



MAGAZINE

*EVS for a Sustainable
learning Society*

Nidri, Lefkada, May-June 2013



SUMMARY

Evs for Sustainable Learning at Nidri.....	pag.3
Meet the Volunteers.....	pag.6
The Basics of Permaculture.....	pag.10
Building the eco-House at Nidri.....	pag.14
Presenting the Results of Our Work.....	pag.17

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Building the eco-house in Nidri - a story of EVS volunteers

“EVS for Sustainable Learning” is a project issued by the Greek organization “Solidarity Tracks” in the town of Nidri on Lefkada Island. The main goal of the program is the building of an eco-house made entirely from local material and entirely constructed with the help of young people from European and Mediterranean countries. The project started last year (2012) when 41 young volunteers coordinated by trainers specialized in building passive houses and installing alternative energy sources. In 2012 the foundation of the house as well as the roof were completed.

The volunteers started building the walls of the house and the solar panel that was intended to assure the necessary energy for all the devices which will operate inside the eco-house.

At the end of the 2012 seminar, the house was by a percentage of 40% ready, there was still need for other young people to come to the small and beautiful Nidri to continue the hard work. This year at the beginning of the month of May, 16 young people from Armenia, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Romania, Spain and Ukraine came for the second part of the project eager to finish the walls of the house, to build the windows and the door, to start maybe the work at the floor, to put the electricity wires in the walls and also to create an ecological garden respecting the rules of sustainable development.



Organizing the Workshops

Again, the work was coordinated by the above mentioned specialized trainers, from whom the volunteers learned many new things related to the mix of straw, sand and clay necessary for creating the basic material for the walls, the main principles for creating and installing a solar panel, the principles of permaculture and their efficiency in creating an ecological garden. The 2013 project was structured in three parts: the building of the house, the installing of the solar panel and the creating of the ecological garden. There were days of hard work but also days of fun and new interesting experiences.

by Cosmina Bajan

Increasing knowledge and awareness on sustainable development

The main purpose of the workshops was to keep to the line of the sustainable development and to try to explain in theory and also to exemplify in practice to the volunteers why local consumption, traditional natural materials and alternative sources of energy are to be preferred to other possibilities, when it comes to choose a way of living friendly to the environment and on balance with nature.

Cultural diversity and the importance of intercultural exchanges

Apart from the three main workshops of the programme, the volunteers took also part in the activities organized by their host organization. In the first days of their arrival the volunteers got the chance to organize an intercultural dinner where they presented the traditional food and drinks of their countries. With the occasion of the European Youth Week they were creating a medley of traditional dances from each country and presenting it to the lefkadian public taking part in the event on the 25th of May in Paralia Park.

On the 7th of June, when the work-related part of the project was finished, the 16 EVS volunteers organized a closing event at Nidri where they presented in different workshops the work they had been doing there, the importance of this project for the sustainable development and for the community of Nidri.

In the morning the volunteers presented to more than 100 children from the schools of Nidri and Lefkada the basics of creating an eco-house and an ecological garden. In the afternoon the young people of Nidri came to see the work of the volunteers with whom they became friends during the 40 days of the project.



This publication is entirely made by EVS Volunteers and dedicated to all the people who care about the nature, who love liberty and diversity.



Let's get some direction in this chaotic world

The project at Nidri was from the beginning a mixture of work and enjoyment. Everybody that was taking part in the building of the eco-house will have the chance to come to Nidri and use it for holidays. At the same time, during the building everybody was very happy with the new things they were learning about this topic. All the EVS volunteers were working or studying in fields related with what happened at Nidri. They were architects or students in architecture, environmentalists, specialists in gardening, specialists in electronics and electricity.

All of them were young, motivated people, eager to learn more about the sustainable way of leaving and to live new revealing experiences that will help them in the development of their personality.

Apart from the experience gained in the field of sustainable development, sustainable buildings etc., maybe the most important aspect of this year's programme is related to the personal development and the experiencing of life in an ad-hoc community of people coming from different cultures and traditions.

Those who can, do.
Those who can do
more, Volunteer.

Author Unknown

The statement that the Eco-House Project at Nidri intends to make is that sustainable development means local development. All the materials used for the building of the house were local, traditional ones that the people of the island had been using for ages in order to build their houses.

And they made it so well, they managed to create in such a short time a coherent community surpassing the cultural and language barriers. The proof of this amazing socializing capacity of this year's EVS Volunteers of the ECO-House at Nidri consists in the degree of popularity they enjoy in that town where they made new friends and rendered the project more visible for the community. It was not simple all the time, there were, as always happens good moments and not so good moments, but maybe these 2013 Nidri EVS volunteers gave all us a new interesting and functional recipe of solidarity, happiness and motivation that is essential for building a sustainable world.



Meet the Volunteers

I am an ...architect and sometimes also a graphic designer. I chose this project because....I am interested in eco-friendly architecture.

From this project...I have learned a lot about the eco-buildings, how to prepare materials, how to install a solar panel, how to build the walls of a house from a clay-sand-straw mixture.

Sustainable development is... the three substances we are using.

The world would be a better place if...all the people would be open and positive as we are.

My primordial question...I don't have; I know everything I need to know!

I am...studying management in my country and now I am also working abroad as a mechanic.

I have chosen this project...because I have never been in such a faraway place, because of the landscape of the area which is amazing and, besides, because I am interested in learning new things about eco-buildings. I learned during the Nidri project... more things about how to work with natural materials in building houses, how to install photovoltaic panels, how to cooperate with different people from different countries.

Sustainable development is MAKING BALANCE WITH NATURE

My primordial question: Can I stay at Nidri forever?

I am Katarza from Poland



I am Janis from Latvia



I am Adrian and I come from Spain (Malaga)

I am...a gardener but in September I will also start studying in order to get specialized in landscaping.

I choose this project... because in the future I wish to make myself an eco-home.

During the project...I learned how to talk in English and a bit in Russian and how to make a mix necessary for building an eco-house.

Sustainable development in 3 words is.....ECOLOGIST, ENVIRONMENT, ECO-HOME

The world would be a better place if... everybody changed to the better.

I am Krisztina from Romania

Before I came here... I was working in a pub.

I have chosen this project because... I like to learn new things like building an eco-house, because being a volunteer was always a childhood dream for me and because I wanted to meet new people, new cultures, new languages.

Sustainable development in 3 words is... protecting, nature, future. The world would be a better place if... people looked after each other.

My primordial question: what does sustainable development mean to you?

I... Graduated High school in 2012 and decided to take one year off before going to the University and studying Slavic studies, Serbian/Croatian. I choose this project...because I am in love with the Balkans and want to visit all the countries and cultures there and because I wanted to meet new people.

During the project I learned... how to work within a team, how to solve problems in cooperation with others and how to build an eco-home. I also learned how to cook (mostly due to my Italian roommates).

Sustainable development in 3 words is ...CARE ABOUT EARTH

The world would be a better place if...everyone could find their own place.

I am... *Alicja* from Poland



My name is... *Sona* from Armenia

I work...simultaneously at two organizations: Gyumri „Youth Initiative Centre” NGO as a Cultural Project Manager and „Armenian Caritas” BNGO as a Volunteer Coordinator.

I chose this project...because these recent years I want to experience myself in an EVS project, and this short-term EVS was a good opportunity to do that.

During this project...my attitude changed towards the word “eco” from the neutral into positive; I acquired personal learning in terms of eco-building construction and solar panel system and I discovered more about the hidden heaven of Greece. Sustainable development is...Development through loving nature.

The world would be a better place if...there were no time and space limits!

Primordial question: What is the level of awareness of locals about sustainable development?

I study...Environmental Sciences and I work in a restaurant like waitress and in a shop like salesperson.

I have chosen is project...because I love nature and I want to prepare my thesis about eco architecture.

Now I know how...I can make a wall from clay, straw and sand, but it's a hard work.. ; I learned more info about solar systems too.

Sustainable development in 3 words: FUTURE, HEALTHY, LOVE

The world would be a better place if...all the people will be more interested in the earth and the life of our-selves because sometimes we forget that we are linked with nature!

Primordial question: Am I ready to change my life for a new, more natural way of living?

My name is... *Marta* and I'm from Italy



I am *Todor* from Bulgaria

I am...an engineer and Environmental biotechnologist.

At the moment I'm working in the field of Permaculture and Sustainable way of living.

I chose this project...because I wanted to expand my knowledge in eco-building.

During the project so far I've learned...more than I had ever imagined I could in such a short time. If I have to limit myself in three things, these would be: getting along with different personalities, solving problems in a civilized way (through communication and discussions), knowing myself better, so I can be more valuable for the others.

Sustainable development in 3 words is... OBSERVE, ANALYZE, SYNTHESIZE

The world would be a better place if..... we worked together!

I have a primordial question: How was the Universe created, by whom and why?



I am Gurgen... from Armenia

I am working...in two positions at the same time: At Gyumri "Youth Initiative Centre" NGO, I am "EVS Sending & Youth Mobility" Coordinator and person in Charge of „Cross-Border Dialogue" activity direction and at "Armenian Caritas" BNGO. I am also youth project manager in charge of two centres for youth under pre-carious circumstances.

I have chosen this project...because I have been thinking of doing an EVS for quite some time; since 2013 was the last year for „Youth in Action" and nobody knows what will happen in 2014, I decided to use the chance to get involved in EVS myself.

The project at Nidri was a good opportunity for...learning things about eco-building construction which was completely a new field for me and I believe EVS is a chance to experiment yourself in something you never tried before. It was a short-term project which meant I could do it for my vacation and there is a sustainable partnership between YIC NGO and Solidarity Tracks that we managed to consolidate during this project.

Sustainable development in 3 words...is PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE WITH ENVIRONMENT.

The world would be a better place if...things would depend only on dreams beyond money.

Primordial question....What is most typical of the youth on the Ionian Islands?

I am working...as an attaché at the Ministry of foreign affairs and I also teach Greek and English.

I chose this project... because of the topic and the place, because I know Greek and I also knew that it might help me in my future.

Sustainable development in 3 words is. ..RATIONALITY, EFFICIENCY, CARE

The world would be a better place if... we lived without wars and enemies.

I am Emil from Bulgaria



My name is...Volodymyr and I am from Ukraine

I study...at the National University of Bio resources and Environmental Sciences in Ukraine, at the Faculty of "Plant protection".

I chose this project...because in the future I want to build a similar home, based on the experience that I've gained in this project.

At Nidri I learned...how to properly plan and situate the eco-house depending on the surrounding, how to mix in a proper way the ingredients for the construction of walls and to practice building in general, how to install windows, doors and shelves in the construction of walls.

Sustainable development in 3 words is....S T A B I L I T Y, EFFICIENCY, CLEANNESS

The world would be a better place if...we used the knowledge we acquired during this project to create our houses in a way that doesn't harm the environment: houses that are self-sufficient and make for a perfect place for a happy life.

I am working as a... tutor of English and studying architecture in the Faculty for 3 years.

I chose this project because.... it is a perfect chance for me to learn more about earthen buildings.

As an architect I need to study different techniques but also to put them into practice in order to see the process from inside, to go through the whole process and learn every detail. Eco-architecture has interested me for quite some time and it's something I would like to take up in the future. That is exactly why I have chosen this project for my EVS.

Sustainable development in 3 words is...THINK ABOUT NATURE

The world would be a better place if...people stopped being selfish and cared more about what surrounds them.

My primordial question....What is the awareness of the population of the world about the sustainable development?

I am Polina from Ukraine



I am studying...Master Degree in Tourism Economy.

I have chosen this project because.....I need to improve my knowledge on sustainable development and because I think it would be very useful for my future job.

During this project I learned... the basics of know-how on many topics such as eco-buildings, methods and tools of building and also team work.

Sustainable development in 3 words is... NEW GENERATION, ENVIRONMENT, SOLIDARITY

The world would be a better place if...everyone would be more responsible for their own actions.

My primordial question is...How can young people collaborate with public institutions in undertaking projects to promote sustainable development?

I am Anna from Italy



I am Sergey from Armenia

I am working... ..as an electrician in my home country.

I chose this project because...it was a good opportunity for me to study English and learn more about solar panel technology.

This project also gave me the possibility to learn...how to build an eco-house with natural local materials and, at that, how to communicate with people from other countries.

Sustainable development in 3 words is...TAKE CARE OF NATURE

The world would be a better place if people would...care more about nature.

My primordial question is...Can I come here again?

The Basics of Permaculture

2. Why Permaculture?

1. What is Permaculture?

'Permaculture' comes from the words 'permanent' and 'agriculture'. The term was invented by two Australians: Bill Mollison (known as the father of Permaculture) and David Holmgren back in the mid-1970's.

There are many definitions of Permaculture and it is not possible to give just one that can be followed blindly forever. The reason for this is because, as everything in life, Permaculture is evolving science, which is not fixed and static, but it's being updated all the time, with the raising of the human knowledge, awareness and understanding of Nature.

Here I'll point out just one of the many definitions that can be found from the different authors: 'Per-maculture is a branch of ecological design, ecological engineering, and environmental design which develops sustainable architecture and self-maintained agricultural systems modeled from natural ecosystems. The aim of Permaculture is to help creating consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature, while yielding an abundance of food, fiber and energy for provision of local needs. People, their buildings and the ways in which they organize themselves are central to Permaculture [1,2,3,6].

In my opinion, Permaculture is a very broad subject and at the same time it offers simple and practical solutions to a wide variety of problems, that we meet not only in agriculture, but in our lives in general. Permaculture teaches us how we can design and organize our landscape, buildings and even our society in a way that is in harmony with our environment. One of the basics of Permaculture is the principle that it is much better to work with Nature, not against it. But in order to do that, first we have to develop one of the most important qualities – the ability to observe and understand.

I could try to be positive and not mention the problems our modern society encounters nowadays, but I wouldn't be realistic, but rather idealistic, if I said that we are following a sustainable way of development. We all know about the human impact on Nature by consuming more than we can afford – it's not that we just don't have the money to buy it, but because we just don't have the resources and the materials to produce it; by not recycling, but buying and throwing valuable material, which can be reused many times; by disconnecting with the Nature and forgetting how important it is to us to be balanced and harmonious physically and mentally.



Work with the **NATURE** not against it





Why Permaculture? Because it offers maybe a solution to our current problems. It may not be a panacea for everything, but does anybody believe there is such thing as 'ultimate solution'? We've tried many things and we are still trying to fix our falling apart society and environment with makeshift and temporary solutions, while it is obvious to me and to more and more people now, that we need a new way of thinking, a new Paradigm. I think we can find it in Permaculture, even though not only there.

The principles and the philosophy of Permaculture arise from the work of many people, of which quite well-known are Bill Mollison, David Holmgren, the Japanese farmer and philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka (author of the book 'One Straw Revolution'), the Austrian farmer Sepp Holzer and many others. What is interesting about all these people and their experience is that they all have spent many years, decades, not trying to achieve great success, but just observing, analyzing and then synthesizing the laws that govern Nature. Quite the opposite approach of the modern science, which breaks down everything, examines in great detail each component of the system, but fails to 'see the big picture'.

Permaculture tries to see the links between everything, so to be able to truly understand why this or that is happening, on the contrary, this is the so-called 'Holistic approach' or 'Holism' – the opposite of the 'Re-reductionism' [4].

3. The Principles and Ethics of Permaculture

Even though the name of Permaculture comes from "Permanent agriculture", the real reason for this science to emerge is to try to harmonize our existence on the planet with the laws of Nature, which we are inseparable from, no matter how hard we try to convince ourselves otherwise.

Put in more practical words, this means application of Permaculture principles to the seven domains necessary to sustain humanity in the future.

These principles are:

- Land and nature stewardship (bio-intensive gardening; wild harvesting; organic and biodynamic agriculture; forest gardening; seed saving; water harvesting and re-use);
- Built environment (natural building materials; owner-building; passive solar design; charcoal and wood gasification);
- Tools & technology (hand tools; bicycle transport; re-use/recycle);
- Culture & education (home and Steiner education; reading landscapes; art and music);
- Health & spiritual well-being (home birth/breastfeeding; preventative health; holistic medicine; yoga and other body/mind/spirit disciplines);
- Finances & economics (Fair Trade Products; WWOOFing ; Community Supported Agriculture);
- Land tenure & community (Eco-villages/co-housing; Co-operatives; native title; Holistic Rangeland Management; Keyline water harvesting).

Permaculture includes a broad variety of domains, but above all, the very foundation of this science is based on the 'Ethics of Permaculture', whose norms are the following:

- Care for the earth (husband soil, forests and water);
- Care for people (look after self, kin and community);
- Fair share (set limits to consumption and reproduction, and redistribute surplus) [1].

These are distilled from research into community ethics, as adopted by older religious cultures and modern cooperative groups. The third norm, and even the second, can be seen as derived from the first.

The ethics has been taught and used as simple and relatively unquestioned ethical foundations of Per-maculture design. They can be seen as common to all traditional cultures that have connected people to land and nature throughout history, with the notable exception of modern industrial societies.

Stepping on this solid basis, we can achieve much in harmonizing our way of living with our environment without sacrificing too much of our lifestyle. Yet, we still have a very long way to go, until we reach the point where we can live a sustainable life, without compromising our future as a species. We need to develop the technology which will give us environmental-friendly energy, i.e. renewable energy.

We need to understand how important local, biological food is, grown up as it is with care, without the use of chemistry which can harm us or the environment.



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Care for the Earth Care for the People Fair Share

- The use of chemistry, as pesticides and herbicides, destroys the natural balance and begets potential threat to our health;

- The tendency of growing one culture on a large-scale (monoculture fields) creates attractive conditions for pests, which develop in enormous numbers;

- Tillage (especially the deep one) totally destroys the structure of the soil: turns everything upside-down, thus killing the organisms living in it;

- Lack of quality. Nowadays we can find more and more tempting food, but most of it is either tasteless, or produced and treated only through the perspective of the business, with no care for the well-being of the society whatsoever;

- Use of artificial fertilizers. It may seem like a very clever idea, but unfortunately this is not the truth. Artificial fertilizers are like a drug to the plants. If we use more and more such fertilizers we'll make our plants drug-addicts! What we achieve by the synthetic chemicals is to boost the growth and the yield of the crops, but in the long term we destroy the environment and create complete dependant plants with ever rising need of care and efforts to sustain.

Permaculture approach is quite different from the conventional Agriculture. For example:

- Instead of monoculture, Permaculture suggests diversity for a stable system. The more links between the elements in the system, the less the possibility for total failure.

- Creating diversity helps with the regulation of the so-called 'pests'. The natural enemies of the pests in our garden will take care of the job that we usually do with the chemicals.

- In Permaculture there isn't such thing as 'weeds' – there are just accompanying plants. If we wisely grow our plants we won't have problems with 'weeds', so we won't need any herbicides;

- The use of manure is the most natural way to create fertility. Manure, unlike artificial fertilizers, doesn't boost the growth of the crops in an unnatural way. This is what Nature has been doing for millions of years.

- In the first steps of designing a new place according to the principles of Permaculture, tilling is not totally rejected. Often when we are designing a place we may use machines to dig and excavate. But this is only in the beginning. In the long run tillage is not recommended at all. If we further expand our understanding of how soil organisms live and work, we'll inevitably get to the conclusion, that tillage is not only unnecessary, but it causes serious problems. Here I'll mention only the soil erosion, due to the disruption of the soil structure. The roots of the plants and especially the 'weeds' act as a framework that prevents the valuable nutrients and minerals to be washed out by the rain.



5. Expand our horizons – find out more about Permaculture and START practicing It.

We live in a time in which we can reach almost any information at the bating of an eye. It's really not hard to find more about Permaculture if you are really interested.

Search on the Internet with a key word 'Permaculture', for example, and you'll find many interesting results. You can also go in the closest bookshop and ask for books related with 'Permaculture'.

Here I can share with you my experience so far, hoping it might help you. So, a year ago I went to a Permaculture course in Bulgaria about 'Forest Gardening' and I learned so many things, that I decided to go further in this area. I got really interested in composting, so I read a lot and started applying small-scale composting. In a few months I had already taken the whole garden of my parents and I was composting almost everywhere. I wrote a small handbook about composting in the Bulgarian language. Then I decided to try vermin composting (composting with worms), so I bought some Californian Red Worms – they are now myriads in my garden, and are working so hard, producing the best bio-humus known to man. So that's up to now! What's next – I don't really know yet, but I hope to go further in this direction because I think it's very important and enjoy it so much!

The books I have read and I can recommend are:

- 'The Permaculture Home Garden' by Linda Woodrow - very helpful book to the starters, with a lot of practical ideas.

- 'Introduction to Permaculture' and 'Permaculture Two' by Bill Mollison – two serious books worth reading, with a lot of structured scientific-like approach.

- Sepp Holzer – very good and understandable book with a lot of practical examples

- 'The One Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming' by the Japanese Masanobu Fukuoka – a must-read book!!! With his minimalistic approach to land-farming, Mr. Fukuoka has established a new (or better said 'old, but forgotten') understanding of how Nature works. His system is so intuitive and simple – as any genius idea!

If you'd like to contact me and share your experience or ask any question about Permaculture, you can: send me an email:

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or you can find me on facebook:

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by Todor Tashev

Building the Eco-House at Nidri – Volunteer Report

1. Introduction

In May - June 2013 I was fortunate to participate in the project of building a natural home at Nidri (Lefkas) Greece. It should be noted that in 2012 the project was already started, the foundation, wooden carcass and roof were already installed and the process of building walls has already started.

The principle of an eco-building is to use only natural materials and to provide communications (heating system, water, electricity supply) independent from the central network. Natural or earthen building is one that only requires materials extracted directly from natural sources and delivered directly to the building site, without prior factory processing. In such building processes only local materials are used, the radius of affordability should not exceed 30 km.



2. Brief description of the building and the purpose of the project.

The area of this building is not large, it consists of 2 bedrooms and a bathroom. The building is circular in plan. The idea of constructing the building is to spread the principle of environmental and natural construction. It's the second year, that young volunteers come to Nidri to learn more about eco-construction though practicing it and to spread this technique in their counties.

So, in this year, 16 volunteers from 7 countries (Ukraine, Latvia, Armenia, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania), have come to Nidri to continue the already started in 2012 construction of a natural home.

3. The main elements of the building.

The main structural elements of the building are: Foundation; Wooden frame the main function of which is to carry the roof; Roof and Walls.

a) Foundation:

Before building the foundation, the soil was examined in order to define its depth. Then the vegetation layer of the soil was removed.

The foundation consists of big stones, in this case joined together with cement, so the stones are the - bearing elements, cement – is the joining matter. The house on which we have been working is experimental, that is why the architect has decided to use cement, but the experts claim that the earthen construction had better be made with clay or lime as associating material.

The diameter of the stones used for the foundation is 30-40 cm. The foundation ends at the top mark of the soil, then the stamp wall should be constructed. It can consist of stones and clay, lime or cement or bricks or cement blocks, as long as the material has to be water resistant, as the main function of a stamp wall is to protect the wall from damage by water. The height of a stamp wall is 40cm-1m depending on the humidity of the region where the construction takes place. The foundation should be 10 cm wider than the stamp wall.

b) The wooden frame.

After the stamp wall has been, the constructed installation of the wooden frame begins from the central column, which as the house is round in plan, is right in the middle.

Then 8 more columns are being installed on the circumference of the plan.

In this house
the depth of the
foundation was 1 m
Width of foundation
was 60 cm
Width was 50 cm

c) Roof

The roof is heat-isolated with straw and covered with ceramic tiles. This part of the building was carried out by the first group of volunteers in 2012.

d) Walls

In 2013 the EVS Volunteers were directly engaged in the erection of walls.



For the construction of the walls the clay - sand - straw technique was chosen as it is the most appropriate to the climatic region.

To prepare the mix (material) from which the walls are made of, the clay extracted from the mountains nearby was transported to the building site. We needed to moisten that clay, turn it to the swampy state, then filter from the large stones. For the filtration of clay we used a grid with small cavities.

While one half of the team was still mixing clay with water, the other was already filtering the ready clay.

Subsequent to the filtration process, the preparation of the mix for the walls was started. The mix consist of: clay, sand, straw.

The proportions of the mix is 2 parts sand - 1 part clay. And so in fact these are the stone walls, because basically they consist of shallow rocks, with clay acting as joining matter. The straw in this technique is used as reinforcement, as it creates a strong net that keeps the mix from falling apart.

Preparation of the mix:

1. Put plastic canvas.
2. Two buckets of sand are poured on it.
3. A small hole is made in a hill of sand.
4. One bucket of filtered clay is poured into a hole.
6. 2 people mix these materials barefoot or in special shoes until you see no sand (every piece of sand should be covered with clay). It usually takes 10-20 minutes.
7. When sand and clay are well mixed - the straw begins to be added (straw should be long enough to ensure a good reinforcement). The straw is added until the mixture avoids falling apart (you can check this as follows: roll the mix and try to take a part, if it is hard to take out a part of mix and you feel like the reinforcement is strong enough to hold the mix together, it means the mix is ready and can be applied).



When the mix is ready it is divided into 4 pieces, as it is easier to build walls of smaller pieces.

In the first part of the project in 2012, volunteers built a wall about 50 inches around the outline (or: circumference) of the house, and the group of volunteers this year, continued to build walls.



Technology of building walls

The previous layer of the wall is moistened with water. Ready mix is put on the surface of the previous layer, strongly pressed and pierced with the sticks 2-5 cm in diameter to let all the air out and help to compact the material. It is important to maintain the shape of the wall, so the builder pierces the material with one hand (applying the whole body weight) and smoothes the material using the other hand. Work is required on both sides of the wall, 2 persons per one part of the wall, because otherwise it is difficult to sustain the shape of the wall, not following what is happening on the opposite side of the wall. The beauty of this method lies also in the fact that the clay is a very obedient material. Even if the time has already passed and the layer has hardened, all you need to do to fix errors is to moisten it.

Only 25 cm in height of each wall can be built per day, as the layer has to dry out before the next one can be put. In particularly hot days, 2 layers (50 cm) can be raised.

Door installation

When erecting walls in doorways, special pieces of wood must be installed, to which the door will be fixed. There must also be pieces of wood installed into walls in places where mirrors, pictures or hangers will be placed, otherwise you can not fix anything to a clay wall.

The shelves are installed the same way.

When the wall is completely dry we can start trimming. Initially, this is done by using saws. With vertical movements up and down, we cut off the protruding imperfections.

The wall becomes thinner towards the top (in this case 50 cm base 25 cm top), so by measuring the straightness of the wall for the wood with the right angle we can adjust it to the level.

To fix the holes in the wall earthen plaster is used. There is no exact recipe of an earthen plaster, because its properties are highly dependent on the materials (i.e. clay and sand in this case).



Window installation

Windows are being installed on the pre-agreed project (project in progress). When the walls are raised to a level which a window should be, the area of the wall where the future window will be installed is carefully aligned with the help of brick or piece of wood, then the wooden frame of the bulletin thickness of 1 cm, a width of the wall (in this case 50 cm) is put.

On the vertical sides of the frame there are nails, for the better grip of the material and, also, because drying clay shrinks, so nails prevent the formation of cracks. If a gap appears with horizontal ends of the cavity, it is usually filled with the paper or straw, then cover with earthen plaster (we will talk about it later). Then with the help of a level, we will check if the installation of window is correct. Once the house is finished, the carpenter sets in these cavities windows.



4. Conclusion or final assumptions on this project

I feel really honored I've taken part in this project. It was unbelievably beneficial for me as a young architect and a person very interested in sustainable lifestyle. I've learned a lot about earthen construction techniques, the installation of solar panels and the organization of a sustainable garden. Apart from a professional benefit, I have had a really great time at Nidri, met a lot of brilliant people and had in fact a life-changing experience. I think more young people have to consider taking part in EVS projects and join us.

by Polina Sevostyanova

Presenting the Results of our Work and Discovering the beauty of the island

After weeks of hard work on the 7th of June, the Nidri Volunteers got the chance to present the results of their teamwork to the Greeks. They organized an open air event for the community of the island in order to make their activity more visible for a large number of people. The event consisted of two workshops, one about making the mix for building an eco-house and the presentation to the audience of the house the volunteers have been building and the second about the ecological garden they have started near the house and the importance of the sustainable growing and consuming of products. Apart from the workshops, the volunteers also organized a international culinary stand where they presented and offered for tasting traditional food and beverages from their countries.

The event on the 7th of June had two different targets in terms of public. In the morning the volunteers explained to around 100 children from the schools at Nidri and Lefkada the importance of the sustainable development and of building a house entirely made of natural materials that they can find in their region and also the importance of growing in a sustainable way your own fruits and vegetables and of consuming them fresh. The children also had the chance to mix by themselves the clay with the sand and the sawdust in order to build miniature eco-houses. Mr Scare Crow was one of the main attractions of the day our little friends!

by Cosmina Bajan



Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make, not only our own happiness, but that of the world at large. (Mahatma Ghandi)



In the evening, the young people and adults from the island were invited to enjoy together with the volun-teers the results of the project and to have a dialogue on the importance of sustain-able development for the development of future eco-friendly communities.

For the local community the common work of volunteers coming from different cultures, tradi-tions and backgrounds should clarify a little bit more the importance of tolerance and solidarity. The eco-house is the product of these two char-acteristics united together with a lot of hard work but also nice moments and new revealing experi-ences. During the development of the project and mostly after finishing the work and sucessfully managing the event on the 7th of June, the brave volunteers at Nidri made also time to have fun and explore the amazing island of Lefkada that hosted them for 1 month and a half.

They took a trip by boat to see the beautiful beaches of the island as well as the sorrounding islands like Ithaca, Kefalonia and Meganisi. They went motorbiking to see the heart of the island, they explored the small but so cosy town of Nidri and of course Lefkada City.





7th of June 2013, Nidri, Lefkada Children's Workshop



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