

# Intercultural Talk

ICYE NEWSLETTER

## Cultural Humility



### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Introduction to Cultural Humility
- Where is the humility in IVS?
- Trainings to address sexual violence in IVS
- *Greener Together and Safer Together* - Baseline Reports
- Update on Decolonize IVS
- New ESC volunteer at the IO



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# Cultural Humility- an Introduction

This issue's theme is cultural humility, a concept I had not heard about before, but when I found out the meaning, it was clear to see the connection with ICYE's values and goals. To understand the term cultural humility, you first need to understand the term cultural competency.

## Cultural competency

The term was popularized in the 1980's by Terry L. Coss, PhD., but only became more mainstream in the beginning of the 2000s. In 2001, William defined cultural competence as "the ability of individuals and systems to work or respond effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or organization being served" [1]. The term was first used mainly in the area of healthcare, to indicate wrong diagnosis because of lacking intercultural competency of medical staff. But the importance of cultural competency was soon also accepted for other fields, like in schools or businesses.

At university, I was taught Hofstede's six dimensions [2] to understand Chinese culture and etiquette in a business setting during my preparation training before arriving in China. But what we failed to learn was that by learning these rules, we in some way strengthened stereotypes about the Chinese we were going to meet and failed to take into account our own culture. This is what cultural humility has to offer.

## Cultural humility

In the end of the 1990's, cultural humility was introduced in academic literature. Instead of being a "fixed set of knowledge or training" [3] as cultural competency, it refers to an attitude. The difference from cultural competency lies in that when you communicate with a person from a different culture, you do so with an open and curious manner. This curiosity is not only focused on the person you talk with, but just as much towards yourself, reflecting on your own shortcomings, privileges and power.

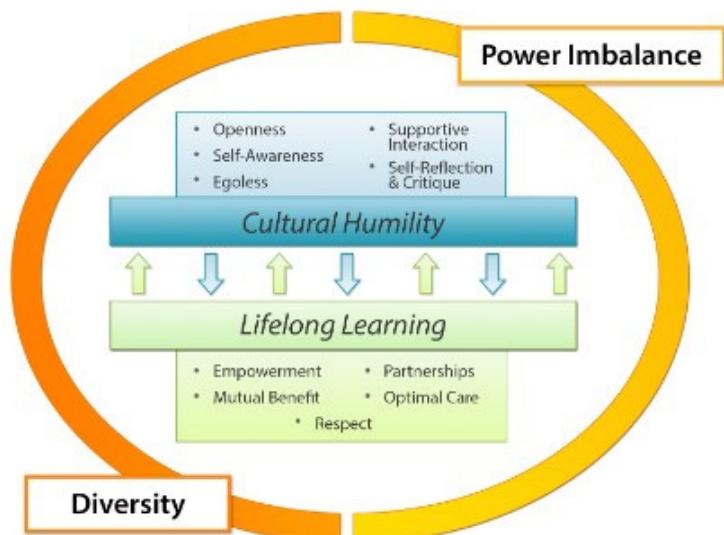


Figure 1. A concept analysis of cultural humility.

Source [4]:

# Cultural Humility- an Introduction

Another difference is that as I mentioned, we were taught in university cultural competency and mastered at graduation a certain understanding of the Chinese culture. Cultural humility though believes that this is an ongoing process, where you keep learning and challenging yourself, and remain humble about this.

## Cultural humility and volunteering

For many volunteers when they go abroad, it is the first time leaving not just their home and family, but also their familiar surroundings to go to a place where even the smallest changes can become a big deal. This can result in a culture shock. To prepare young people going abroad to volunteer, it is key to understand cultural humility. Not only do they need to know about the new country and their customs, belief systems, values, but it is also important that they are aware that cultures are diverse and represent social constructions so that the difference between your own and the new culture is that it is a different way how groups of people construct their societies.

Baylor University created a guide for volunteers named “How Cultural Humility Can Bridge Gaps Between Volunteers and the Communities they Serve” [5] to give advice for how volunteers can become more aware of their own prejudices.

Examples of questions volunteers could be asking themselves:

- *What biases might I have against this culture that I have learned from media or other sources?*
- *What biases do I have about myself that I need to intentionally explore and check?*
- *What has been the context of volunteers in this space?*
- *How does white supremacy affect my assumptions about a community, as well as the relationship between volunteers and community members?*

I believe that it is key to address cultural difference with an attitude of humility both now and in future work and hope this article has been useful for you.

Stine Jensen (Danish ESC volunteer in Germany)

[1] Williams, B. (2001). Accomplishing cross cultural competence in youth development programs. Journal of Extension, 39(6), 1-6. Accomplishing Cross Cultural Competence in Youth Development Programs (joe.org).

[2] <https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/>

[3] Cooks-Campbell, A. (2022) How cultural humility and cultural competence impact belonging, How Cultural Humility versus Cultural Competence Impacts Belonging (betterup.com) Sacred Heart University, Cultural Humility vs. Cultural Competence: A Lifelong Journey Journey <https://onlineprograms.sacredheart.edu/resources/article/cultural-humility-cultural-competence/>

[4] C. Foronda, D.L. Bautista, M. M. Reinholdt, K. Ousman. Cultural Humility: a Concept Analysis. in Journal of Transcultural Nursing, Volume 27 Issue 3 (May 2016), p 214.

[5] Baylor University How-to-Practice-Cultural-Humility-PDF-1.pdf (baylor.edu).

# Where is the humility in IVS?

“In a world of imbalance of power, cultural humility is a process of openness, self-awareness, egolessness, and the incorporation of self-reflection and criticism after voluntarily interacting with different people.”[1]

I think that, as a society, in these difficult times, we have lost a little bit the focus on “being humble”. And I am not referring to being humble as synonymous with poverty or simplicity. I'm talking about true humility: that the main reason for your actions to help someone or participate in a cause is pure and without the intention of receiving something in return. To put yourself in another person's shoes and try to help, just because. Because you don't need more reasons to want to help and contribute, to try to make the other person happier; and why not, transform the reality.

To be honest, it's been a while since I thought about this concept, which is both very broad and concrete. A clear reflection that, since I've been living in my volunteer project, words and philosophies are more in the background because action is the protagonist of my every day. I think that volunteering and/or international volunteering (IVS) is a good place to put this theoretical connector into practice, to bring it down to reality. Where the formalities and the academic are not important, but where you can see on a daily basis people acting from a place of love and solidarity, and from the heart of humility; and together these are, in my opinion, one of the main drivers of social change.

Volunteering and/or IVS is an experience where one learns about life and carries out the culture of humility. Because yes, we live in an unfair and at times very dark world, but there are people willing to try to change this. During my volunteering, I relearned about identity, values, privileges, discrimination and opportunities; I discovered other cultures and ways of doing things. It was also a journey of self-discovery, where I questioned, criticized, reflected, crossed out, erased, and rewrote. For all this, it is worth volunteering. Although it is an action that ‘helps others’, in my opinion, volunteering is self-centered, because it gives you a lot, even more than what you give.

The culture of humility and volunteerism is like coffee with milk: a mixture of black and white that does not form grey. A unique combination, where everyone has their preference but no matter how it is, it is always good to start the morning with a good cup of coffee with milk.

Daniela Corbalan (Argentinian ICYE volunteer in Germany)

C. Foronda, D.L. Bautista, M. M. Reinholdt, K. Ousman. *Cultural Humility: a Concept Analysis.* in Journal of Transcultural Nursing, Volume 27 Issue 3 (May 2016), p 213.

# Trainings to Address Sexual Violence



*My favourite part was on response because I find this the most challenging. No matter the rational knowledge about the topic, emotions always run high, so having mechanisms and a referral route in place really helps.*

This spring, two trainings to address sexual violence in IVS were held first in Nairobi and then in Vienna. Participants from ICYE members in the Africa and the European region came together to strengthen their knowledge and capacities on how to prevent and respond to sexual violence in their work in a professional and survivor-centred way.

They discussed how sexual violence is rooted in discriminatory gender norms and how sexual harassment is often belittled but has a lasting impact on victims. Both groups analysed how visible and extreme forms of violence are built upon an invisible and normalized foundation of violent practices that support and perpetuate more overt acts of violence.

Participants facilitated most of the interactive activities, always taking into account how to apply the training in their local context. Especially the role plays and case studies were pointed out as useful for reflecting on their own practices.

In March and April 2024, two more trainings, one for the Americas and one for the Asia-Pacific region are planned. A training manual will also be available in English and Spanish.

The training in Nairobi was made possible with the financial support of the UNESCO participation programme and the Mekriba Foundation while the training in Vienna was co-funded by the European Union.

# Baseline Reports

In May and June 2023, ICYE members were asked to respond to baseline questions regarding ICYE's new *Greener Together* and *Safer Together* policies.

## **Greener Together - ICYE's commitment for a sustainable and regenerative future**

The Baseline Survey to evaluate the situation before the implementation of our environmental commitments received responses from 37 members plus from the International Office, representing a 90% response rate. The results show that most of the NCs are already addressing environmental issues 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 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 to implement the policy e.g. included introducing environmentally friendly practices in all offices, training for staff as well as orientations for volunteers, connecting with local initiatives and introducing a specific day or week in the ICYE Federation where all NCs share what they are doing and how they contribute to environmental regeneration and climate justice.

## **Safer Together - ICYE's policy addressing sexual violence in international volunteering**

35 members of the ICYE Federation responded the baseline survey. The results show, that before the *Safer Together* Policy was implemented, systematic and institutionalised prevention and response measures to address sexual violence only existed in very few National Committees (NC). Less than half of the NC have a focal person on sexual violence, trained staff and clear structures and processes in place to respond to cases. 29 members raised awareness on the topic of sexual violence in 2022 and included the topic during different moments of the volunteering cycle but it is not clear whether this is done in a systematic way.

In 2022, 12 cases of sexual violence (including cases of sexual harassment) were reported to the NC. Of these, four were communicated to the local authorities, as some of the cases presented forms of sexual harassment or an inappropriate comment that were not applicable for criminal prosecution while the survivors in the other cases decided not to report them.

# Decolonise IVS! Update



## Belgium - February 2023

Since the last newsletter, a lot has happened in the Decolonise IVS! project. In February we had the introduction to the Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Brussels, where we got to discuss the project and got tools on how to do the research back in our organisations during the spring. The researchers initiated discussions in their organisations to create awareness on the topic, but also to locate where the challenges are so we know where we can create a change in the IVS world.



## Italy - July 2023

The research culminated in Ferrera, Italy in July, where both PAR researchers and advocacy team members gathered together to work further on our project and share the current results and integrate them together.

## France - February 2023

The week after the PAR training in Brussels, the advocacy group met in Paris. They created a Decolonise! advocacy plan. Their role is to take another angle of affecting our organisations and hopefully also decision makers to promote awareness of the problematic ways that neocolonialism shows up in the institutions that shape our work.



## Austria - September 2023

In the end September, some of the coordinators together with participants from the Think Tank will develop several tools that can later be used by IVS organisations to reflect on issues around Decolonisation. This includes a Self-Assessment tool and a massive open online course, that can be used by volunteers as an additional reflection tool in their pre-departure camps and help them to find paths towards an IVS based on global justice.

# Announcements

During September changes are happening in the IO, as it is time for us to say Auf Wiedersehen to our ESC volunteer Stine Jensen and welcome the new one.

## New Volunteer at the IO

Hello everyone!

My name is Ruslana and I am from Bulgaria. I am a very positive person who enjoys going out and spending time with friends and family. I am passionate about topics related to social issues, equality, education and youth. My experience has been very colorful so far. I have been in different organisations, but I am looking forward to having the opportunity to join ICYE and learn many new things while also working for a cause. You can always feel free to reach out to me. I can't wait to join you very soon!



## Upcoming General Assembly

We are looking forward to seeing all BoM members, the GA President, Delegates and Observers at the upcoming ICYE General Assembly in Accra, Ghana from

**13.11.2023 - 17.11.2023**

Please note there is a second call for Full or Associate Members to nominate candidates for the BoM Treasurer and Member positions before 12th of October.

## Online Dialogue scheduled

Please remember that we have the next online dialogue on

**04.10.2023 at 15:00 CEST**

The topic is how to choose and promote host projects, with an input from VASE/ ICYE Ecuador.

Please check your email or Sharepoint for the Zoom link