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**Costa Rica Alumni 2003**



After studying International Development at university, I had really wanted a tangible experience to put my understanding of the subject into perspective. In 2003, I went to Costa Rica with YCI and volunteered in El Valle, a small rural community that YCI had identified as facing serious health problems due to poor sanitation and inadequate water supply.

During my ten weeks in El Valle, along with 10 other YCI volunteers, I contributed to one of three phases of an aqueduct project. Our activities included digging trenches for water pipes, constructing concrete water holding tanks and the overall maintenance of the aqueduct system. It was truly awe-inspiring to take part in a project that brought running water, a resource many take for granted, into the homes of El Valle's community members.

Waking up to the sounds of howler monkeys, working daily with the members of the Costa Rican aqueduct association and entertaining ourselves in the evenings with salsa and language lessons created a cultural exchange I will not forget. In a community that welcomed us with open arms, I gained practical skills, personal growth and long lasting friendships.

Since being a YCI participant, I have completed a CIDA internship in Zimbabwe working at a Business Support Centre. My experience in Costa Rica gave me valuable tools to complete my internship as well as a personal perspective on how I would like to participate within my own community and communities abroad. I have no doubt that YCI will continue to enlighten youth and I feel privileged to have had the experience.