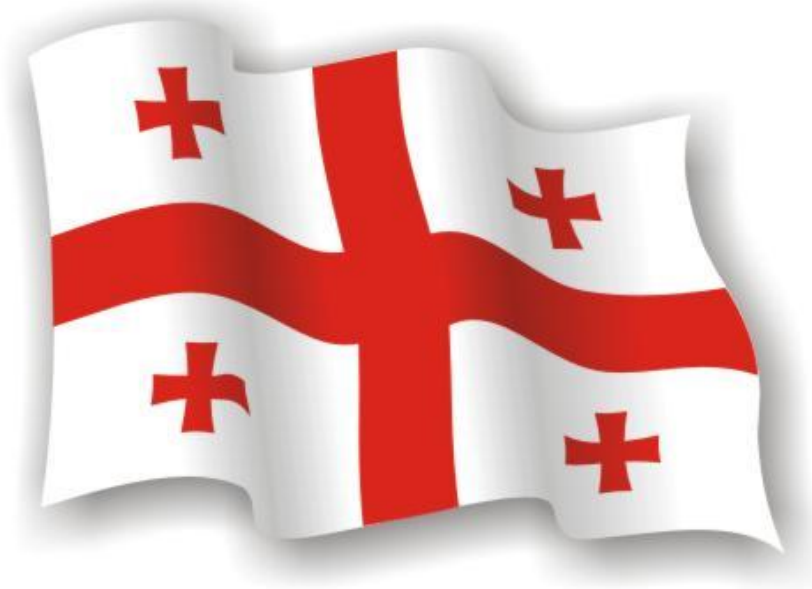
GLEN participant: **Roman Bartoň**

Period: **September – December**

Place: **Koda - Kvemo Kartli - Tetriskaro region**

Hosting organization: **Koda Community Education Centre**

Sending organization: **INEX-SDA**



SUMMARY (CZE)

Stáž GLEN se konala ve vesnici Koda ve východní části Gruzie nedaleko hlavního města Tbilisi v období od prvního září do čtvrtého prosince 2011. Německo-český tandem byl složen z Evy a Romana. Tři měsíce byli naplněny prací pro Komunitní výukové centrum v Kodě. Hlavní náplní naší byla práce s místním klubem mládeže, ale byli jsme zapojeni do běžných i neběžných aktivit centra. Polovina obyvatel třítisícové vesnice jsou takzvaní vnitřní uprchlíci. V tomto případě jsou to lidé, kteří byli nuceni opustit své domovy v Jižní Osetii během války v roce 2008. Komunitní výukové centrum bylo založeno německou organizací dvv-International právě kvůli jejich příchodu. Má za cíl jejich socio-ekonomickou integraci. V centru je možné navštěvovat různé odborné kurzy, stát se členem klubu mládeže či se poradit v oblasti drobného podnikání. Následný text pojednává o naší tříměsíční stáži, pokud Vás odrazuje pouze angličtina, tak doporučuji až konec dokumentu s odkazem na blog v naší mateřštině.

SUMMARY (ENGLISH)

GLEN internship was held in village Koda in Eastern Georgia not far from capital Tbilisi. Our work lasted from September to December 2011. German – Czech tandem was composed of Eva and Roman. Three months were filled up by work for Koda Community Education Centre. Our main task was to work with Youth Club of the Centre but we were also involved in both regular and irregular activities of the Koda Community Education Centre. Half of the village of Koda which has approximately 3000 inhabitants consists of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). These IDPs had to leave South Ossetia during the war in 2008 and were resettled to Koda. KodaCommunity Education Centre was established because of their arrival. Centres goal is their socio-economic integration into new environment. There is possibility to attend several vocational courses in the Centre, become a member of the Youth Club, small business consultancies are provided.



Koda Community Education Centre 2011

INTRODUCTION

GLEN attracted me from the first moment I found this program. I signed firstly in 2010 and I wasn't accepted. My long-term interest was not discouraged so I applied again the following year. Instead of going to Kenya or India my lovely country Georgia was offered to me. There were no doubts.

I spent some years by studying Environmental Economics and Developing Studies and I travelled not only to "developing" countries. I needed different type of experience. I was missing working or internship experience. Also I felt lack of theoretical information about GE and its methods.

This report will take you through my GLEN experience. Which is in fact one year cycle. But for me it was unforgettable experience which is not bordered only by this cycle. This report is about the whole process, activities, feelings, content of work and in fact a complete picture of GLEN seen through my eyes.

GEORGIA, I MEAN SAKARTVELO

Georgia is not situated between Florida and Tennessee but in Caucasus. It is surrounded by Russia, Azerbaidzhan, Armenia, Turkey, Black Sea and two "separatist countries" – Abchazia and South Ossetia. Geopolitical information are available online so I will point out just one important fact – story how it all began.

When the God was distributing the land Georgians were drinking, eating and saying toasts like usually. On their way they continued in celebrating life and when they got late to the meeting all the land was over. There was no land left for them. Georgians said that they are late because they were drinking and saying toasts about God. When the God saw that they spend their time that well he decided to give them one special piece of land. Not so big but the most beautiful one. It was the piece he saved for himself.

My version of old Georgian legend

ON THE ROAD TO GLEN

GLEN doesn't mean only internship abroad. In February we took part in assesment selection procedure in Prague. Later we had two incredible seminars in Germany and in Czech Republic. I was absolutely amazed by several things there. Learning about cultural issues and the preparation for internship was perfectly managed and I was really benefitting from the GE methods I learned.

First step on the road to Georgia I did by bus to Istanbul. I continued by hitchhiking through Turkey and Georgia. Before the intership I spent one month by traveling and working on two workcamps. One of them was in enchanting Tusheti National Park. After this helpcamp we met with my tandem partner Eva. We travelled a bit, spent together one week on the workcamp close to Tkibuli. Then we separated again and after my adventure in Nagorno Karabach and Armenia we met again on 1st September in Tbilisi – ready to go to Koda!

KODA, MY LOVE!

Marshrutka drivers are on strike but nothing can stop us on our way to Koda! It does not take long time and we are in front of the Koda Community Education Centre (Koda CEC, CEC or Centre). We are warmly welcomed by Khatia, our kind director and nice Kety shows us our new home which is about two minutes walking from the Centre.

Koda is very famous village in Georgia because of huge egg production during the Soviet period. Nowadays the industry is collapsed but brand “Koda” was sold to another company. So you still can meet eggs signed “Koda” which are not made in there.

But we didn't come to Koda to work for egg factory like some people thought in first moment when we explained in which village we work. But it is true, that the eggs are most famous fact about Koda. Not many people notice this kind of village. Koda surrounds main road Tbilisi – Yerevan about thirty minutes south by marshrutka from capital of Sakartvelo (that is the name of Georgia in Georgian language - Kartuli). Koda has good connection to Tbilisi, marshrutkas are going regularly every half an hour.

The population is approximately 3000 inhabitants. For our tandem Koda became our love. From the first moment it was such an interesting place for us. Koda is not very attractive on the first look (for some people) but as we know – hidden beauty is the most important one. Each place has it's own magic, you just have to explore it. And the “glacier theory” – 10% is visible helps quite a lot!

Koda has several shops with basic food and general merchandise. You can hardly buy vegetables in the shop because people are growing a lot or buying directly from the farmers. It looked that every shop has just one type of vegetables. But we had enough local delicious food. There were farmers coming and selling vegetables directly from their car or we got some products from our lovely neighbours.

There is one bar in Koda. Very small, very original. There is offer of draught beer, local chacha (brandy) and some food. Unfortunately bar was closing in the afternoon and it was totally closed in October. And in general, there is not much to do in Koda. People usually gather outside (Koda boulevard:-) When the weather was good we enjoyed evening walking around, talking to people and in general just being there. After while people got to know that we are there. But I had the feeling that we still have to explain that we are not tourist and what is our job (that we are not teachers as everybody usually expect). We were in contact with locals. What will always stay in my mind is shouting of little kids “Hallo” and “Good bye” – it means whole their vocabulary☺



View from our window

THE IDP SIDE: FRAGMENTED KODA

Koda is not a homogenic village. Situation changed a lot after war in 2008. About 450 families were resettled from area of South Ossetia to one part of Koda. We labeled former Koda like “the other side”. New inhabitants are called IDPs (Internally Displaced Person = someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country’s borders).

IDPs are living in the blocks of flats on the edge of the village. These buildings were used like accomodatin for the soldiers from former military base. From the windows of our flat you can observe ruins of military base as far as the eye can see. I would say that you can feel the separation between original and new inhabitants. Their conditions are different. At least when we compare living conditions, for example rural houses versus blocks of flats.

I would say there is no spite between people in Koda. But we just have the feelings of diversification. IDP issue is a complex problem. Some of these people have been living in a civil war for 20 years on the places where they grown up. Some of them were turned out of their homes more than one time. They lost their property, home and many of them members of their families. Many strong bonds were interrupted. They moved from fertile foothills of Caucasus to Koda. It is very dry place, they moved from houses to blocks of flats. We can’t generalize but it is difficult to start new life. I would say that many of IDPs will never reconcile with this situation and they percieve Koda like a transfer station. They hope in return home but.. Most of the houses were bombed and there are just ruins nowadays.

Somehow people got used to live like this. The process of the integration is quite difficult. For example some people has no good realitionship with their new home. When I travelled in Georgia I was asked many times how I like the country, village.. In Koda we replied positively as usual. One boy told me that he doesn’t like it.. And it was first time in Georgia when I heard that.



KODA

COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTRE

Koda CEC was set up in 2009 by the Georgian Department of The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (dvv-International). Main goals are integration of the IDPs in a socio-economic way. Center is running several vocational courses (computer skills, plumber, knitting, etc.). And there are other acivities: small business consultancy, youth club, consultation with psychologist, children development program and others.

We were first Glennies in Koda. The topic of our internship was to sustain the development of the Community Education Center in Koda. The Center on the one hand aims to provide informal education for the local community and on the other hand, promotes active citizenship and participation.

When we came all the activities of the center was about to begin again after school holiday. In first days we planned to observe little bit the environment but in fact we directly found one of our roles in the Center. Work with Youth Club (YC) was one of our main tasks .

We started to work with youth club members. We were supporting them in taking pictures for exhibition titled “Life of IDPs in Koda”. Interesting was when Iliia mentioned that we can’t use one of the photos because the guy is not IDP. I am writing about it because the identity of IDP was very important for all the people around, especially the young ones.

One of our tasks of the internship was organizing activities for the Youth Club members. The CEC team was recently missing one person in the team with no possibility to hire someone so we overtook some of those responsibilities.

The general aim of our activities for YC was to promote volunteering, create awareness about political and social issues, provide space for discussion and evaluation and sensilize them for environmental issues.

In addition, we organized one bigger event so far to attract the whole community of Koda to the Center and asked their participation in the decisions concerning the center. With this event, we wanted to make informal education more attractive among the local population and promote their involvement in a vivid and strong community. Beyond that, these events i.e. Open air Cinema and Adult Education Festival should offer free activities as the small village does not offer any reasonable distraction to its citizens.

Another task of our internship was to document the activities of the Center in the form of photos and reports. These photos are important for the donors and other supporters of the center.

Last, but not least we have provided practical and technical support in the office of the Center. In this sense we do not replace any member of the staff, but assist in the case of extreme work pressure.

YOUTH CLUB KODA CEC



One of the activities of the Center is Youth Club (YC). It has about 25 members from 14 to 21 years old. Our task was to create program for YC and support all their actions. During our internship we organized several trips, community events, movie screenings, clean-up action, International Volunteer Day and YC members supported many regular activities of the Center. I will point out some crucial events we did together – Because Together we can make a difference☺

FORUM THEATRE

Situation of IDPs is very specific. We were facing many people who somehow lost their former life and they are quite closed or motiveless to change their situation. This is deep topic but one can feel strange mood or atmosphere in the society. And this is one of the reasons why we decided to use method Forum Theatre in our work with youths of Koda.

We learned this method on GLEN preparation seminar and also on other seminars. In the CEC we decided to apply this specific form of theatre to attract young volunteers, show alternative methods of conflict solutions and informal methods of developing and learning about these solutions. The implementation of this method - under the guidance of the youth club – was made on the Adult Education Festival which our Center organized.

We had several Forum Theatre workshops. We started by familiarizing the youngsters with different theatre-related games and introduce the main concept of Forum Theatre. At first the atmosphere was slightly contained, yet after a short while the warming up games helped contributing to a very positive atmosphere where everyone was willing to participate and involve in her or his role.

An interesting experience was also the international composition. We invited many youngsters and volunteers from different countries.

PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH DOCUMENTARY FILMS

ONE WORLD IN SCHOOLS IN GEORGIA

“Be flexible“. This motto is crucial one for GLEN interns. We were facing it very often in our daily life in Koda. I knew before the internship that there are film screenings for the Youth Club. I was thinking about showing documentary movies I possess. But there were quite big language barrier so I couldn't use them because there are no Georgian subtitles for the documents I have.

I had to find solution. With the help of my friend I got in contact with Czech NGO “People in Need“. They have extensive experience with organizing one of the biggest Human Rights documentary film festival “One World” in Europe. In accordance with this focus, PIN started running a project called “One World in Schools in Georgia“. One of the goals of the project is to prepare educational toolkit for schools which will contain at least 5 documentary movies translated to Georgian. Thanks to support and willingness to lend us the movies we could show these films to youth club members.

One of the movies we showed was “Bristol Bike Project“. It was screened to the youth club members in the conference room of the Community Education Centre Koda. The movie was about the situation of asylum seekers in Bristol and its most comprehensive ‘Community Bike Project‘.

The film was especially interesting for the community as it showed the situation of refugees in another country and the audience learned about a good example of successful community project.

During the discussion appeared one funny moment. We asked the question: “Can you see some analogy between your situation of IDPs in Koda and asylum seekers in Bristol? “. Answer: “Our situation is not the same, we are IDPs in our own country and they are IDPs abroad“.



Made in Koda

PROMOTING THE SPIRIT AND ACTION OF VOLUNTEERING IN GEORGIA

We brought our youth club members to two clean-up actions which were organized by European House Georgia. For the youth club, it was exciting to meet other volunteers and get in contact with other organizations. Last but not least this action inspired us for organising similar event in our own community.

Together with the Greens Movement of Georgia a Clean-up Action was organized in the part of Koda where the most of the new citizens (IDPs) live.

In cooperation with the Youth Club, flyers were designed and distributed among all citizens of Koda. Approximately 60 mainly young community members participated and collected waste in the settlement. The Clean-up Action aimed to promote the idea of “Together We Can Make a Difference” and to sensibelize the youngsters for environmental issues and raise their awareness. Besides that, the collection of the large amounts of waste made the area a more attractive place for living.

KODA COMMUNITY NIGHT

Koda Community Night was held in front of the Community Education Centre Koda, it was the first event held in the evening. The event started by brief welcome by director of the Centre and introduction of GLEN project volunteers. The program continued by screening documentary film about Community Education Centers in Georgia including shots from the local centre. The next point of the evening was a discussion. Youth Club members prepared three flipcharts with questions connected with Koda CEC and sensibilisation of community members.

The aim of this activity was to open the discussion and try to collect ideas from the members of the community. As well as to find out if there is some will from locals to contribute. Last point of the night was screening my photo - slideshow from workcamp in Georgia and traveling in India. The action was very successful in so far as about 70 people from Koda attended and were actively participating.

ADULT EDUCATION FESTIVAL

The preparation of the festival was not only a very busy period for the staff of the center, but also the youth club was very involved in a variety of tasks. Besides the organization, the youth club helped with installing the exhibition, transporting items to the cultural house, preparing and cleaning the accomodation of the festival. From my point of view this event really tested “our small crew” because everyone had so many tasks and extreme portions work.



Clean-up action Koda

TANDEM PARTNER-SHIP

This way of cooperation was very special for us. Not for me – for us. This “European dimension” brings really lot to the internship. Be alone or not to be alone is crucial difference. I wrote this to my motivation letter: “I think that cooperation between Czech and German volunteers and local people may be very beneficial. This interaction can bring new ideas and innovations. Or not, who knows...” Now I can honestly write that to spend this time with Eva was magic and unforgettable.

Sometimes it happens that tandem partners are not fitting to each other and then it is big challenge for them; they have to behave in a professional way etc. Basically it should be main supporter and person you trust the most. In this way it happened to me and Eva. We depicted our situation in our Midterm report by following words:

“We work together, we live together, we eat together, we always meet same people wherever we go, we lost our individualities and forgot the meaning of word “I”, we have a common budget, same office- we share one desk in it, we have the same room, we took over the habits of the other person, we are perceived as a married couple and we have really great time😊”.

Eva for example matched our tandem partnership to “arranged marriage”. We really had great time and we spent majority of time together. Somehow one has no choice. Poor cultural possibilities and living small village do not offer many opportunities to separate. Fortunately we didn’t need to.

CONCLUSION: WE LOVE MISTAKES

Every step in GLEN was really enriching for me. During the internship there were no crucial problems. I came with very open mind with some experience from abroad including Georgia. True is that more and more things are visible after longer period. When you are getting deeper into the local life and work you are sometimes dissapointed, sometimes surprised in a positive way. And it can easily happen that it goes in a opposite way soon. The whole process of the interaction with our Caucasian sisters and brothers was so powerful. I am sure I was giving my best. Both in the work and in the personal life. During the working we established great connections with the staff of the Center. I percieve our colleges like our Georgian family. Whole period gave me huge lesson of patience, adaptability, tolerance and FLEXIBILITY!

I still follow GMT (Georgian Maybe Time:-). More important that be on time is to do what your heart wish and in Koda it fitted together. I did big step in my personal development. I feel much more like citizen of the World and I think with all the experience there is no way back. I appreciate so much

whole preparatory part, internship and in general - whole cycle. It was great pleasure to take part in GLEN in amazing Georgia.

GLOBAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

I wrote a blog during the internship, there were about 1500 entries during the internship and following three months. My article was published in news letter of my sending organization INEX-SDA. Together with the coordinator of GLEN we were in online radio to promote program and speak about internship. I am also preparing article for very known magazine in Czech republic. My main GE will be one hitchhiking tour around Czech republic "Glen On The Road". There will be photoscreenings, vernisage and other activities. Every day on a different place – I will be focused on smaller towns and villages. Also I am involved in one Global Education Program for schools and in preparation of Czech Glennies 2012. I would like to point out that mentioned activities are planned for following months but my interest in GE is longterm and as I mentioned, there is no way back.

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Shoe making workshop

“Feel Free to Feel Free”

Romanito 2012*