

A project of the Universal Peace Federation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 | A NOTE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR

5-24 | PROJECTS IN DATE ORDER

25-26 | RYS FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2008

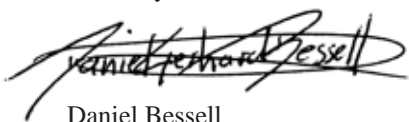
A Note from the International Director

This annual report gives only a glimpse of all the amazing work that RYS has done this year. If you are interested in learning more about the various programs and projects, please take a look at our website at www.rys.net.

Through the work of our dedicated project developers and educators, the RYS social service learning experience was shared with many new people around the world. This year we have given special attention to expand our project developer and “Train the Trainers” seminars aiming at educating more people in the RYS methodology. Through exciting new partnerships, RYS has been able to spread its unique approach to other organizations and programs and, by working closely together with partners, RYS was also able to reduce project expenses and increase quantity.

Thanks to our staff for their continuous efforts, our committed project developers for their initiative, our advisory council for their input and dedication, and the Universal Peace Federation for their continued spiritual and financial support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Bessell". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'D' and 'B'.

Daniel Bessell

Director RYS International

40 Days of Peace

JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 29 | VARIOUS CITIES, USA

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve” and, on Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day, Service For Peace (SFP) together with sub-grant partners and chapters, including RYS, engaged 70,691 volunteers in 747 projects in 12 cities in “Advancing the Dream for Peaceful Communities.” RYS partnered with SFP in Bridgeport, CT, Chicago, IL, and Miami, FL.

The 40 Days of Peace initiative brought together community organizations, corporations, block watches, schools, neighborhood associations, faith based institutions and law enforcement agencies to promote greater communication and cooperation among neighbors with the goal of achieving a sustainable reduction in violence of our communities.

Maintaining Peace is a Shared Responsibility

FEB. 8 | AUSTRALIA

On February 8, 2008, Fazida Razak, a member of the RYS Global Management Team (GMT) was invited to address 900 students between the ages of 12 to 17 at St. John 23rd School, Western Australia, to speak about her work with the Religious Youth Service and the Interreligious Peace Sports Festival. About 100 teachers were also present for the talk.

In sharing her experience with RYS, Fazida said that her work is sometimes deemed important only in conflict areas. She said that peace work is also urgent in time of peace in countries such as Australia because peace cannot be taken for granted. She said that maintaining peace is a shared responsibility.

With more than 200 nationalities, cultures and races, Australia's diversity is a unique blessing and a challenge.

“I Can Change”

FULL PROJECT
MARCH 1-7 | INDIA

The RYS India 2008 project, “I Can Change,” targeted renovation to a hostel, which houses young underprivileged girls. The building, which is more than 100 years old, was in bad condition. The 30 enthusiastic participants did a great job renovating the building, giving it a much needed face lift. Volunteers cleaned the premises, scraping the old paint off the walls, mixing concrete used to inject into the structural cracks and re-enforcing the walls with iron rods. The work was telecasted by Jaya TV, one of the most prominent television channels in Chennai. The greatest reward for RYS participants was to see the joyous smiles of the little girls' faces when seeing their home given a new look.

Each day started with a morning meditation to rejuvenate the mind and the body. Educational workshops were held in the afternoons and in the evenings. Various subjects were addressed, including family values as related to religious standards, interactive sessions, personality analysis, personal development, and much more.

An RYS participant confirmed the success of the project goal saying, “I am so excited here. I never had such a wonderful experience ever in my life; I have changed. I am sure that RYS will go forward making a big difference in youths and society.”



A Unique Education

MARCH 16-19 | NETHERLANDS

From March 16th thru 19th, Youth Service Initiative (YSI) and some additional youth interested in service learning attended the Train the Trainers program held in the Netherlands. This training was designed specifically for the participants of the YSI but also open to other interested youth. The training workshop was held at a local University.

Participants were introduced to the service learning education of the Religious Youth Service including the methodology and were given the opportunity to practice-teach portions of the education. The youth were intellectually and actively involved in the education. Many expressed their appreciation for this unique education.

Piano Keys

FULL PROJECT

MARCH 21 - APRIL 3 | ELUBO, GHANA

It was indeed a spectacular event to see participants from Europe and America dancing together to the tune of African soup aced drums at the conclusion of a two-week service project in Elubo, Ghana. Within a very short time RYS volunteers were able to learn and sing local songs including the traditional national anthem in the vernacular—"Yen Ara Ya Asase Ni". The amalgamation of black and white voices served as a vocal reminder of the words of one of Ghana's native scholars, Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, who compared the human race to the keys of a piano. For true harmony to exist, one must play both the black and white keys of the piano. For peaceful coexistence, the harmony of the white and the black peoples can be a source of hope and reassurance to humankind.

For 14 days, participants joined together with many residents of the local community, men and women, young and old, trooping to the project site each day. They cooperated to build an adequate canteen for the children at the local school. Volunteers came from Ghana, Togo, America, Sweden, Ireland, Britain, and Germany. This year’s project theme was “Quality Education and Good Health as tools for Socioeconomic Development of a Nation.”

Before the commencement of the project, participants took time off to cruise in canoes on River Tano. That was the first time a majority of the participants ever sat in an open canoe. The serene atmosphere and the chirping of crickets and birds brought everyone in close contact with nature. It was indeed an exciting and memorable experience. The speakers and visitations were educational and fruitful, and the friendships and cultural exchange unforgettable.

A Next-Gen Encounter

MARCH 30 - APRIL 17 | INDIA

RYS India made possible the Next Generation Academy’s (NGA) successful activities in South India. Three NGA youth could make lasting connections with the people and culture, as well as making an impact on the youth through their volunteer efforts.

With the great help of RYS India, programs consisting of interaction and cultural experiences, as well as Character and HIV/Education, were made available to Indian students. The three NGA youth leaders traveled to numerous schools, offering songs and skits as part of their Character and Leadership program.

Put Your “PEACE” in...

APRIL 22 | MONTCLAIR, NJ, USA

On April 22nd while most of America joined in celebrating “Earth Day,” a select few at Montclair State University took part in an RYS project in conjunction with Service for Peace’s “Peace on Earth Day” celebration, which was highlighted by the unveiling of their Mosaic Peace Bench. The bench was a collaborative design by MSU students, who emphasized the theme of the unity of heaven and earth on two separate benches surrounding MSU’s peace tree. Peace quotes were contributed by several of the cultural and religious organizations on campus, and were placed around the base of the tree. The hope was to create a space where students could come and take time out to rejuvenate and refocus themselves in a busy campus environment by meditating on the quotes.

An estimated 150+ individuals stopped by to make their contributions to the mosaic bench design by putting a “peace” in, and also to admire, comment and appreciate the efforts being made toward creating a monument of peace.

At the close of the event, representative organizations offered prayers together. As part of the closing ceremony, the participants in attendance invited passersby to contribute to the framing of the 10 peace quotes with mosaic.

“...A Moving and
Unforgettable
Experience...”

APRIL 23-27 | SOUTH JAKARTA, INDONESIA

RYS Indonesia, in conjunction with Service For Peace (Philippines), held the first annual international RYS project in Lebak Bulus,

an industrial/residential area in south Jakarta. This was focused on activities within the Merah Putih School—a school where students come from unfortunate families living under marginal conditions, some who were even living within the areas designated as the city dump. Altogether 57 participants gathered. Though this project was only four days long, it included all the elements of the longer projects—educational orientation, service, religious visits and reflection.

The students of Merah Putih appeared to be timid initially. But the education exercises began to create a bond among the participants. The students of Merah Putih slowly



peeled their facade and showed their energetic and friendly personalities. The central service component of this RYS project was the construction of a multifunctional religious site building. The participants also visited Buddhist, Confucian and Muslim religious sites. Finally, their reflections were written in Pendopo, where all closed their day together as a moving and unforgettable experience.

Interfaith Youth Celebrate Global Youth Service Day

APRIL 26 | BRISTOL, ENGLAND

Thirty youth and community activists from various backgrounds gathered in Bristol on a bright Saturday morning to celebrate Global Youth Service Day. This one-day service project was organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Bristol in conjunction with the Religious Youth Service (RYS).

The day included education, banner making, Origami creation and a short reflection on the day's activities. An Awards Ceremony brought this lovely day to a close. All 25 children received a Certificate of Appreciation from the RYS and four of them also received Youth Ambassador for Peace certificates.

Eat What We Grow... Grow What We Eat...

MAY 23 | PORTLAND, JAMAICA

RYS joined hundreds of students and community members in Jamaica to celebrate the National Labor Day Project, May 23. The group worked tirelessly to plant over 500 vegetable

seedlings and 70 fruit trees, as well as to erect a greenhouse shed at the Buff Bay High School in Portland. Altogether 35,000 plants and 200,000 seeds were distributed to schools and citizens of different communities island-wide as part of the Labor Day projects.

The Portland parish manager for the Rural Agricultural Development Agency (RADA) explained that farmers would be able to purchase plants from the nursery at Buff Bay High School.

The plant nursery is an income-generating project for the school and will be important to farmers even outside the local parish as a seedling production and supply center for many new plants. Students and citizens planted sweet peppers, callaloo and tomatoes, and prepared the ground for the planting of pineapples and pak choi.

Integration into a Mayan Community

FULL PROJECT

JULY 7-17 | ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

This cooperative effort in Guatemala, mobilizing 27 young people including organizing staff, provided rich opportunities for young leaders to further develop skills critical for peacemaking and reconciliation. Project participants hailed from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Cuba, USA and France.

The group made an initial excursion to Tecpán, Guatemala to visit the old Mayan temples and ceremonial grounds in Iximche, where they learned about the history and culture of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. The trip concluded at the main location for the project in the community of Santiago Atitlan. There, the group was received and welcomed with a cultural performance by the administration and teachers of the private school, Santiaguito.

Service work was offered at two loca-

tions – the Santiaguito school, and at a second school in Chacaya, Escuela de Autogestión Comunitaria. Some light construction work was done, including building a support wall to protect against mudslides, as well as leveling an area where another classroom could be built. Service rendered through this project was extremely valuable and necessary in meeting the needs of this isolated community. They not only embraced the local school children but also the richness of diversity as they became fully integrated into this Mayan community. Participants expressed awareness of the significant contribution they provided. Through “learning by doing,” participants came to appreciate the complexity of their service experience and were eager to transform this single experience into further involvement with the local community as well as to apply it in a broader context to meet the needs of the global community.

“They are All Different but All One”

FULL PROJECT

JULY 7-17 | UTRECHT, NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands RYS was a Peace Park Project carried out on the foundation of a similar project last year, which was done in partnership with the Youth Service Initiative, a service organization encouraging youth leadership. This year’s activities took place in the city of Utrecht, at the Galecop, a community center situated in the Moroccan and Turkish immigrant section of the city. This location was chosen in hopes of expediting the integration of the immigrant culture with the local Dutch culture.

Included in our activities were many opportunities for the youth of the area to interact with our intercultural group. Many local school children visited with their teachers and classes as well as independently after school.



They joined together in the designing and creating of four mosaic benches and a large wall design. One of the designs integrated the Dutch flag with the crescent moon and star, a symbol of Morocco, and the Turkish five-pointed star. At the center of the bench were three figures, a Dutch boy and girl together with a little girl in a long dress and head scarf. “Who is she?” One of the local girls asked. “She is a Muslim girl,” the participant replied. “Oh, I see,” mused the little girl, “they are all different but they are one.”

The project in general provided the participants with opportunities to learn a lot about local Dutch and immigrant cultures through the tasting of food, visitations to many religious sites, learning about their music and dance and just meeting the people.

“Fixabroko”

FULL PROJECT

AUGUST 15-26 | BROKOPONDO, SURINAME

“Years after the Military Revolution the children of Het Centrum, Brokopondo can play again; thank you RYS for choosing Brokopondo.” These were the words of Brokopondo’s Mayor, Verno Pryor.

Twenty-one RYS participants went to the most beautiful district in Suriname, Brokopondo, to do a project named “Fixabroko” (Repair the broken). After clearing 28 years of bush and debris from the war-torn community of Brokopondo, an abandoned playground was discovered. One group cleared a path to a multipurpose court which was also abandoned since the time of the Military Revolution in 1980, which separated Maroons and Native Indians from the rest of Suriname, while the other group, aided by one participant’s father (who became the weedwhacker teacher and the hardest worker) together with the children, helped reclaim the multipurpose court. During this project participants removed, straightened and replaced rusted and ill-shapen bas-



ketball and volleyball posts. The basketball/volleyball court was marked out and painted, the word “Brokopondo” was written in one of the goal circles, and RYS and Suriname logos were also drawn on the court.

When all the holes in the playground were filled, the park equipment was painted in the bright Suriname colors of red, green, yellow and white. Participants, children and community members completed this massive task in six days. The word “Fixabroko” took on special meaning inasmuch as RYS not only repaired an abandoned playground, but played a critical role in helping to heal old war wounds and in inspiring the community.

Reaching out Together for Peace

FULL PROJECT

AUGUST 23-30 | COLUMBO, SRI LANKA

In the city of Colombo, Sri Lanka, in the midst of impoverishment, a large crowd of people of mixed origins and ages gathered for the ceremony to open the RYS Sri Lanka '08 project – the building of a new preschool, the only one of its kind to accommodate Tamil children with other local children.

When the service work began, the enthusiastic group took only a few minutes to demolish the former preschool building before commencing the heavy manual labor involved in laying the foundation for the new school. As the service work continued throughout the week of August 23-30, 2008, the RYS trainers also presented the education program, which was oriented toward teaching leadership skills to the 41 local and foreign participants. These leadership skills are meant to guide the participants in working together beyond all racial, religious and national barriers.

A Muslim undergraduate student from the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, M.H. Yehiya, who was participating in an RYS project

in Sri Lanka for the second time, said, “Although I have participated in many Community Service projects, RYS is totally different. It really builds up the family sense.” As an international family, the participants shared their unique religious observances each morning with the whole group. In addition, the participants shared meals, cleaning, down time, and sightseeing, listening to specialized speakers, visiting religious sights and sweating together as they serviced the needs of the children of Colombo.

A Gift to Newark

AUGUST 30 | NEWARK, NJ, USA

Supporting the United Initiatives for Peace (UIP), Religious Youth Service in partnership with Peace IN, Inc. created a Peace mosaic. This project included inviting the athletes, sports staff and community members attending the UIP sports event to join in creating a mosaic which was designed as a gift to the local St. Peter’s Recreation Center in Newark. The mosaic is meant to be a substantial reflection of the community, conveying a message of peace through cooperation between peoples of diverse races, nationalities and religions.

Housing for Teachers in Amanvi, Ivory Coast

FULL PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 7-14 | AMANVI, IVORY COAST

RYS completed its second 2008 project in Cote d’Ivoire, held in Amanvi in the Eastern region of the country. Participants from the United States, Benin and Cote d’Ivoire gave hope to 70 youths to be able to attend school. As in all underdeveloped countries, especially

in the more remote villages, school facilities are not in good condition.

The education/service program focused on developing personal responsibility as a means to transform communities. The participants were inspired to work with the local youth. Both carried the building materials—wood, sand, and gravel to build a traditional bridge to link Amanvi to a small village. They also carried out a cleanup around the river. It was a proud moment for them to serve together in this way. Eventually, the service effort became focused on building the much needed housing for the teachers.

The participants were greeted by the Government Minister of Economic Infrastructures at his personal residence. By his invitation they had the opportunity to visit some villages and take part in celebrations with the ministers the next day. They learned about the local economics, including the use of fish and animal breeding, and observed the making of blocks used for construction. Before departing, they took a short boat trip on a lake.

RYS is giving hope to communities around the world through its projects and trained young people, who are taking ownership to create a world of peace.

It's Not About Breaking and Blasting, but Building and Growing Together

SEPTEMBER 21 | AGARTALA, INDIA

Christian-Hindu amity marked the International Day of Peace (IDP) in Agartala. Even as reports of recent bomb blasts and Hindu-Christian conflicts continue to pour in from different parts of the country, the Northeast Indian capital town of Agartala witnessed a rare gesture of unity and friendship between

Christians and Hindus. The program was organized by Sampari Hukumu Bodol Tripura, under the patronage of Universal Peace Federation (UPF), Peace Dream, and Religious Youth Service (RYS).

The Agartala celebrations of the IDP consisted of leaders from both Christian and Hindu communities planting a sapling in a place offered by the other community. The religious leaders exhorted the listeners to appreciate the many cultures and religions of the country, each of which tries to bring about peace in its own unique manner and method; and that it made no sense to fight in the name of religion since every religion taught peace and communal harmony. The participants of the IDP celebrations also held a candle-lit prayer for the victims of the recent violence in various parts of the world.

RYS Teams Up

OCTOBER 28-31 | GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

RYS representatives, in partnership with the Peace Dream Foundation, presented education to this year's teaching team for Guatemala City's Peace Vacation, a six-week sports and character education program. The RYS teaching seminar has been a time-tested experiential education presentation, which has proved in the past to be valuable in enhancing the development of these sports teachers and service trainers.

Trainers presented the RYS exercises followed by the Sports for Life curriculum of the Peace Dream Foundation. The participants especially enjoyed the integration of the RYS agenda and the Sports for Life activities. The Sports for Life curriculum, which applies the practices of good sportsmanship to family and societal interaction, serves to correlate the experience of good team cooperation with positive community interaction.

Learning, Serving and Trekking in Nepal

FULL PROJECT

NOVEMBER 20-28 | LALITPUR, NEPAL

“RYS Nepal allowed me to develop a sincere relationship with the community of Sunakothi and further deepened my understanding of other religious traditions and beliefs. I realized that through broadening my understanding of other faiths, I grew deeper in my own personal spirituality....”

The Religious Youth Service hosted an eight day project in Sunakothi, Lalitpur, Nepal from November 20 - November 28, 2008. Participants from Nepal, India, Mauritius, and the United States came together to aid the village of Sunakothi with the installation of 2 much needed water tanks and the creation of a peace pond. The project was hosted at the Bauddha Jana Vihar, a Buddhist Community Center and Temple.

Participants engaged in daily morning meditations with Bhante Dharmagupta, a Buddhist Monk and spiritual leader, and had opportunities to interact and learn the values and principles of the Buddhist faith.

Each afternoon a religious excursion was scheduled in hopes to enrich the understanding and deepen appreciation for all faiths. Visits included: Inter-religious Assembly (Anmol New Baneshwor), Brahma Kumari Ashram (Thamel), Assumption Catholic Church (Jawalakhel), Shanti Hindu Ashram (Koteshwor), and Jamal Mosque (Kathmandu).

Additionally, educational sessions were scheduled in the evenings to encourage intercultural dialogue, team building, and personal reflection. Participants were able to enjoy the aesthetic beauty of Nepal through trekking adventures and historic visits to ancient temples.

On the final day, a peace tree was planted and inauguration of the water tanks took place with local dignitaries as a symbol of un-

derstanding and cooperation. Following the inauguration, a Community Cultural Night was organized as part of the closing ceremony. Representatives from the community and project offered cultural dances and songs in appreciation for RYS.

“Make A Difference”

FULL PROJECT

DECEMBER 2-8 | NORTHEAST INDIA

In a society that implicitly accepts and lives with clear-cut polarization and “ours versus theirs” behavior patterns, the concept and praxis of the recently held RYS came as a welcome jolt. The social context of Tripura provides a revolutionary edge to the simple idea that common space, common endeavor, common ideals and companionship are still possibilities in this conflict-ridden land of Tripura.

The RYS “Neutral Space” was a pointer that peace and wholeness become reality only when people of different backgrounds and affiliations can transcend the barriers that divide and engage in mutually enriching exercises for the common good. The service experience, the educational segments and the exceptionally cordial atmosphere of the RYS camp provided the much-needed atmosphere for inspiration and resolution to become ambassadors for peace wherever conflict exists.

The project achieved construction of a 1,500 sq. ft. community center for the indigenous tribal people to stage their cultural programs, watch TV, and enable their children to play indoor games and be together. RYS participants worked hard with local help to complete this great hall of friendship and goodwill in a record time of 7 days.

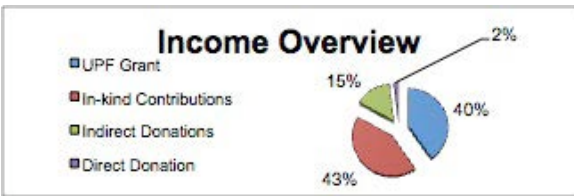


RYS Financial Overview 2008

The numbers below reflect the income and expenses for the Religious Youth Service. In addition to these amounts, participants and staff have spent an estimated 35,000 US Dollars to travel to various projects. We recognize and appreciate this investment, as well as the value of their time and talent, as generous contributions.

INCOME OVERVIEW	
UPF GRANT	\$125,299.92
IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS	\$132,035.00
INDIRECT DONATION	\$46,574.74
DIRECT DONATION	\$5,676.72
TOTAL	\$309,586.38

The Religious Youth Service is one of many innovative projects of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF). The Federation helps finance administrative expenses, as well as provides and administers grants for RYS programs around the world. The UPF provides office space and organizational infrastructure for the RYS. This effort can hardly be represented by numbers. We deeply appreciate the support of UPF.

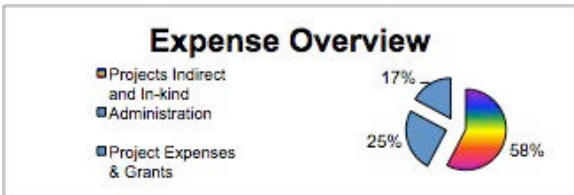


In-kind contributions are difficult to measure and keep track of. The figures in this report reflect only the elements for which we have documented evidence. Many contributions go undocumented – RYS recognizes that it would not be able to function, nor complete as many projects without the efforts and help of its local supporters and friends.

EXPENSE OVERVIEW

PROJECTS INDIRECT AND IN-KIND	\$178,609.74
ADMINISTRATION	\$77,695.67
PROJECT GRANTS	\$53,280.97
TOTAL	\$309,586.38

Project Grants include all grants and expenses managed by the International office.



As evidenced by the chart above, most of our projects are heavily supported by in-kind and indirect monetary contributions. These are administered by local project developers.

RYS PROJECT FINANCIAL REPORT	
SURINAME 2008	
(THE NUMBERS BELOW DO NOT INCLUDE PARTICIPANT TRAVEL.)	
INCOME	
RYS/UPF GRANT	\$6,000.00
APPROXIMATE VALUE OF IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS	\$11,034.00
MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS	\$2,500.00
TOTAL	\$19,534.00
EXPENSES	
HOUSING	\$1,495.37
FOOD	\$1,407.41
TRANSPORTATION	\$1,419.03
WORK MATERIALS	\$550.32
EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS	\$148.66
MEDICAL EXPENSES	\$59.11
OUTINGS	\$312.00
COMMUNICATIONS	\$0.00
T-SHIRTS AND BANNERS	\$433.61
HONORARIUMS	\$152.65
AIRFARE	\$1,371.84
APPROXIMATE VALUE OF IN-KIND SUPPORT: FOODS, MEETING ROOMS, SECURITY AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, ETC.	\$11,034.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$18,384.00
RETURNED TO RYS INT'L	\$1,150.00

To complete our RYS 2008 fiscal overview, the above chart provides an example of expense and financial patterns of an average RYS project. Detailed project records and reports are available on our website at:

www.rys.net

RELIGIOUS YOUTH SERVICE



RELIGIOUS YOUTH SERVICE

find out more @ RYS.net
info@religiousyouthservice.org
int'l: +1 212-239-1421
USA: 1-800-880-2987