Greener Together
Policy
BASELINE REPORT
Introduction

Greener Together - ICYE’s Policy for a Sustainable and Regenerative Future – has been approved in 2022 by the members of the ICYE Federation. In the policy, the National Committees (NCs) commit themselves to promote climate justice and environmental regeneration from an intercultural, human rights and intersectional approach. Our main goal is to advance, sensitize on, and advocate for environmental sustainability and regeneration.

To be able to evaluate how the implementation of Greener Together is progressing, the ICYE Federation conducted a baseline survey from March to June 2023 among our members to understand where each NC is starting from. The survey explored in 10 questions their commitment and existing work regarding climate justice and environmental regeneration in 2022 – this is before ICYE started with the implementation of the policy.

The Baseline Survey received responses from 37 of the 41 NCs plus from the International Office (38 responses in total), representing a 90% response rate – which can be considered representative of ICYE’s member base. From the region of Americas 10 out of 10 NCs participated in the survey. In Asia 9 out of 9 NCs shared their feedback while 6 of the 8 members in Africa filled out the survey (missing are ICYE Morocco and ICYE South Africa). From the European region 12 of the 14 NC responded (missing are ICYE France and ICYE Poland).

Summary of Results

The survey results show that NCs are aware of the climate crisis and are addressing it in their work but so far not strategically nor consistently. While most offices rate themselves as average on being a “green office” and many applied some environmentally friendly practices in 2022, there are still clear gaps towards the comprehensive policy commitments. Particularly in the areas of training and orientation as well as in the systematic use of the policy in the volunteer cycle, more progress needs to be made. However, responses also indicate that there is an appetite amongst offices to do more in the future, particularly as some offices are slowly emerging from the effects of the COVID19 pandemic.

Suggestions by the respondents on how to implement the Greener Together Policy:

1. The development of a standard orientation package for staff, volunteers, host families, and other people associated with ICYE.
2. Guidance on how to integrate orientation around climate justice and environmental regeneration into all phases of the volunteer cycle.
3. Developing a standard check-list to help offices to monitor their performance.
4. Development of “minimum solutions” for offices with low resources.
5. Collecting environmentally friendly practices from NCs and sharing them with each other.
Results of the Baseline Survey

a) Level of commitment to environmental sustainability in 2022

Responses to this question[1] show that 3 NCs (ICYE Bolivia, ICYE Brazil and ICYE India) consider themselves more advanced in their commitment regarding environmental sustainability and ICYE Vietnam already developed a strategic plan to address environmental sustainability in 2022. 25 respondents on the other hand reported that in 2022 their NCs only implemented isolated actions, while 8 NCs did not implement any specific actions on environmental sustainability.

13 NCs commented on the kind of actions they were taking to promote environmental sustainability. These included:

- Promotion of environmentally friendly practices at the offices (reducing/recycling/ repurposing, local products with no or little packaging, use of public transport, waste management)
- Promotion of environmentally friendly practices during camps (recycling/ repurposing, use of public transport, waste management, offering plant based/vegetarian meals during camps)
- Engagement with environmental projects and engaging volunteers at local level (e.g. to join local protest on environmental issues)
- ICYE Uganda highlighted that they work through local partners to promote environmental awareness raising programmes

b) Training on ecological issues

8 NCs indicated that they have trained either most or some of their staff, co-workers or board members on ecological issues in 2022. ICYE Italy e.g. trained four staff in the framework of their international project on upcycling. Moreover, they hosted most youth exchanges in an eco-hostel, where participants and staff can learn and adopt good practices.

In addition, 7 NCs already have dedicated staff/ board members who are trained to raise awareness on ecological issues. More than two thirds of the NC indicated however, that no training had been conducted for staff, co-workers or board members in 2022.

[1] 1 NC had not responded to this question
On a positive note, most offices have included ecological issues in their work with volunteers in general (almost two thirds), although less systematically in the different steps of the cycle. While ecological issues were mentioned most frequently in the pre-departure and on-arrival camp, this was less so in the final evaluation camp. 5 NCs indicated that they had not mentioned ecological issues at all during their volunteer cycle in 2022.

ICYE Mexico gave an example on how they implemented an action day in the mid-term seminar in 2022 with volunteers. They talked about ecological issues, and the volunteers then developed their personal action plan with some ecological actions for the rest of their program.

d) Implementation of specific activities / sessions on ecological issues in the volunteering cycles

16 NCs had not conducted specific sessions on ecological issues with the volunteers in 2022. In comparison, 22 NCs had conducted specific activities or sessions – though mostly outside of the regular moments of the volunteering cycle with 13 responses.

e) Orientation of host families / projects on environmental issues

Most offices had not conducted any specific activities to orient host families or projects. Only ICYE/ ICDE India and ICYE Philippines/ GIED organised awareness raising activities with host families or host projects in 2022.
Whereas 24 NCs indicated no engagement, 12 NCs were actively doing advocacy or campaign work on environmental issues in 2022. This entailed mostly campaign activities with no direct interaction with decision or policy makers. ICYE/ United Planet Tanzania e.g. partnered with Voice of Youth Tanzania in the climate justice campaign #Back2Green, planting trees and raising awareness in schools. ICYE/ ICDE India supported a host project in the campaign Plant a tree - Plant a Hope while ICYE Brazil campaigned together with Ubuntu on agroforestry and organic gardens. Other NC either supported the IVS for Climate Justice Campaign coordinated by CCIVS or global campaigns like Fridays for Future. ICYE/ JOINT Italy campaigned with partners in Spain, Croatia, India, Thailand and Cambodia on upcycling and waste management. Similarly, ICYE Ghana engaged volunteers and students to campaign on recycling and cutting down on the use of plastic products. ICYE Vietnam/ VPV campaigned with partners in an Erasmus+ project Go Green, Forever Green and developed policy papers. ICYE Nigeria developed policy papers on environmental protection together with the Development Communication Network.

26 NCs had not participated in any events or conferences on environmental topics, while 11 NCs responded that staff had. Staff in ICYE Kenya e.g. participated in online seminars that were focusing on discussions around how volunteering contributes to climate change and ways in which volunteering can be a tool to promote environmental sustainability. ICYE/ GIED Philippines was invited to speak as an expert on the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (on the conservation of oceans and seas) and on SDG 15 (Restoration of ecosystems) in a conference.

NCs rated their office as fairly green – with an average rating of 2.86 (on a scale of 1 = No, not a green office yet to 5 = Yes, a fully green office). ICYE Honduras rated their office as fully environmentally friendly.

NCs commented that in their offices they save paper, energy or water, or benefitt from particular office arrangements (in environmentally friendly building). ICYE Iceand/ AUS e.g. is renting two desks in an open office with other institutions. The building is part of a green office scheme in Reykjavik – with recycling, energy and water saving being organised by the City of Reykjavik.
introducing environmentally friendly practices – like waste reduction, composting, less use of paper, reduction of plastic, energy and water saving, better insulation, using environmentally friendly products/supplies and energy efficient equipment.

better planning and monitoring their performance - e.g. ICYE UK is planning on using on-site storage for their camp equipment rather than moving it back and forth from their current office storage. ICYE Germany/ ICJA and ICYE Iceland/ AUS want to set up an action plan on how to achieve a green office while ICYE Costa Rica plans to work on a zero waste culture. ICYE Colombia wants to connect with environmental projects that carry out carbon sequestration.

training for staff as well as orientations for volunteers, host families and host projects.

promoting green travel for volunteers and staff where possible.

connecting to local initiatives to learn more about their work.

ICYE Mexico suggested to introduce a specific day or week in the Federation where all NCs share what they are doing and how they contribute to green offices.

Several NC also highlighted that coming out of the COVID 19 pandemic, they are still understaffed and focusing on their survival and have little resources to start additional activities.

"We will try to put the green office policy into practice beyond the small steps we are already implementing." ICYE South Korea

5 NCs had not done anything in 2022. For other NCs, reusing/ recycling and the use of sustainable transport by staff were the most frequently used measures to contribute to environmental sustainability in the office, followed by energy and water saving. Staff at ICYE Kenya e.g. recycle all plastic bottles and shopping bags and are deliberate about switching off all machines and lights at the end of the work day. ICYE Switzerland only buys organic coffee & tea for the office, uses recycled paper for printing, buys only second-hand laptops and furniture and pays half of the annual subscription for the public transport for its staff. ICYE Bolivia focusses on local products and reduces the use of office materials: "Our computers are 15 years old and we try to repair and improve them instead of replacing and producing more waste."

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j) Improvements for 2023

NCs made a wide range of suggestions for improvements, related to

- introducing environmentally friendly practices – like waste reduction, composting, less use of paper, reduction of plastic, energy and water saving, better insulation, using environmentally friendly products/supplies and energy efficient equipment.
- better planning and monitoring their performance - e.g. ICYE UK is planning on using on-site storage for their camp equipment rather than moving it back and forth from their current office storage. ICYE Germany/ ICJA and ICYE Iceland/ AUS want to set up an action plan on how to achieve a green office while ICYE Costa Rica plans to work on a zero waste culture. ICYE Colombia wants to connect with environmental projects that carry out carbon sequestration.
- training for staff as well as orientations for volunteers, host families and host projects.
- promoting green travel for volunteers and staff where possible.
- connecting to local initiatives to learn more about their work.

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Results of the Baseline Survey

i) Contribution to environmental sustainability in 2022

j) Improvements for 2023