

## **GLOBAL CITIZEN JOURNEY: BACKGROUND**

Global Citizen Journey (GCJ) is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to joining hearts and hands across countries and continents. GCJ strives to do this through not only taking groups to other countries, but also bringing global issues home to the Puget Sound region.

### **Mission Statement:**

*GCJ welcomes a new paradigm by exploring the question:  
How do we awaken to our interconnectedness, our grassroots power, and our mutual responsibility so we are inspired to act as fully engaged global citizens?*

GCJ engages this question by facilitating the creation of simple yet profound networks of grassroots connections by means of Journeys which allow people from the Puget Sound area to meet, work, live and grow with people from a vastly different culture. Journeys are carefully designed to create relationships that extend the connections between individuals, villages, and organizations beyond the trips themselves, as can be evidenced by the numerous spin-off projects that have arisen from our journeys.

GCJ is a Living Learning Laboratory designed to engage diverse individuals in a joint effort to bring forth a just, peaceful, and sustainable global society. Though GCJ's primary means of forging these connections is through the Journeys, GCJ also engages the local community by bringing in speakers and hosting other community-awareness raising events.

GCJ has a vision of deep, ongoing connections that build understanding and bridge cultural differences with bonds of peace, reaching into places that are little known beyond their borders, shedding light on areas and issues that are not well understood in the United States, creating an avenue for otherwise silenced voices to be heard.

### ***Global Citizen Journey...***

- Connects delegations across continents and boundaries in places often unheard and unseen
- Partners with the local host community to accomplish tangible projects developed in ways that are empowering and sustainable
- Engages in community and peace building dialogues and practices
- Forges grassroots cross-cultural connections and friendships to build the global neighborhood
- Joins hands, heads and hearts through living, working, and learning together to unleash individual and collective wisdom and capabilities

## **JOURNEYS: THE HEART OF GCJ**

Each GCJ journey is a multilayered experience in cross-cultural communication, leadership development and community service. Participants discover new ways of thinking and living, and learn to see the uniqueness of their own cultural gifts through the eyes of others.

GCJ Journeys are designed to form lasting bonds between delegates and the host country. Each phase of the experience is equally important, from planning for the journey to the spin-off projects that stem from individual delegates' passion.

### **Before the Journey:**

Roughly 15 U.S. delegates are chosen to travel, live and work for 2.5 to three weeks with the same number of local and regional delegates. Participants represent a diverse mix of religions, ethnicity, gender, ages, socio-economic levels, lifestyles and professions. The planning and leadership roles are shared between the host country organizing group and the U.S. organizing group, the result being that when the time comes to step onto the plane, delegates are excited to meet their new friends with whom they've already developed a rapport.

### **The Journey:**

Participants are housed in the host village, sharing meals and getting to know the local families, working daily on a community service project, which is identified and organized by the host community. The project might be planting trees, wetland restoration, building homes or a community building, such as the library built in Nigeria in 2005.

Delegates also participate in daily workshops and dialogues to promote cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution and compassionate listening skills, leadership development and environmental awareness. (Read an overview of GCJ circles and workshops). Additional activities to enhance learning and understanding include music, crafts and art, recreation, visits with local dignitaries, side trips to cultural sites, and the sharing of participants' native music, holidays and favorite foods. We work with the local community to host a Town Hall meeting using World Cafe and Open Space processes, inviting 50 to 150 local residents to join in dialogue about their issues and ways to create a vision for their desired future.

### **After the Journey**

Upon their return, many of our delegates stay in contact with the friends they've made and keep working on the issues they care about. Check out the Ghana and Nigeria pages for an idea of some of the spin-off projects that have resulted from those Journeys.

It is vital for delegates to extend the journey into our home communities by sharing their experiences and learning before, during and after the journey. Many delegates are sponsored by a group or organization. Participants without organizational sponsors develop individual plans to share their stories in other ways, ensuring that their experiences also reach a wider network.

## **OPOROZA, NIGER DELTA: NIDPRODEV (2005)**

In mid-November to early December, 2005, GCJ worked with the Niger Delta Professionals for Development (NIDPRODEV) to bring 19 US delegates and 21 Nigerian delegates in the village of Oporoza in the “creeks” riverine area of the Niger Delta. Together these delegates built the first library in the region and participated in workshops promoting cross-cultural understanding, compassionate listening, conflict resolution and leadership skills. They



hosted several Town Hall meetings to bring various ethnic groups that have been in conflict together for dialogue in Warri, as well as several community dialogues with the community of Oporoza.

The village of Oporoza is located in the heart of Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta, yet poverty and illiteracy are widespread. The community struggles to provide education for village children, but has had difficulty attracting teachers willing to face the challenge of teaching without books in a region with only about 40% literacy.

GCJ was delighted to support the energy and initiative of the community to meet these challenges with construction of a library. Oporoza village leaders believe the library will attract

better funding for the school, hopefully leading the government to staff it with salaried teachers, as well as providing vital learning resources for the entire region. The U.S. delegation brought over 1500 donated books to get the library collection started, as well as purchasing text books for Oporoza students.

NIDPRODEV is a non-profit organization/NGO operating in Nigeria since 1999, focusing on conflict mediation, peace building, youth empowerment and gender rights issues in the Niger Delta. Led by Founder and Regional Director Joel Bisina, NIDPRODEV has a dynamic track record of successful initiatives to meet the significant challenges of the Niger Delta.



When the situation in the Delta stabilizes, GCJ and NIDPRODEV will plan another Journey to the Delta– this time to the neighboring Itsekiri village, to balance the benefits brought to the Ijaw village of Oporoza.

## **AXIM, GHANA: WESTERN HERITAGE HOME (2006)**

In the fall of 2006, GCJ partnered with the Western Heritage Home to bring its second group of delegates (15 US and 13 Ghanaian) to the town of Axim, Ghana to build an orphanage and community center. Delegates were able to share technical skills and professional expertise, along with participating in workshops promoting cross-cultural understanding, compassionate listening, conflict resolution, gender dialogue, leadership skills and HIV/AIDs understanding. The delegates hosted a powerful Town Hall dialogue with a cross section of over 150 Axim citizens, from fish mongers to judges, youth, women, elders, Christians, Muslims, professionals and illiterates.



Western Heritage Home is a Ghana-based NGO formed for the purpose of building and managing the community center and orphanage and for bringing foreign nationals with particular expertise to Axim, with Mr. James Kainyiah serving as Chairman and host.

Since the initial trip to Axim, many US GCJ delegates have taken it upon themselves to return in order to continue to assist in the building project, train office staff in the use of computer software, and follow up on projects begun during the Fall 2006 visit, such as supplying a science classroom and Veronica buckets for hand washing and sanitation for Manye Academy, where many of the orphans attend.

### **BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI: JRMD/YRWD (2009)**

GCJ's host organization in Burundi is JRMD/YRWD (Youth in Construction in a World of Destruction) which has been using the strategies of rebuilding homes and opening spaces for peace to rebuild the nation over the past ten years. Prosper Ndabishuriye, founder of JRMD, created this organization in response to the seemingly hopeless cycle of war and destruction that has been prevalent in modern Burundian history. His unique way of peacemaking was to bring Hutu and Tutsi youth together on a mission of home building to replace the thousands of homes destroyed by war. To work together to rebuild homes for one's enemies is teaching how to bring healing and reconciliation to this wounded community through Love and Compassion in action. To date over 350 homes of the intended 800 have been built, which includes housing and latrines for over 2000 families, in what is called the Camara District, or neighborhood.

GCJ is currently in the process of recruiting delegates for this Journey, which is scheduled for summer 2009. The 15 US delegates will join with 15 Burundian Hutu and Tutsi delegates to work on bringing clean water to the residents of the Carama district of Bujumbura, as well as promoting cross-cultural understanding, healing, and conflict resolution.



## **CONTINUING THE JOURNEY: DELEGATE SPINNOFF PROJECTS**

The role of GCJ as a facilitator for grassroots movements is realized by the many spinoff projects that have resulted from the Journeys. These occur because of the initiative of GCJ delegates themselves who are so moved that they take their energy and expand it. Some projects include:

- Axim, Ghana
  - Stocked the Konongo School Library with \$22,000 worth of up-to-date textbooks
  - Purchase of 56 replacement mattresses for the Axim hospital
  - Medical care for children in Ghana (including a cleft palate, hernia and eye infection)
  - Provided four women's vocational training center scholarships
  - Provided financial and other support to Daasgift – a microlending organization founded and directed by a Ghanaian delegates
  - Partnered with the Nursing Institute at Axim to provide Veronica Buckets (portable system for hand washing)
  - Science classroom equipment for Manye Academy
  - Supporting 21 orphans to attend school and for lunch
  - Taught HIV/AIDS classes in several venues
  - Collected life stories of 30 Ghanaians
  - Brought Appreciate Inquiry training to the Western Heritage Home Board, Konongo School, Takoradi Chamber of Commerce, and other venues
  - Served as communication conduit between a Methodist Church in Mt. Vernon which is exploring developing a sister church relationship with the Axim Methodist Church
  
- Oporoza, Nigeria and beyond
  - Sweet Crude – a full length documentary about the Delta
  - Microlending fund established with ERIKPO
  - Sister school relationship set up with Marysville HS – raised funds, bought supplies, etc.
  - Scholarship fund for disabled