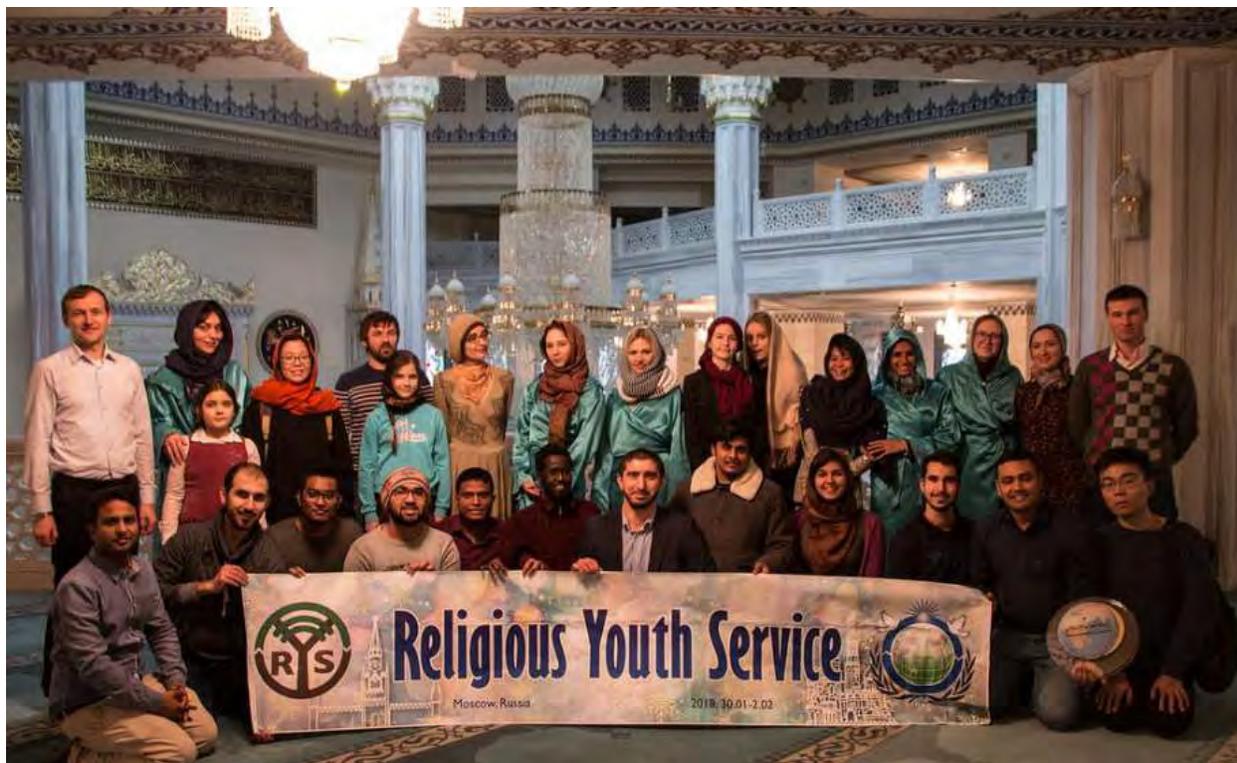


## Religious Youth Service (RYS) volunteer project in Moscow

Dmitry Samko  
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**Moscow, Russia** -- Young people from 13 nations took part in a Religious Youth Service (RYS) volunteer project related to World Interfaith Harmony Week.

From January 31 to February 2, 2018, thirty-five youth and students, including UPF volunteers and Mr. and Miss University finalists, attended lectures and participated in discussion programs. They met with experts in the field of the Sustainable Development Goals and UN volunteers.

As part of the RYS youth volunteer program, they also took part in a service project in the Martha and Mary Convent in Moscow, preparing food boxes for poor citizens.

The participants visited the Moscow Cathedral Mosque, the main mosque of Moscow, and plunged into the amazing and profound peace of Islam. Interreligious dialogue and interaction of representatives of different countries and religions are the main features of RYS projects.



At the end of the four-day intensive program, an interethnic cultural program was held in which participants represented their nations. Wearing national costumes, they sang folk songs, gave presentations and performed national anthems.

The great success of the project is that the participants from different countries made friends and came to a unanimous decision to develop such projects for the sake of sustainable development and interethnic and interreligious harmony.



#### **Feedback from the participants:**

##### **Anastasia Titova**

Each of us has had the warmest and brightest memories from visiting the Martha and Mary Convent and the Moscow Cathedral Mosque.

Firstly, I visited the Orthodox abode of a charity founded by Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fedorovna Romanova. Seeing archival photographs, documents, and household items – it was like going back in time.

Secondly, some members of my family profess Islam, and therefore I can pray both in churches and mosques. It was very interesting to watch the reaction of the young participants of the project, how their eyes were burning and with what interest they were getting acquainted with the religions and cultures of different peoples, and the beautiful architecture items.

We also took part in one of the volunteer projects in the Martha and Mary Convent and shared our stock of goodness with those who needed it so much. I am immensely grateful to each organizer and participant for the trip.

##### **Arina Kirichek**

Today was a wonderful, busy day filled with good deeds and positive emotions. All the young people from different countries were very friendly, and it made me very happy. All the participants were completely different, but the amazing snowy weather fascinated everyone without exception. Interfaith, intercultural and international dialogue allowed us to penetrate other cultures and experience a new atmosphere.

It is difficult to single out one thing, but I was struck by the special tranquility of the Moscow Cathedral Mosque, its majestic beauty and peace, its gentle turquoise color, which brought me to a mental and sensual trance, especially contrasted with the activity in the Martha and Mary Convent. It was nice working together for a good cause. The common cause brought together completely different people.