



ICYE

NEWSLETTER

N°62: International Volunteer Year



ICYE Italy/JOINT



ICYE Thailand/VSA

2026: IVY

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IVY: A run-through

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Volunteer Year (IVY), to recognize volunteering as a key driver of sustainable development. Valuing and measuring volunteer contributions, formal and informal, is key to strengthening global understanding and shaping innovative models for the future. IVY 2026 celebrates volunteers, promotes their integration into development strategies, and encourages global collaboration to enhance the impact of volunteerism. (United Nations, 2025).



ICYE México/SIJUVE

SOME STATS!



Globally, 1 in 4 people volunteered in 2022



Gen Z and Millennials make up **48%** of volunteers

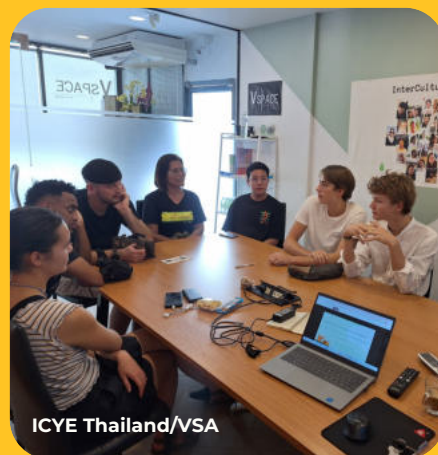


94% of volunteers say it enriches their sense of purpose

Source: (Townsend, 2026)

ALL VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

Whether formal or informal, in-person or digital, local or cross-border, every act of volunteering counts. It takes many forms, including mutual aid, caregiving, skill-sharing and civic engagement. Each deserves visibility and support.



ICYE Thailand/VSA

Virtual Volunteering

Perspectives from LIVE-Ex participants

by **Motsatsi Ramatlho and Phila Mdletshe**

LIVE-Ex is an Erasmus+ funded initiative coordinated by ICYE and CCIVS with eight partner organisations across Sub-Saharan Africa in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe. The programme strengthens digital skills, advocacy capacity, and intercultural learning, grounded in decolonial perspectives and a commitment to social and climate justice. For this newsletter, our LIVE-Ex participants Motsatsi and Phila share their views on how virtual volunteering works.

What is virtual volunteering?

Motsatsi: “According to my understanding, virtual volunteering is about using online platforms to make a positive difference in people's lives. It involves organising activities, running online sessions, and supporting or educating communities without having to be there in person. I see it as a great way to share your time, skills, and knowledge with others, no matter where you are. For me, virtual volunteering shows that distance doesn't stop us from helping others, it simply gives us a different way to create meaningful change and connect with people from all over the world.”



Motsatsi

Why do people choose to volunteer virtually?

Phila: “Many people choose virtual volunteering because it is cost-effective and convenient. Volunteers do not need to spend money on transport, fuel, accommodation, or travel documents such as visas. It also saves time and allows volunteers to balance volunteering with work, studies, or family responsibilities. Virtual volunteering makes it easy to connect with people from different countries, share knowledge, and collaborate on projects. Organisations can also include more participants in meetings and training sessions at a much lower cost than hosting physical events. In addition, virtual volunteering reduces travel, helping to lower carbon emissions and making it a more environmentally friendly way of volunteering.”



Phila

How has virtual volunteering allowed organisations to expand their reach or services?

Phila: “As a mentee in the LIVE-Ex programme through the South Africa Volunteer Work Camp Association (SAVWA), I have learned how organisations can work together across Africa and around the world without always meeting in person. ideas effectively using online platforms. Mentors and mentees have been able to offer peer-to-peer support, exchange experiences, and solve challenges together despite living in different countries.

Through virtual volunteering, I have experienced how organisations collaborate, plan projects provide training, and share Virtual volunteering has also enabled organisations to monitor project progress, discuss challenges, and make informed decisions through regular online meetings. This has reduced travel

costs, avoided visa challenges, saved valuable time, and allowed resources to be used directly for

community development activities instead of travel expenses”.

What is the overall impact of virtual volunteering on addressing societal needs or global challenges?

Motatsi: “Virtual volunteering has taught me that making a difference doesn't always mean travelling to another community or country. Sometimes, all it takes is a stable internet connection, a willingness to serve, and a genuine desire to help others. It also helps overcome challenges like expensive travel costs and visa processes that can prevent many young people from participating in international programmes. At the same time, reducing the need for travel means fewer carbon emissions, making virtual volunteering a more environmentally friendly way to connect and collaborate. I believe it is a powerful way to bring people together, empower young leaders, and create lasting positive change while caring for our planet.”

Phila: “It enables organisations, volunteers, and communities to work together regardless of geographical distance.

Communities benefit from quicker access to information, training, mentoring, and support through online platforms. Organisations can respond more efficiently to challenges, strengthen partnerships, and involve volunteers from different countries who bring diverse knowledge and skills.

Virtual volunteering also promotes inclusion by allowing people who may not be able to travel due to costs, disability, or other barriers to still participate and contribute meaningfully.”



Community Strengthening through Volunteering

by Sara Rodríguez

Currently, the ability to communicate is at the tip of our fingers. One might think that because of it, stronger communities should be the norm. However, sociologist Robert Putnam points out that our sense of community has significantly declined for the past half century (2000). In addition, psychologist and Harvard professor Geoff Cohen pointed out that young people are struggling with high

levels of anxiety and mental health issues at times when they desperately need a sense of connection and belonging (2023). Although there can be many possible solutions to this crisis, volunteering might be one of the strongest ones since it creates a unique and effective pathway to cultivate a stronger, purpose-filled, vibrant community for everyone.

Volunteering and human connection

The UN defines volunteering as giving time, skills, and energy freely to benefit others or contribute to a cause, without financial compensation. It can be formal or informal, local or global (2025). The great news about volunteering is that because of its nature, it connects people beyond the superficial level. It breaks any barrier that might come from backgrounds, ages, and experiences by uniting people with shared purpose and common goals.

Research done by Nichol et al. (2023) shows that engaging in volunteer activities significantly enriches social



ICYE Nigeria

development. By working together on projects that encourage cooperation and mutual respect, people expand their social circles and develop a stronger sense of belonging. Furthermore, there's a sense of collectiveness that is reinforced; a belief that the community can solve problems together.

Volunteering and community resilience

Volunteering is also the acknowledgment that although there is a government-administrative system that provides a framework for social assistance, it is often flawed and bureaucratic. Hence community involvement becomes essential for welfare. As an example, Satizábal et al. (2022) points out that community engagement for disaster risk reduction has become central to participatory emergency management. This statement can be also backed by the statistic that disaster relief volunteers aid 100 million people per year (Townsend, 2026). This could indicate why community ties get strengthened through volunteering since not only does it respond to local needs and challenges proactively but also increases civic engagement and a sense of ownership over the community.

The challenge of modern-day social building demand solutions that go beyond shallow interactions. Volunteering offers this essential bridge, proving it is a vital route for community resilience and genuine human connection. Consequently, it empowers individuals to proactively address social challenges and pursue social justice. The call to volunteer is, in essence, a call to connect, to contribute, and to build the communities we all yearn for.



ICYE Denmark

Impact in Action:

ICYE's Project Highlights

SEMBRAR ESPERANZA

Since 2002, Fundación Sembrar Esperanza has been a cornerstone of sustainable change in Ecuador, Quito. Driven by a dual philosophy of tangible support and mindset transformation, this NGO is enhancing lives and fostering ecological awareness in vulnerable communities.

Key Initiatives

- **Nurturing future leaders through early education:**

Through two kindergartens, Fundación Sembrar Esperanza provides comprehensive early learning for local children. This includes vital English language support and enriching creative subjects like sports, music, and games, setting a strong foundation for future success.

- **Championing ecological responsibility:**

At the heart of their mission is an internal ecological project that actively promotes sustainability and cultivates local environmental awareness. This hands-on approach instills a deep sense of responsibility for the planet from a young age.



Fundación Sembrar Esperanza is actively sowing the seeds for a more educated, environmentally conscious, and connected future, demonstrating profound impact through dedicated support and a commitment to sustainable development.

Impact in Action:

ICYE's Project Highlights

YMCA GOYANG INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL YOUTH CENTRE

Since its establishment in 2021, the YMCA Goyang International Cultural Youth Centre has been a dynamic hub in Ilsan, Goyang, South Korea, dedicated to empowering local youth through a vibrant blend of cultural and educational engagement.

Key Initiatives

- **Youth empowerment:** The Centre actively targets youth in the Ilsan community, providing them with a nurturing environment to grow through diverse cultural and educational activities.
- **Promoting healthy lifestyles and safety:** Volunteers play a crucial role in organising and supporting physical activities such as swimming, inline skating, golf, yoga, and gymnastics. Beyond sports, they lead vital awareness-raising sessions on critical topics like personal safety and traffic safety education, equipping youth with essential life skills.



The YMCA Goyang International Cultural Youth Centre is making a significant impact by building a foundation of well-being, knowledge, and community spirit for the young people it serves.

Impact in Action:

ICYE's Project Highlights

COOPERATIVA ONE

In Crotone, Italy, where youth unemployment stands at a challenging 64%, Cooperativa One is a vital social cooperative actively forging pathways to brighter futures through the transformative power of languages and cultural exchange.

Key Initiatives

- **Combating youth unemployment:** Cooperativa One directly addresses the critical issue of high youth unemployment by providing young people with invaluable opportunities to learn languages, gain international exposure, and develop marketable skills, significantly enhancing their future employability.
- **Enriching educational experiences:** The organisation orchestrates engaging workshops for teens and specialized school trips on historical/ artistic themes, making learning dynamic and memorable. They also facilitate group visits to the hostel and various hostel activities, creating immersive cultural experiences.



By integrating language acquisition, cultural exchange, and direct support for vulnerable groups, Cooperativa One is more than a language centre; it's a launchpad for opportunity, opening doors, and creating tangible opportunities for young people and the wider community in Crotone.

VOLUNTEER VOICES

by Trần Phạm Minh Hương

I have always looked at my volunteering days as a game. And because it is a game, sometimes I scored a goal, but sometimes I failed. And in those moments that I win, I can see that it is building up my ego, an ego that is supplemented by love, support, commentary words. But because I may have this ego, it also means, when I fail, the ego makes it hurt even more. And as I navigate my games, I learn to accept this ego, because it keeps me going on when any storms come, but I also learn to put down this ego, because ego might prevent me from seeing the truth, the truth from the world around me and my own truth. That is something very philosophical until now :-)) and that is also how me, myself, and my thinking have changed thanks to this journey.

I would say this adventure is one of the most lonely time I have ever gone through in my life. I have always grown up being a little bit like an outsider, thanks (again) to the way I think, but fortunate enough to have all the loving people and a safety nest around me. Coming here, as long as I was sailing my trip and thanks to the force of life, like the force of water, I also received so much support and learned so many things at my workplace.



However, it was totally lonely, not because I do not meet people who are absolutely loving, curious, kind, but because the time is too short for me to build up any relationship that I could find myself lean on to.

In Vietnamese and Buddhism philosophy, there are two concepts that I really like: “được” and “mất”. “Được” is when you get or achieve something, and it then associates with the positive feeling; while “Mất” is when you lose something, yes a very negative feeling. I would personally say the nearest exact translation for it is “win” and “lose”.

VOLUNTEER VOICES

by Trần Phạm Minh Hương



But here, when I am lonely, and when no one understands me, it might feel like a loss, but it is also a win. I win because I get my own approval. I approved myself and I understand myself.

A loss actually creates a win. And I think we as human beings, will keep winning and losing continuously in our life, like a thousand waves, going up and down. And during all of these waves, you will also encounter so many people standing beside you and holding ground for you. That is how my volunteering year became so wholeful, because of the other volunteers, the colleagues and all the families back home. So I hope everyone who is preparing for this, will find the wave as something interesting to explore, like you are going to surf on it. I am sure that it is a worthwhile adventure :-).

VOLUNTEER VOICES

by Sara Rodríguez

Trying to summarise the experience of volunteering abroad in a couple of sentences has been the most challenging task I ever did as the ICYE International Office's volunteer. I can assure you this experience has been an integral part of my growth as an individual. Here at the IO, I've always felt like part of the team. This meant truly starting to believe in my abilities while discovering new aspects of it. I renewed my passion for communication. Previously, I struggled a lot with trying to connect my creativeness with strategy, discipline and purpose, but as I did my daily tasks and projects I've improved immensely. I wholeheartedly believe that that wouldn't have been on my cards if it weren't for the IO team: Anja, Courtney, Dennis, Katja and Nicolaus.

Volunteering has gained a new meaning for me. As far as I can remember, volunteering has been part of my life. From being the teacher's helper back in elementary school, tutoring my classmates in middle school, participating in crowdfunding activities in high school, to eventually organising community volunteering in university - I've always felt naturally pulled into that world. Through these experiences I've also found a deeper desire and curiosity to understand those around me. Why do they think the way they do? How are we so alike and different at the same time?



What can they teach me through their views? Every day, the IO team taught me about a true desire for challenging viewpoints and community building. As a result, there's a newfound meaning of volunteering for me: exchanging experiences to create an ideal world. Maybe this sounds a bit naïve but I've found that a glimpse of delusion is needed to strengthen your soul; to continuously get up and desire to work for said purpose. Now I can confidently say that there's no other calling in life if not trying to connect with others while trying to better our society.

That same pursuit of connecting led me to create new friendships in my volunteering year. I've fell in love with

VOLUNTEER VOICES

by Sara Rodríguez

Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, Mozambique, Luxembourg, Spain, México, Perú and many other countries through the eyes of my new friends. As I'm preparing to go back to Honduras, I wish I could bring them as a souvenir, so my community can also experience the awesomeness and delight not only from these amazing people but also their countries. Whether through music, story times, pictures or dishes, I've been blessed with experiencing a glimpse of my friends' identities. I now uncovered a hunger to experience with my own flesh other cultures around me and share my own as well.

I look back to the Sara that was very scared yet eager to go on this journey, and I'm amazed that although I still see that essence within me, currently I witness a different version of her: more confident, strong, filled with love and determination, and with a passion for serving others. I know that I wouldn't have reached this point if it weren't for my volunteering year abroad.





World Peace Action 2026



What is it?

Aug. 15th is a Memorial Day as it constituted the end of World War II. Many people strongly wish to never repeat the horrors from 80 years ago.

Yet, people all over the world are still victimized today and suffer wars, violence and conflicts.

As part of the world peace movement of International Voluntary Service (IVS), we would like to call for your collective actions and contributions to promote peace and solidarity worldwide until August 14th, 2026!

3 Steps of Actions

You are super welcome to become active. Here is what you can do:

01. Organise a talk/ an activity on peace in your community!

When: During your final, pre-departure or on-arrival activities or anytime that is suitable before August 14th.

With whom: other volunteers, your host family or host project, community members or anybody else you feel is interested.

What: discuss what peace means and collect some key ideas or quotes on how to achieve it.

02. Post your message for peace on Padlet ([click here](#))!

Showcase the impact on peace of your ongoing volunteer action and/ or your thoughts, proposals, future actions to promote peace and solidarity worldwide.

Showcase your individual or collective activity and your thoughts around peace, preferably with a photo or drawing, during or after your activity about peace but before Aug. 14th.

Who can join?

Volunteers, communities & others who share our values!



03. Join our online event on August 14th from 11.00 - 13.00 UTC!

In the event, we are having a panel discussion with NGO representatives from countries with ongoing wars (e.g. Palestine, Myanmar, Ukraine) to discuss how volunteering is possible in conflict areas and its role to promote peace. We are also inviting a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb to share her reflections.

Register here to receive the final agenda and Zoom link:

[Registration form](#)

This global common action is co-organized by the following IVS networks;

[CCIVS](#) (Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service)

[ICYE](#) (International Cultural Youth Exchange)

[NAVO](#) (Network of African Voluntary Organisations)

[NVDA](#) (Network for Voluntary Development in Asia)

[SCI](#) (Service Civil International)

IVS IN ACTION

In 2023, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2026 as the [International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development \(IVY\)](#), with the aim to promote and recognize the impact of volunteering on sustainable development.

With our **IVS in Action Campaign**, the global IVS networks CCIVS, Alliance, SCI, ICYE alongside the regional networks NVDA and NAVO, want to show the diversity of volunteering and the impact it is having in strengthening communities, fostering solidarity and contributing to social and environmental justice.

During the month of **September 2026**, we want to collect and showcase collective actions illustrating what the International Volunteer Year means to each one of us



Who?

Everyone can submit their collective actions associated with the IVS movement, either as an international or local volunteer, as staff, as host project, as workcamp participant, as host families.



What?

The scope of contributions can be broad, covering the topics of sustainable development (along with the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#)), solidarity and peace



When?

All activities should take place and be uploaded before 30th September 2026.



How?

Include your collective action with your photos here: [Join Wakalet](#)



Visibility

All the activities will be published on the CCIVS website and on our social media channels using the hashtags #IVY2026 and #IVSACTION.



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