



2024

April
Newsletter

GREEN VOLUNTEERING



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GREEN VOLUNTEERING

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WHAT IS GREEN VOLUNTEERING?

This issue will focus on the topic of Green Volunteering. This can be a very broad concept, so let's dive into it together and see how we can define it. It became clear for us that everyone can have something different in mind when talking about Green Volunteering, but we all agree that it has the same goal: fighting climate change and ecological challenges.

The problem of climate change relates to various concerns such as economic growth, destruction of ecosystems, governance challenges and financial instability. As a young person, however, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the topic and all technical terms and definitions. One thing is clear though - it gets more evident that human actions and unsustainable development practices are the main contributors to these challenges. The escalating effects of climate change have the potential to significantly harm both human society and the natural world. And young people are the next generation that will have to survive this.



Green volunteering can include all kinds of activities and projects that aim to protect the environment. It comes in different shapes and sizes and it has a positive long-lasting environmental impact.



WHAT HAS CHANGED SO FAR? <<<

We can't deny that many people have changed their lifestyle, we switched to reusable containers and cups, we consume less animal products and more plant-based meals, we ride a bike instead of driving a personal car, and we take the train instead of a plane when possible.

Everyday life changes

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28)

>>> WHERE ARE WE STANDING?

Still the World Meteorological Organization confirmed **2023 as the warmest year we have on record**. And the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) that was held at the end of 2023 didn't show a great picture either – the world's progress on addressing and fighting climate change is too slow across all areas of climate action: from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to strengthening resilience to a changing climate, to getting the financial and technological support to vulnerable nations. (UN, 2024)

We need to take environmental-friendly actions now, otherwise everyone will be severely influenced. And one of the population groups that need to face the impact would be the younger generation that would have to find impossible solutions.

What are we planning to do about it?

>>> ICYE ACTIONS

ICYE is recognising that big groups of society lack a more holistic understanding of the problem. This is why we focus on raising awareness of the importance of green volunteering, but we are also planning on taking concrete steps to encourage this.

One of the things we need to mention is the Green Volunteering Package. This is still in progress, but the goal is to **increase the volunteers' environmental and global consciousness** through trainings, sessions and campaigns, and for them to change their behaviour while in the meantime communities increase their awareness and contribute to the regeneration of the environment in their region.

ICYE GREEN FUND <<<

During our last General Assembly in 2023 in Ghana, it was decided that for every volunteer there will be a “green fee” contribution to a **Green Fund**. The amount will be allocated annually to projects in the Global South. The aim is to contribute to climate injustice and environmental racism by supporting organisations and projects that help the ones who are often unheard and overlooked.

Green Grants for a Greater Good



What motivates young people to volunteer for the environment?

When asked about the **most important things, our volunteers learned** in their projects, they shared the following:

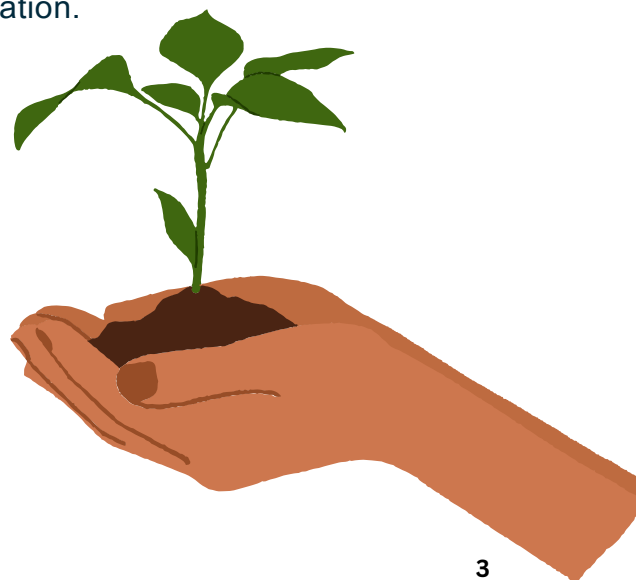
- “To plant and maintain plants”
- “Environmental facts about recycling, nature and garden, being patient”
- “Bioconstruction and in general permaculture”
- “I also learned which parts of waste can still be recycled and how these processes work.”
- “Knowledge about plants, ecosystems, outdoor activities with kids.”
- “How to take care of plants. How to use special tools.”
- “A lot about gardening”



>>> ICYE EXCHANGEE'S EVALUATION SURVEY

Studies show it's mostly **personal knowledge of and attachment to nature** - as the main motivation to engage in activities that help the environment.

Based on our *Exchangee's Final Evaluation Survey for Programme year 2022-23*, 21% of the participants (40 out of 188) were involved in environmental / green projects. Out of them 28 did their volunteering in the Global South. Their main activities were to help in the garden, take care of the plants, or plant new ones, help in recycling stations and waste sorting. The participants enjoyed most working outdoors, in the nature, they described it as a **stress-free environment**, and it was good for them to work in reforestation.



WHAT DOES GREEN VOLUNTEERING MEAN TO YOU?

We asked current volunteers about their opinion and here is what they shared with us.



Daniel Müller, volunteer from Germany in ASVO



Jonah Byars, volunteer from Grenzenlos, Austria, in ACI

TESTIMONIALS:

Daniel Müller, volunteer from Germany in ASVO (sea turtle conservation project in Costa Rica):

“Green volunteering would mean to me that the environmental impact of volunteering is reduced to a minimum. For me this means that flights should be avoided or used at very low frequency. Also the accommodation of the volunteer should provide mostly plant based food and mind resources such as water and electricity”

Jonah Byars, volunteer from Grenzenlos, Austria, in ACI (Costa Rica):

“For me, green volunteering means dedicating time and energy to initiatives that aim to protect and restore the environment, as well as living in a sustainable manner. This can mean a variety of things such as volunteering at projects whose aim it is to make a positive impact on the environment, for example conservation projects. However, green volunteering goes beyond these specific projects. It also entails cultivating a general awareness of sustainable living practices in everyday life. This awareness involves making conscious choices to reduce one's ecological footprint, such as practicing energy and water conservation, reducing waste, and supporting environmentally friendly products”

GREEN VOLUNTEERING

AN INTERVIEW WITH HANNA SAINIO, ICYE FINLAND

»»» HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND “GREEN VOLUNTEERING” AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS IN YOUR OPINION?

To me, Green Volunteering could mean different things, depending on the person and context, yet being as green as possible, holistically, and beneficial from many perspectives.

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON EVERYDAY LIFE

»»» HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT YOUR WORK?

It affects my work mostly as a part of the training content, but also mentally, since it is a topic very much discussed overall, causing anxiety and questions about our responsibility and ways to act against the negative changes. In Helsinki and Southern Finland, climate change has meant more winds and storms, and changes in the weather conditions. So far, this has not yet changed our lives too much physically though, e.g. the way we get to work or arrange activities.

»»» HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN GREEN PROJECTS?

It seems to me that some of them are already aware of climate issues and more or less eager to act, while others don't seem to be too interested in the topic yet. Then again, we haven't had the topic on our agenda for that long, nor organised workshops or deeper discussions on the effect of the climate change in different contexts, so this would be a good activity for our next training camp, discussing openly about our personal experiences. I believe volunteers could get motivated to engage on the topic - if we link it e.g. to personal reasons, give them concrete possibilities to act, or show them strong evidence from the media or studies and portray the information in an encouraging or otherwise touching way. We would need to analyse, what motivates volunteers to act, who gets motivated, and by what kind of projects.

»»» COULD YOU SHARE WITH US MORE ABOUT THE DIFFERENT ACTIONS YOU TAKE IN YOUR OFFICE?

Personally, I don't work in the office, but I can say with the experience I have from the board meetings and other activities organised at the office that their practices are already quite green. For example, they save on water and energy, paper and all materials as much as possible by reusing and recycling about everything. They use public transportation, eat mostly vegetarian food and don't buy any new furniture or equipment or gadgets unless absolutely necessary.

ICYE Newsletter

ICYE XXXIII General Assembly - Ghana

Just a few months ago ICYE had the XXXIII General Assembly in Accra, Ghana from 13th-17th November 2023. This was a great opportunity for some of our members to meet, exchange ideas, take important decisions and have fun. With that in mind, we share with you some key moments:



➤➤➤ ICYE Board of Managers (BoM)

We have a new Board of Managers:

- Chairperson: Hester Kuijk Breitenmoser (ICYE Switzerland)
- Treasurer: Adeolu Onamade (ICYE Nigeria)
- Members: Rhenelyn Queen Dadulo (GIED/ ICYE Philippines) and Mariela Ortiz Suarez (SES/ ICYE Argentina)

➤➤➤ New Sub Committees

- Standing Committee on the Future of the Federation
- Sub Committee on Supporting and Monitoring the Implementation of the ICYE Policies
- Sub Committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Equality
- Sub Committee on Quality Assurance/ Minimal Conditions
- Sub Committee of Regional Representatives

➤➤➤ Youth Engagement Committee (YEC)

During the GA, the decisions was taken to establish a Youth Engagement Committee that will empower young people in the Federation to be more vocal about their views and be more active on different levels. The Youth Engagement Committee will encourage intergenerational collaboration and transmission of knowledge in all directions.

ICYE Newsletter

»»» Youth Engagement Committee (YEC)

In February we opened the applications for the Youth Engagement Committee and in March we selected 15 young people from all four regions for the first ICYE Youth Engagement Committee:

In the upcoming months they will have regular online meetings with the YEC Supporting Committee to bring them on board, share valuable lessons and offer the first trainings. We wish them good luck and can't wait to see all the great work they will do in our Federation!



»»» Board of Managers Meeting

Berlin, 21-23.02.2024



At the end of February there was a BoM meeting at the ICYE International Office in Berlin, Germany. The three days were filled with intense, but very fruitful discussions around the current situation in the Federation and the strategic plan for the future.

ICYE Newsletter

>>> **Safer Together Policy against Sexual Violence** **Training of Trainers, Songkhla/ Thailand - 08.-12.03.2024** **Training of Trainers, Quito/ Ecuador - 10.-14.04.2024**

In March and April, ICYE conducted two five days training of trainers in Thailand and Ecuador with representatives from all the members in the respective region plus guests from host projects. They not only learned about the root causes of sexual violence, but also discussed prevention and response measures and started to develop their own action plan to address sexual violence in international volunteering.



➤➤➤ Advocacy Laboratory, Brussels (26.02-01.03.2024)

In February, there was an Advocacy Laboratory in Brussels/ Belgium, as part of our Decolonise! IVS project. Over 25 passionate young individuals from IVS organisations in Argentina, Mexico, Togo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Indonesia, Nepal, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Albania, Hungary, Turkey, Finland and Belgium gathered in the heart of Europe for an intensive training on how to advocate for decolonizing volunteering and empowering youth.

The aim of this weeklong training was to work on our long-term advocacy strategy on addressing issues like social injustice, visa barriers for young volunteers and decolonisation of funding opportunities for youth. **Anja Stuckert** (Secretary General ICYE and mentor of the youth advocates since 2023) and **Mariela Ortiz Suarez** (Subir al Sur Argentina, ICYE BoM member, and mentor of the youth advocates since 2023) facilitated the training with a non-formal education approach. Participants gained new knowledge and skills on how to build a good advocacy strategy, that takes into consideration the different stakeholders and different advocacy approaches.



➤➤➤ Networking event, Brussels - 27.02.2024

All participants could contribute at the different stages of the training, and they were encouraged to actively express opinions and thoughts. By creating a safe environment and bringing many different points of view, participants created a long-term advocacy framework and divided into working groups to work on materials to support the work that was done until now in the Decolonise! IVS project, and to lay a good foundation for the future advocacy actions.

One of the highlights of the Advocacy Lab was the **Networking Event** on 27th of February. Over 40 participants from different organisations gathered for a dynamic discussion on decolonisation. We had a chance to present the Decolonise! IVS project by showing the developed tools – the Decolonise Card Game and the Self-Assessment tool for organisations, plus the participatory action research and the advocacy work. The inspiring speech of Chafik Allal (ITECO) in the beginning sparked an enriching discussion. The Networking Event used methods like the World Café and a Fish Bowl Debate, and they were described as some of the most interesting moments of the whole week. This was a great opportunity to build an advocacy network with various like-minded organisations with similar advocacy asks.



In addition, we had a very thoughtful presentation from an external speaker from EuropaHuis that shared valuable knowledge on how to advocate, together with practical tips on the preparation process and stakeholder mapping. Participants could ask questions to the speaker, and they got insights that helped when developing the next steps in our advocacy strategy.

During a visit to the European Parliament, the young advocates had a presentation on the structure of the European Union and EU Parliament, and they got a chance to learn more about how decisions are made. Participants also opened critical discussion on the challenges young people face when they want to volunteer abroad.



The key learning of this training was that advocacy is **collaborative work**. By discussing different successful advocacy examples during the week, participants left the training with positive mindset that change is possible, and it is up to us to continue the hard work. Equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, participants will proceed working in groups on different tasks and hopefully move to the next phase of our advocacy work to decolonise power relations in international voluntary service!

**DECOLONISE
VOLUNTEERING!**

get ready for equality..

IN MEMORY OF REGINA MÉRY

We are sad to inform you of the passing away of Regina Méry in March 2024. Regina served as the Executive for Programs in the ICYE International Office in Berlin from the late 1970s and through the 1990s. She was a dynamic leader of ICYE in those decades, always full of energy and ideas for new programming directions for ICYE. This is a great loss to the ICYE community.

Ed Gragert shared with us a bit on what it was to work with her. May this serve as a living tribute to her memory.

REMEMBERING REGINA MÉRY

ED GRAGERT



➤➤➤ We worked an ocean apart, I in New York and Regina in Berlin. But, her warmth, energy, humor and vision of how the lives of young people could be forever changed through ICYE brought us close together. Regina Méry served as Executive for Administration for ICYE in the International Office in Berlin during the late 1970s through the 1990s. I met her in 1980 when we both experienced our first General Assembly in Monterenzio, Italy. At that GA, more than once we spent hours in difficult discussions about ICYE finances and program directions. In working through these issues, it was my first opportunity to observe her caring soul as she looked after the needs of each of the country delegates.

Over the next years, Regina was a huge part of so many lives, providing professional (and multi-lingual) leadership and sharing personal experiences with hundreds of members of ICYE National Committees and exchangees from around the world. She was a warm friend and inspirational role model to many.



One of her many accomplishments was to put together a small committee (called the “Study-Cum-Workgroup”) of NCs with which she worked to develop minimum standards across the global program for administration and program to ensure a high quality exchange year for all ICYE exchangees worldwide. This is just one small example of the kind of work she did ‘behind the scenes’ to enhance the world of ICYE.

I’ll never forget the discussions we had in the early 1980s about whether the ICYE International Office should purchase a personal computer to handle data and financial management. She was totally against having such a machine in the office. On one trip to New York in 1984 (was it really 40 years ago?), I showed her how the computers in the ICYE-US office were facilitating our work, but she was not impressed. Later the same day, we were walking by a store in Manhattan and I pointed out the first of the new Macintosh computers. She reluctantly went in with me. Sitting in front of the Mac, she turned it on and up came the famous smile on the screen that was a feature of those early machines. She said, “It smiled at me” and she smiled back, connecting to what been just a machine a few minutes earlier. **That was how the International Office turned to Macs for its office computers!**

Each July Regina and I worked across the Atlantic to arrange the international travel, including chartering of entire airplanes, of over 600-800 exchangees who passed through the “summer circuses” in Chicago and Brussels/Frankfurt. Exchangees never saw the inner workings that made their experiences happen, but Regina was there to make sure it went smoothly. **She was a joy to work with.**

ICYE was very fortunate to have had Regina Méry in Berlin. Her administrative skills led the organization through some difficult times. She shared her beautiful smile and wry humor with everyone. I am very privileged to have been one of them. That smile and warmth continue to light up my life.

Ed

Exchangee to South Korea 1966-67

ICYE-US Executive Director 1979-90

