

▶▶ Volunteers

Volunteerism with the Roma community entails a deep analysis of the consequences of the Roma associative movement and its development and the necessary transition from solidarity rooted in ethnic group to solidarity based on citizenship.

In this framework the FSG incorporates volunteers into the organisation aware that they, over and above any limitations or difficulties, have much to contribute both in terms of our mission and identity.

In this connection we feel that volunteers bring new dimensions to the Foundation or enhance already existing ones such as:

- ▶ Focus on solidarity and justice as fundamental values of the FSG.

- ▶ Awareness that the “Roma issue” is everyone’s issue.
- ▶ The opportunity to have a “citizenship school” for Roma and non-Roma.
- ▶ The creation and/or enlargement of new areas of social participation taking advantage of the creative and less “rigid” dimension offered by volunteers.
- ▶ The more genuine contribution as an NGO to social construction and transformation.

For all of these reasons, the FSG Volunteer Programme is rooted in the importance of creating a social fabric to boost our implementation and recognition in the Roma community and the society at large although the main focus of our plan continues to be supporting

and continuing forward with our volunteers in order to raise the human component of our services.

2008 has been an important year for FSG volunteers. The implementation of the Volunteer Plan at the Foundation is reflected in the number of volunteers which rose from 276 in 2007 to the present figure of 334.

As for the target of our volunteer initiatives, we must also stress the importance of Roma volunteers; in other



THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF ASTURIAS AT THE FOUNDATION’S BOOTH DURING THE XI NATIONAL VOLUNTEER’S CONGRESS HELD IN MERIDA.



PARTICIPANTS AT THE VIII NATIONAL VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE: “ENTRE TODOS. LA PARTICIPACIÓN DEL VOLUNTARIADO” HELD IN GIJÓN (ASTURIAS).

words, *volunteerism on the part of the Roma population itself* as an exercise in citizenship participation and social mainstreaming. Special mention should be made of the incorporation of Roma volunteers accounting for over 25% of the total number of people volunteering at the FSG.

Capacity-building and participation are values of our Foundation as are involving Roma in their promotion and encouraging the development of the group itself from a cultural and identity perspective as well as collective promotion and participation in the territories where they live along with the rest of the population.

Capacity-building and training of volunteers was one of the objectives in 2008.

In Gijón we organised the VIII National Volunteers Conference: “Entre todos. La Participación del Voluntariado” on 28-29 November 2008. A total of 57 participants took part in the conference including speakers, conference leaders and volunteers from Extremadura, Galicia, Asturias, Castile-Leon, Madrid, Murcia, Andalusia and the Basque

Country. There were more Roma participants this year than in others.

The *Guía de Formación del Voluntariado en la Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (Fundación Secretariado Gitano Volunteer Training Handbook) was presented at this conference. This handbook, for the preliminary training of FSG volunteers, is the first shared tool that the FSG has put together to provide initial volunteer training. It targets trainers and technicians working on the initial training

module forming part of the FSG volunteer training pathway.

Its main objective is to provide FSG professionals with a complete methodological approach for the initial training of volunteers with a view to facilitating access and enhancing quality. The handbook provides a series of common criteria whereby to implement an initial training module for volunteers.

To put things into perspective, in addition to this initial training (an introductory look at the FSG and Roma people), the FSG volunteer

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training pathway is comprised of specific training (specifically focused on the task or post) followed by permanent ongoing training (another dimension of accompaniment in the action-reflection-action process addressing continuous improvement).

We use an active and participatory methodology for ongoing training based on reflection following action (learning from what we do), giving meaning to what we do and supervising what has been done from the point of view of results but, especially, from the viewpoint of people and their processes. Debate and work fora are likewise organised. This makes the methodology one of accompaniment and supervision of volunteer initiatives.

Accompaniment of volunteers is done through meetings where tasks and duties performed are monitored and the degree of satisfaction and involvement in the organisation and the specific project and its aims are supervised.

We have chosen a methodology based on cooperative learning because this favours a change of attitude on the part of volunteers in terms of teamwork and organisation. It is useful to achieve multiple objectives and not

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only those related with the specific content of the activity.

In 2008 we also took part in the XI National Volunteer Congress held in Merida where the FSG set up a stand from which it gave out documentation on volunteerism and activities undertaken by the FSG.

At the end of 2008 a specific volunteer forum was created to enhance communication among volunteers. This tool will help improve communication between the organisation’s volunteers and is a new shared space, alongside the volunteer’s Web page, where people can voluntarily collaborate with the FSG and share their experiences, documents, etc.

Not complacent with the progress made in 2008, new challenges have been set for 2009 with the ongoing goal of enhancing and improving our recognition of volunteers who, with their time and hard work, contribute to jointly achieving the FSG’s mission which is the advancement of the Roma community from the perspective of respect and support for its identity.



SPEAKERS AT THE VIII NATIONAL VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE