

Intercultural Talk

CONFRONTING RACISM IN
INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING



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YOUTH WORK AND VOLUNTARY WORK HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY FABIENNE ZOGG

Building a more diverse and inclusive society has gained further importance, as racial tension, hate speech, nationalism and ethnic conflicts have increased.

The 55th issue of the ICYE Newsletter focuses on anti-racism. It can be defined as a process of actively identifying and opposing all forms of racism. The aim is to change policies, structures, behaviors and beliefs that discriminate, oppress and maintain racial injustice and racist actions in the society.*

In the field of youth work and international volunteering, we have the responsibility to increase cultural awareness, lead with solidarity, challenge power structures, strengthen the cooperation between Global North and Global South, as well as tackle neo-colonial and racist structures.

The ICYE Federation is determined to address the issue of racism and work on advocating for a culture of equality and inclusion by also taking part in projects that seek to transform power structures, promote inclusiveness and empower young people. You can read more about these projects on pages 2-3.



What could be the first steps to fighting racism as an individual? It's important to recognise your own privilege, learn to identify and overcome your own biases, treat everyone with dignity and respect, and stand up against racism and injustice.

*Source: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Let's celebrate diversity and keep on spreading tolerance!





TOWARD DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

The ICYE Federation is coordinating an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 capacity building project, **Youth Work Can Unite: International Volunteering to Enhance Solidarity and Fight Nationalism**. The objective is to engage, connect and empower young people, youth and civil society NGOs in an anti-racist movement and to work toward diverse, inclusive societies.

This project aims to raise awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers, counter biased and racist attitudes among young people and in local communities, launch anti-racism campaigns, foster social inclusion and solidarity, as well as create an anti-racism toolkit for the youth volunteering sector.

Look out for the **Anti-racism Toolkit for International Volunteering** to be published in autumn 2023. The Toolkit will encapsulate the knowledge produced during this capacity building project, as well as draw on participatory surveys of ICYE staff, volunteers, and stakeholders regarding their lived experiences of racism. We are pleased to be able to present a methodological approach to Anti-racism Education and Tackling Hate Speech and present a framework for the Potential for Global Justice and Social Change through international volunteering.

💡 What do the volunteers participating in this project have to say about their experiences abroad? Go to pages 4-14!

LEARNING ABOUT CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY WORK

The ICYE Federation is a participating member of **UNITED for Intercultural Action**, a European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants, refugees and minorities. The aim of the network is to strengthen the movement against intolerance and discrimination by promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as cooperation between NGOs.

UNITED coordinates campaigns, participates in projects, writes publications, organises conferences and engages in advocacy work to oppose discrimination and support a diverse and inclusive society together with more than 500 supporter organisations across Europe.

A two-day online workshop on campaigning facilitated by UNITED was held on 30-31 March 2022 bringing together young volunteers from Latin America, Africa, and Europe to discuss effective campaign strategies and learn about the importance of advocacy work. During the workshop, the participants also had the chance to work on their own campaigns on anti-racism and share ideas on the best approaches, methods and tools to achieve campaign goals.



To read more about UNITED and their work, go to www.unitedfia.org

DECOLONISATION AS A POINT OF DISCUSSION

The international office of ICYE is part of an Erasmus+-funded Cooperation Partnership project, **Decolonise! Building Equative, Diverse and Environmentally Sustainable Long Term International Voluntary Service projects** that aims to foster the quality of transnational cooperation by establishing tools, policies and guidelines to deconstruct climate colonialism, power structures and mindsets in long-term international volunteering. It also seeks to create and implement a participatory advocacy plan to address and change existing inequalities in the field of international volunteering.



This joint project involves 15 different organisations working in the field of international volunteering service from the following networks: **CCIVS, ICYE, Alliance** and **SCI**. The activities consist of several meetings, workshops and trainings taking place both online and in-person. The first steering committee meeting was held in June 2022 in Berlin.



We are starting by developing our shared vocabulary to ensure that we can have fruitful discussions. To let you in on the on-going process, we'd like to share these working definitions that resulted from a recent workshop and ask for your feedback and reflections.

Climate Colonialism: a system that wants to reach development for industrial/technologically advantaged countries through exploiting others.

Global Justice: this includes equality of opportunities and how culture influences our ideas of justice/injustice

Intersectionality: words which the group felt were included were power structure, privilege, ability, accessibility, discrimination, fluidity, identity, complexities, multi-faceted.

Equity: despite different circumstances, it is crucial to allocate the exact resources and opportunities needed for everyone to reach an equal outcome.

Are you already reflecting on these topics in your work? Let us know!

MY VIENNA EXPERIENCE AS A VOLUNTEER

BY OSAMEDE YVONNE OBAYUWANNA
From Nigeria to Austria



My name is **Yvonne**, I'm an ICYE volunteer from Nigeria and currently doing my volunteer service at **Kulturhaus Brotfabrik** in Vienna, Austria. I was motivated to volunteer abroad to have an exchange of culture and learn the German language. In my project at Kulturhaus Brotfabrik, we organize various events such as, courses for mothers with their babies, light sessions, concerts and movie nights to bring people of different races together so that they can interact and promote unity and a sense of community. My main tasks include the organization of and logistics around events and carrying out research. Vienna is a beautiful city to visit.

Participating in a voluntary service can be challenging especially when coming from a totally different continent and country. I had my cultural shock within the first three weeks, with the weather, food, language and use of different automobiles being so different. But my ability to be open-minded helped me gain local friends and together with the support of my project I was able to face the challenges.

However, I do feel like there is a high percentage of discrimination in this countries even though it varies from person to person. Sometimes, someone may feel they are not discriminating but the person involved actually feels discriminated by their behaviour. There are some who don't even want to sit next to me on the bus, train or tram because I am black, and would rather prefer to stand. In the beginning, I felt really bad, but the ability to accept and reciprocate their act with love and kindness made me feel better.



A visit to Stephansplatz, one of the biggest city centers in Vienna

One of my biggest learning outcomes is knowing that even as a foreigner, I have and am entitled to my rights. Your rights might be infringed upon but do not sit back and be quiet about it, talk to someone to help you! The world can be a better place if we accept people genuinely, love and show a little act of kindness regardless of a person's color, race, religion, culture, language or identity.

My volunteering experience has helped me gain new skills. Thanks to my project, for example, my technological and digital skills have improved a lot. My volunteer experience will definitely shape my future plans regarding good interpersonal relationships with people, communicating effectively with others, and also bringing ideas of events learnt at my project into future plans.

If you think of volunteering abroad, go for it! It has been an amazing experience that I won't regret. If you are coming from an African country, please bring some good thick clothes with you because you don't want to freeze especially during wintertime.

“The world can be a better place if we accept people genuinely, love and show a little act of kindness regardless of their colour, race, religion, culture, language or identity.”



Participating in one of the antiracism workshops

KENYA — A COUNTRY FULL OF COLORS AND CONTRASTS

BY MATÚŠ BASANDA
From Slovakia to Kenya

Hello everyone reading this article!
My name is **Matúš**. I'm a volunteer from Slovakia, currently living on the outskirts of the capital city of Nairobi in Kenya – a beautiful country full of contrasts and colors. I've been volunteering since I went to university and my amazing experience from previous projects motivated me to go for another wonderful adventure because I've never regretted any of the projects I've been part of including this one! Even though I volunteered in Kenya a few years ago, my comeback to my second home was more of a coincidence (or destiny?). I really liked the idea of the project and I knew that this kind of job is something I'd like to do in the future so why not enjoy the country of Hakuna Matata one more time?

So, after sending my application for the project, I was very happy when I got accepted. Now I'm back in Kenya where I became part of an organization called **Youth Voices Community (YVC)** which is dedicated to advocacy and education of urban refugees living in Nairobi. We're helping refugees with the complexities of Kenyan bureaucracy and sharing important information they need to manage. Many of these refugees never needed to speak English. That's why we have amazing teachers who are teaching English to everyone. Thanks to our supporters we have computers which are being used for developing useful digital skills.



Fresh graduates of our education program and our great teachers beside me - Daniel (left) and Steven (right).



Descending from Mt. Margaret. You can see cattle almost everywhere: in the village, in the town, even in the city center. Literally anywhere!

In the YVC team, I'm responsible for communication and creating content for social media so I'm spending a lot of my time with a laptop and camera. I'm also responsible for – the task I was the most excited to do – conducting interviews with refugees willing to share their stories and creating a podcast.

I must say, interviewing these refugees is a big challenge, though I was still looking forward to getting started. Even though I have always been eager to listen to other people's stories, recording their experiences and making these accessible for others is something completely different for me. Also being in Kenya has not always been easy. Despite the very nice people around me and the amazing experiences I have gained so far, sometimes it can be exhausting when there is no water or when the infrastructure is collapsing. On the other hand, that is the reason why I came here. I wanted to reach another level of storytelling, and live the daily life here with the locals. As I mentioned, a new experience it's sometimes very challenging. Sometimes, when facing an obstacle I'm asking myself: „what the heck did I decide to come here for?“, but then again I'm so happy when I see the progress I'm achieving. You know, it was never supposed to be easy. If it would be easy, it wouldn't be worth it! I believe that facing these challenges now, will help me to become a professional storyteller one day. To achieve this, stepping out of my comfort zone is totally worth it!



One of the work meetings with SlumTV helping us to develop a storytelling project. We cooperate with many other organisations to improve our services and the lives of refugees.

"It was such a good feeling when someone told me how my story changed their opinions. I think that moment motivated me to continue to share stories that can make an impact on the life of others and have the power to destroy prejudices against other nations, cultures and races."



As I mentioned before, I come from Slovakia – a small country in the middle of Europe. Slovakia is a very nice country. Unfortunately, Slovakia is also a very xenophobic country, especially against people from African countries. I noticed it when I came back home from Kenya for the first time. Since that moment my storytelling started on a different level because I felt responsible for sharing my experience with people and trying to beat prejudices as much as possible. I must say it wasn't easy. Some of the people refused to think differently and overcome their prejudices even when they faced a different reality through my own experiences. Well, I guess I cannot convince everyone. Yet it was such a good feeling when someone told me how my story changed their opinions. I think that moment motivated me to continue to share stories that can make an impact on the life of others and have the power to destroy prejudices against other nations, cultures and races.

What else should I say? So far I enjoy my project very much! Even though it's not always easy I wouldn't change my decision to live in this beautiful country called Kenya which became my second home. Every day I get to meet wonderful people who show me that everything is possible. Every day I see the reason to be grateful.

Becoming a volunteer is one of the best decisions of my life. Volunteering is not just about giving. You receive much more than you might think. You have the opportunity to experience different cultures, make friends from all around the world, become independent and gain work experience in the field you want, learn new languages and so much more! What I value the most are the people I was able to meet during my journey. The inspiration I've found in those friendships is something that motivates me to live the life I'm living. So if you're just thinking about volunteering, even a little, my advice is to give volunteering a chance, you won't regret it!

Greetings from sunny Kenya!



MY VOLUNTEER JOURNEY

BY TRUPHENA KIBAGENDI
From Kenya to Slovakia

Hello! My name is **Truphena** and I am from Kenya. I'm a volunteer in Slovakia, in an organization called **KERIC (ICYE Slovakia)**, since October 2021. My volunteer project is about how youth can unite.

The desire to learn new intercultural skills that will help me to enhance my career motivated me to volunteer abroad. I also wanted to meet new people, have new experiences, get to know another culture, explore different systems of education, learn a new language and engage in something that will add value to me.

My main tasks include: cooperating with local schools, English conversation lessons for adults, teenagers and children, assisting in running the KERIC office, preparing workshops, summer camps, space for individual activities in KERIC, European culture awareness activities and other activities in local schools.



Me with other volunteers from Turkey, Georgia, Austria, Germany and Spain. We had team building activities together with the staff members of KERIC.

Apart from these tasks, we do a lot of outdoor activities like hiking or weekend workshops where I was part of the facilitation team. Now we have started to organize our summer camps.

The most interesting part about my volunteering so far has been engaging with the teenagers, preparing international dinners and organizing Christmas together, my office job tasks and also improving my teaching skills.

The most challenging part about my volunteering is the language barrier but I often have Slovak lessons. But also experiencing different seasons and feeling homesick is not easy to cope with. What is great is that I have been able to make new friends, build my personal network, gain new experiences and learn about cultural diversity.

I think my volunteering time here will impact my future plans by enhancing the knowledge for my teaching career. I hope it will help me secure a job. Volunteering abroad is much fun when you dedicate your heart and mind to it. Learning how to speak up your mind really helps and also being open-minded.



Doing activities together during wintertime, such as hiking in the snow and skiing, accompanied by our coordinator.

"What is great is that I have been able to make new friends, built my personal network, gained new experiences and learnt about cultural diversity."

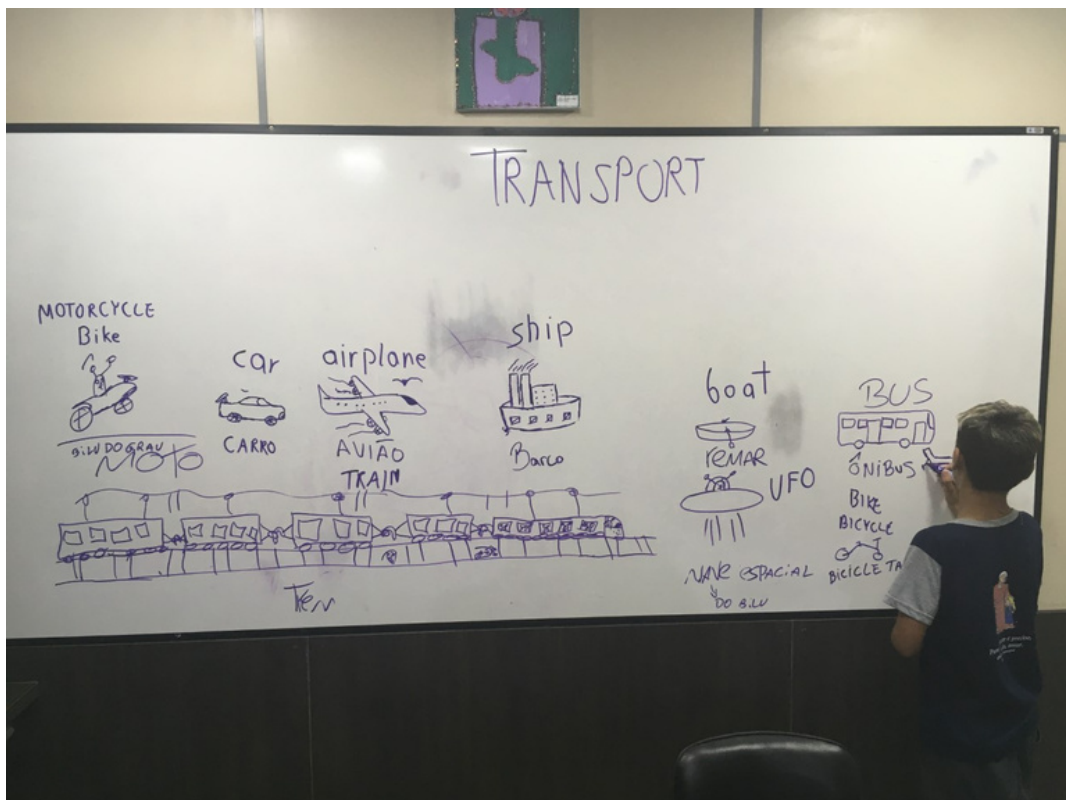
Growing Abroad

BY MAXIMILIAN HERZOG
From Austria to Brazil

My Erasmus+ funded project took place in the city of Porto Alegre, the capital of the most southern state in Brazil, close to Uruguay and Argentina. Reminiscing about the half a year I've spent there, I have to say that I'm pretty grateful for the possibility of such an experience.

First of all, I realized that it's actually a privilege being a stranger in a stranger's land. There's a whole new set of experiences which comes with that. You're looked at differently; you often receive a different treatment; you feel integrated and apart at the same time and you're often alone with yourself and have to find a way of dealing with all the differences.

Something I was kind of surprised about was the level of English. The average person here doesn't speak it – not even a few words. The same was the case at my workplace; I had to try to speak Portuguese from day one. Having no prior skills (and no knowledge of Spanish either), it was quite a challenge, but it helped me to get in touch with the language a lot quicker.



A photo from an English lesson. The children love to draw and it makes learning new vocabulary more fun.

My voluntary work consisted of working at an after school daycare center for kids between the ages of 6 to 14 years in a poor community within the city. Many people there work as trash collectors called “catadores” or in recycling factories. At the end of the day, they try to sell the plastic and metal they found in dumpsters or in the streets to make some money. All the children in the daycare project are from this community.

I enjoyed working with the kids - they were just full of energy and joy. That positively impacted me, but sometimes it could also become exhausting. With their age group, social conventions and overthinking is not yet as present as with adults – they do as they please and feel. Something that can be an inspiration for us adults!

I never really worked with kids before, so I enjoyed the different tasks. I taught them some basic English, we did sports like football or table tennis and I helped my colleagues with some lessons, such as the weekly IT course for the kids. My colleagues were a bit shy interacting with me as the *estrangeiro* (stranger) during the first months, but after a while, they turned out to be very friendly and I had a good time there.

The six months flew by very quickly. Looking back, I definitely see this as a positive and challenging experience during which I learned to become more independent and also got to know myself better - my likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, what I have and miss when being far away from home.

The volunteer experience broadened my horizon and made me grow on a personal level – which were exactly my reasons for doing voluntary service (along with that vague dream of exploring South America).

"I definitely see this as a positive and challenging experience during which I learned to become more independent and also got to know myself better - my likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, what I have and miss when being far away from home."



A park in the center of Porto Alegre

Iceland, the Island of Ice and Fire

BY GUILHERME DA SILVA PERES
From Brazil to Iceland



A day at the harbor in Reykjavik with beautiful mountains in the scenery

My name is **Guilherme** and I'm from Brazil. I would like to start by saying that after you travel once, you will always want to travel again. I had a great volunteer exchange experience in 2017 with **ICYE Denmark** for a year, where I was able to learn and grow a lot as a person.

I have always been very motivated to discover new cultures and countries, and I believe that the best way to do this would be through volunteering because while you are able to discover a new country and a new culture, you also follow a purpose to work together with people.

I work at **Alþjóðleg Ungmennaskipti (AUS ICYE Iceland)**, an international voluntary organization which provides volunteering programmes in Europe and around the world. There are two kinds of volunteering programmes in which young people between 18 and 30 can take part: **the European Solidarity Corps**, which is entirely funded by the European Union, and the ICYE programme. But my project is a campaign against racism here in Iceland. This same project is happening simultaneously in other countries, all organized and directed by ICYE.

I like adventure and this opportunity to come to Iceland to do volunteer work came at a time in my life when I was already tired of my routine in my city and wanted to do something new, so I'd say that everything happened at the right time.



My tasks are to do research and inform myself about the topic of racism here in Reykjavik, create actions and workshops to reflect on racism and how to fight it at an individual and societal level. The most rewarding aspect of this work so far is realizing that we can really make a difference in society and in people's lives. The most challenging aspect is finding the right way to do it.

In addition to learning from the Icelandic culture, the biggest learning outcomes have been the effectiveness of the actions and positive debates on the topics discussed within the project. Because we often do not put ourselves in other people's shoes, which makes the process of identifying and understanding the problems that are rooted in society more difficult.

I also believe that with this volunteer work I learned and developed more research and communication skills while working on projects and with people as well. I increased my ability to listen and speak and especially to make my position and opinion on a given subject clear. I also believe, as I said before, that volunteer work has a great positive impact on the lives of anyone who sets out to do so and that will certainly reflect positively on the future.

This experience has helped me to see the world and things in a different way, and I really recommend that anyone who can have the opportunity to do any cultural exchange, go for it, as this experience will change your perspective on life.



At Klambratún park

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HOW TO CHALLENGE RACIST ATTITUDES AND GET INSPIRED BY INCLUSION?



The Standing Together Against Racism Training Handbook provides staff in youth and voluntary service organisations with concepts and methods on various topics related to racism, such as empowerment, micro-aggression, power dynamics, stereotypes, prejudice, oppression, colonialism and intolerance. **Managing Organisational Change: Tools and methods to become a diversity-sensitive NGO** is the method book for this publication containing tools and exercises for addressing diversity and inclusion in organisations. The guide was produced as part of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project **Standing together against Racism in Europe – STAR E**.

To dive deeper into the issues revolving around anti-racism and inclusion in the context of international volunteering and global education, here are some suggestions for further readings!



The **Method Toolkit for designing trainings and seminars for international mobilities** includes a wide selection of inclusive, group-dynamic methods. In this handbook, you will find answers to the following questions: What do you need to keep in mind when organising inclusive seminars? How can playful and dynamic methods such as theatre, constellation or movement exercises be adapted in such a way that the whole group can participate actively and equally? This publication was produced as part of a Strategic Partnership Project “**Inspired by Inclusion**“, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme and carried out by five partner organisations from Austria, Germany, and Spain including **Grenzenlos (ICYE Austria)**.

Want to become an inspiring trainer? Check out the **Manual for self-learning of trainers from fewer opportunity backgrounds**. You can also watch video tutorials to support the learning and implementation [here](#). Get inspired by inclusion!

Test your knowledge on racial discrimination and check your bias on [United Nation's website!](#)



UNITED for Intercultural Action has also published a [list](#) of useful resources for youth workers and human rights educators. Here are a few highlights: a **Manual** on combating hate speech through human rights education and **Dangers of Words | Leaflet** with a list of commonly used words and phrases in the field of anti-racism and what they mean in the world of today.