

GENERAL PRESENTATION

"*Compagnons Bâisseurs*" is an NGO which was founded about fifty years ago (1957). Its aim was to help a population that had been hard hit by the effects of World War II, to reconstruct those homes destroyed during the conflict. From the very beginning up until today, Compagnons Bâisseurs has been putting the principle of solidarity into practice in the form of workcamps, as well as promoting peace and better understanding between people from all over the world.

Compagnons Bâisseurs is now composed as a network of one national organization and 6 regional organizations in France :

- in Rennes, Brest, Saint-Malo and Lanester in Brittany,
- in Tours in the Center,
- in Bordeaux in Aquitaine,
- in Montpellier in Languedoc Roussillon,
- in Marseille in Provence,
- in Saint Denis in Reunion island (Indian Ocean)



It carries out 3 activities throughout the year which are:

➤ **Technical, financial and social support supplied to families or people in need**, those often marginalized from society and **to organizations** dedicated to collective interest projects, regarding the improvement of housing. The aim is to work along with the owner or renter of the house or flat, and with neighbourhoods' networks

➤ **Professional integration** into building trades through construction site, training course... The aim is to help people with social or professional difficulties to re-enter the job market.

➤ **Promote voluntary experiences** : The **national organisation** is in charge of voluntary activities as the network's coordinator :

- coordinating **Long and medium term volunteers** (LTV and MTV) projects. Each regional organisation (except in Reunion Island) hosts between 2 and 11 volunteers, men and women over 18 years old who come from France or European Union. The volunteers work together with families and neighbourhoods' networks to help them renovating their house and reinvesting their homes.
- offering the possibility to participate in **short term projects (workcamps or Youth Exchange...)** during 2 or 3 weeks in France and abroad, most of the time in the field of housing, ecological constructions, surroundings and standard of living. CBF projects deal with construction and renovation of buildings such as social centres, community buildings or heritage buildings (old fountains, washhouses, wells, old stone bread ovens...).
- encouraging the participation in voluntary actions of a diversity of people from CBF network: LTV, MTV, STV from workcamps, volunteers from the Executive Committee, families who participated in the renovation of their home, neighbourhoods' networks, people coming from professional integration activities... The aim, is to encourage mobility and participation inside the CBF network and also abroad through Alliance and CCIVS networks. We work on the development of each people involvement with different tools like the European voluntary project AMICUS, EVS ST, workcamps, etc. We are looking to develop projects for older people and families.

LONG TERM VOLUNTEERING WITH COMPAGNONS BÂTISSEURS FRANCE

With an intervention in the field of building (from renovation to construction) the voluntary sector brings concrete help to families or people in need, often excluded from society and to organisations dedicated to collective interest projects.

The teams intervene with and for the families for the improvement of their living conditions, giving them in this way the means to reinvest their housing.

Volunteers work in one of the five local Compagnons Bâisseurs organizations in France, and they share a community life.

➤ The volunteers

The volunteer posts are open to girls and boys over 18 from different nationalities, with or without preliminary knowledge in construction and renovation. They have different status: European Voluntary Service volunteers, conscientious objectors, and Civic Service volunteers (French status).

They all must be prepared to commit themselves in the fulfilment of the objectives of the organisation and develop their awareness of:

- *Working closely with families in need and with organisations involved in community projects*
- *Participating to associative and communal life*
- *Working as a genuine part of a team outside traditional structures*
- *Sharing a different experience of life.*

This commitment is very demanding but also offers unquestionable experience and awareness of responsibility.

On the project, volunteers also will find many ways to enjoy themselves through new acquaintances and cultural exchanges.

➤ Work description

Working with the organisation staff (administrative mentors and technical supervisors) and with the social worker in charge of the family, the volunteers prepare and assure the technical, financial and human aspects on the building site. They also try to make the families involved in the improvement of their living conditions by working together on the site.

Although the main purpose in the carrying out of the work, the activity has therefore an important social and human aspect that makes our intervention different from a professional one.

This in particular includes the participation of the family in the project (choice of the work that has to be done, the material...) and also in its technical realisation.

Furthermore, when possible the volunteers share the lunch with the family which provides a valuable time to get to know each other and may create strong links based on trust and sharing.

Volunteers are also fully involved in the organisation life, especially through their participation in the national and local administrative councils, general assemblies and through the Volunteers' Collective which regroups all volunteers.

In summer, volunteers can work as group co-leaders on international summer workcamps organised by the association.

➤ Living conditions

The volunteers live and work as a part of a team of 3 to 5 people, sharing a flat or a house in one of the places where we host volunteers in France : in Brittany (in Rennes and Brest), in the Loire Valley (in Tours), in Provence (in Marseille), in Montpellier (Languedoc), in Bordeaux (Aquitaine) and in Reunion's island. In some of these places there is also local French volunteers as part of the team, the difference is that they do not share the flat.

LTV receive a monthly allowance covering food expenses and pocket money (about 400 €/month). Accomodation is provided by Compagnons Bâtisseurs. Because of their low budget, LTV have to adapt themselves during their long term experience to an alternative way of living, sharing a communal life. Compagnons Bâtisseurs pay all the costs related to the training, the local or national associative activities ... in which volunteers are involved.

➤ Training

The association runs its own trainings in order to help volunteers to integrate the organisation and deal in a good way with their work.

Volunteers are offered to attend during their voluntary time to regular national meetings with all the other volunteers (2 times a year) to learn more about the association, exchange about their motivation, make a mid term evaluation...

➤ For more information

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