

Brussels, 30 September 2009

## Volunteering: Ubuntu Winners have been announced

***The Winners of the Ubuntu International Voluntary Service Award 2009 - an award for quality in youth voluntary service - have been announced and awarded prizes to increase their capacity to run quality voluntary service projects, at the official Ubuntu Awards ceremony which took place today at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa.***

Based on the African concept that human beings are linked to each other and depend on each other, the Ubuntu International Voluntary Service Award 2009 is run by a partnership of 10 organisations from Africa and Europe and it is supported by the European Commission under **the 'Youth in Action' programme**. The consortium, led by the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) in Brussels and Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA), Johannesburg, brings together NGOs active and engaged in voluntary service both in Africa and Europe.

The heart of the Ubuntu project is cooperation and reciprocity, and an understanding of the need for strong and equal cooperation between people and organisations from Africa and Europe to tackle developmental issues. The Ubuntu Award has been a means of stressing the role that international youth voluntary service plays in building solidarity and increasing cooperation between people and civil society organisations in the 'north' and 'south'.

The results of the judging process were announced today, and the winners are as follows:

- Durbanville Children's Home – South Africa;
- African information Movement (AIM.) – Ghana;
- Sports and Youth – Togo;
- Taita Foundation – Kenya (Special Prize for Sustainability).

All four winners demonstrated a commitment to youth voluntary service, good practice in cooperation and reciprocity between organisations in Africa and Europe, and exemplified the principles contained within the concept of Ubuntu. Winning these awards will be an additional incentive helping them to increase their capacity to run international youth voluntary service projects.

Ján Figel, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said: *"I congratulate the winners of the Ubuntu International Voluntary Service Award 2009. They exemplify all that is positive about volunteering: the individual benefits from the experience, the immersion in another society and culture; the recipients of the help offered by the volunteers benefit from their activities; and society benefits from the greater sense of social responsibility and social cohesion that volunteering engenders in those who participate. It further pleases me to see that the next Awards will take place in 2011, which the European Commission has proposed to be declared the European Year of Volunteering."*

Massimiliano Viatore, the President of AVSO, said: *"A piece of your life transferred in a different cultural environment"— this was the first sentence I heard about Cross-Border Voluntary Service. This sentence summarises a world of experience achieved by personal commitment in a worldwide context of cooperation. What you learn and get is what you give and offer: this is the strength of the Voluntary Service.*"

### **Selection process**

The Jurors (five from African countries, and five from European countries), chosen on the basis of their commitment to development issues and voluntary service, analysed and judged the applications for the award on six criteria: Cooperation and Joint Decision Making, Coherence, Sustainability, Impact, Youth Empowerment, Innovation and Originality.

In June, the young jury members met in Brussels, together with the project partners, and evaluated the applications received, and discussed the International Voluntary Service. The event was followed by a conference about "International Voluntary Service as a toll for Development Education", held at the European Economic and Social Committee.

Today's conference in Johannesburg brings together project partners, jury members, winners and other actors active in the voluntary sector in order to champion the contribution of voluntarism in development, in building solidarity and intercultural dialogue.

The Award is projected to take place again in 2011.