

IVCO 2022 Conference Report

'A NEW DAWN FOR VOLUNTEERING IN DEVELOPMENT'

Concept and editorial work: Benjamin Haas & Helene Perold



PREFACE

Forum's IVCO 2022 conference marked an important moment for the volunteering sector. As we emerge from three years of COVID-19-imposed restrictions, the theme of 'A New Dawn for Volunteering in Development' gave us a lens through which to explore what we have learned, how we have innovated, what the new normal might look like, what we have allowed to fall out of focus and what comes next. This report by Ben Haas and Helene Perold captures the content and character of the conversations at IVCO 2022, including 12 plenary sessions, side events and the research and think pieces that informed and underpinned them.

These conversations covered a wide range of issues, including COVID-19 as a catalyst for change and the need to continually innovate, decolonising our practice, diversifying and blending different models of volunteering, and doing more to address climate change.

In presenting this report, we acknowledge the enormous contributions made by all of the presenters and moderators at IVCO 2022, as well as the authors of the conference framing paper and think pieces. We also thank our partners, the African Union, for a very fruitful collaboration.

Our progress as a sector is built on their ideas, and we are sure that they will continue to inform our thoughts—and our actions—well beyond IVCO 2022.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Forum's IVCO 2022 conference brought together the global volunteering in development sector in Saly, Senegal. The theme was **A New Dawn for Volunteering in Development**, with the aim of discussing challenges, achievements and learnings from the last two years. These include strategic measures to strengthen the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) following the COVID-19 pandemic and strategies for navigating an uncertain, changing environment. The report draws out key issues discussed at the conference and pointers for future action. This executive summary outlines the aims and conclusions from each session and highlights key takeaways from IVCO 2022 identified by the report authors.

Session 1: "Re-Imagining the future of volunteering in development" introduced the findings of Forum's Collective Strategy Process and discussed the future of volunteering for development. Nick Ockenden, the author of this year's [framing paper](#), presented possible 'strategic pathways' for Forum members and the wider sector. These pathways include innovation and recovery, broadening our conversations, decolonisation, developing a blended approach to volunteering and understanding the volunteer journey.

Session 2: "The Sustainable Development Goals and volunteering in development" discussed the question of how the sector can help to realise the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Central points of discussion were documenting and measuring the contribution of volunteering for development to the SDGs, and rethinking the concept of prosperity (as 'flourishing'), introduced by Professor Rebecca Tiessen.

Session 3: "The role of volunteering standards in achieving the SDGs" examined the role, links and interdependencies of volunteering standards at global, regional, national and organisational levels. Presentations on Senegal's national volunteering standards, the African Union's Continental Volunteerism Standards and Forum's Global Volunteering Standard produced discussion on their complementarity and how they can help achieve shared development goals.

Session 4: "Beyond new volunteer modalities" examined how volunteer modalities are responding to massive global change, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and likely challenges in an uncertain future. The Peace Corps, Cuso International and VSO located their programmes within the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and discussed how the implementation of new volunteer modalities in communities needs to consider longstanding power hierarchies between Northern and Southern countries.

Session 5: “Climate change and environmental sustainability” aimed to discuss how to harness the power of volunteers for climate action and climate justice. Results from a survey of international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCOs) showed most Northern IVCOs were focusing on mitigation strategies, while their Southern partners and volunteer involving organisations were focusing on adaptation strategies. A subsequent workshop discussed how IVCOs can support adaptation locally; how national, local and international volunteers can support adaptation locally; and how to support the Global South to advocate for climate justice in the Global North.

Session 6: “Inequalities in voluntary cooperation” presented three perspectives on whether volunteering programmes can reduce inequality in and through voluntary cooperation. Among the concepts discussed were ‘doing good deeds’, ‘reciprocity’ and a ‘systemic approach.’ The latter, for example, helps the stakeholders identify their priorities and frame a change objective that is going to have a positive impact at a broad/national level.

Session 7: “Engaging the public for volunteering in development” explored the ways in which volunteer involving organisations engage the public to win support for volunteering as an approach to development cooperation. The panellists from different global and national programmes discussed two main questions: What does your organisation do, and why is engaging the public critical to its mission? How have you engaged your ‘public’ in volunteering in development?

Session 8: “The role of institutions in creating an enabling environment for volunteering” explored good practice in policies, legislation, standards and institutions that promote and support an enabling and impactful environment for volunteering. Participants learned, for example, about how the African Youth Charter institutionalised volunteerism and created the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps; how VSO has worked with governments and institutions to build volunteering systems; and how VIONet Sierra Leone institutionalises volunteering at the community level.

Session 9: “Volunteering by and for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers” examined how volunteering supports refugees and asylum-seekers and the importance of refugee- and migrant-led organisations. Participants widely acknowledged the value of partnering with refugee- and migrant-led organisations in the volunteering sector, and concluded there is a need to focus on the agency of refugees and to see them as leaders of volunteer activities rather than beneficiaries.

Session 10: “The impact of technology in volunteerism” featured three ways in which organisations can better leverage technology to increase their impact and reach: using virtual service to increase volunteering options for volunteers and partners (Peace Corps); building relationships through technology (Singapore International Foundation); and how to get the

most out of technology in resource-scarce environments (Prikkle Academy, Nigeria). Among the issues discussed was the question of whether technology is a bridge or a divide to establishing relationships in the volunteer space.

In **Session 11 “Rethinking financial structures”** Julie Gervais (Quebec Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie) and Raji Sultan (Unité) shared insights on new opportunities for diversifying funding and for supporting volunteer involving organisations in a fast-changing environment. Both explained how their entities have been through intensive processes of introspection and consultation to develop new approaches to financing their international development cooperation strategies.

The **final session – “United for common goals”** – focused on what comes after IVCO 2022. It took place in three different venues, each with a separate focus: strategy, research and programmes. Through structured networking using a World Café format, participants shared their needs and expertise to connect with each other for post-conference collaboration in the three areas.

Looking ahead – concluding observations

IVCO 2022 demonstrated that in the wake of COVID-19, the thinking about international voluntary cooperation in development is undergoing a sea-change.

Challenges like inequality and exclusion are persistent features of volunteering in development, and decolonisation remains a central task for the sector. In Senegal, it became clear Forum members have wrestled with their purpose, methodology and envisaged role in the development field, and in the process have made some important shifts in their thinking. Five central insights became evident:

1. The importance of **integrating volunteering more deliberately** within the different development sectors.
2. A shift occurring towards **viewing volunteerism** more broadly as a form of **active civic engagement**.
3. Progress in **strengthening the volunteer infrastructure** for improved development outcomes.
4. Crafting more flexible approaches to **funding strategies** to support vulnerable organisations that are critical players in civil society.
5. The importance of increasing the presence and impact of **Global South participation in the knowledge space** about volunteering in development.

IVCO 2023 will take place in Malaysia. Until then, stay healthy!

Ben Haas and Helene Perold

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A) INTRODUCTION 01**
 - Thematic frame of the conference 02
 - IVCO 2022 in numbers 03
 - Interlude - Opening Ceremony 04**

- B) SESSIONS 05**
 - Session 1 | Re-imagining the future of volunteering in development 05
 - Session 2 | The Sustainable Development Goals and volunteering in development 07
 - Session 3 | The role of volunteering standards in achieving the SDGs 09
 - Session 4 | Beyond new volunteer modalities 11
 - Session 5 | Climate change and environmental sustainability 14
 - Interlude - Collaborative Wall 17**
 - Session 6 | Inequalities in voluntary cooperation 18
 - Session 7 | Engaging the public for volunteering in development 21
 - Session 8 | The role of institutions in creating an enabling environment for volunteering 24
 - Session 9 | Volunteering by and for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers 27
 - Interlude - Uganda Research Project 31**
 - Session 10 | The impact of technology in volunteerism 33
 - Session 11 | Rethinking financial structures 37
 - Final session | United for common goals – What comes after IVCO 2022 40
 - Interlude - Voices from Volunteers on the Future of Volunteering 42**

- C) LOOKING AHEAD – CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS FROM IVCO 2022 44**
 - Interlude - Pictures from UN Volunteers Programme Exhibition 46**

- APPENDIX 48**
 - List of sessions and speakers 48
 - Conference library (briefing, research and think pieces) 51
 - About the authors 52

INTRODUCTION

The [International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations' \(IVCO\)](#) conference brings together heads of agencies and other key stakeholders from volunteering for development organisations from around the globe. It is the International Forum for Volunteering in Development's ([Forum](#)) national conference. **135 delegates from 44 countries representing 60 organisations took part in IVCO 2022. Notably, this IVCO conference had the highest ever number of participants from national-level volunteer-involving organisations in the Global South.**

The theme of IVCO 2022¹—**A New Dawn for Volunteering in Development**—was framed by three main objectives:

01

To share and explore the challenges, achievements and learnings regarding key themes in the volunteering sector from the last two years.

02

To identify key takeaways and strategic advice that accelerate progress toward the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's 2063 Agenda.

03

To learn about priorities emerging in the volunteering sector, strategies for navigating a changing and uncertain environment, and the role volunteering standards can play as we address those priorities.

This report draws out key points and arguments from the conference and pointers for future action. It provides brief summaries of key points and discussion from the sessions, and includes links to all speaker presentations and to the briefing, research and think pieces that accompanied the conference. The report follows the order of the sessions and is supplemented by 'interludes' dealing with representative and creative elements of the conference.

1. IVCO 2022 was hosted by Crossroads International, the International Bureau for Children's Rights and Forum from October 16-19, 2022 in Saly, Senegal.

Thematic frame of the conference

IVCO 2022 took, as its starting point, the challenges and opportunities that volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) have experienced as a result of COVID-19. The United Nations reports that COVID-19 has resulted in a regression in many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 10 to 15 years. How can voluntary cooperation leapfrog us to quickly close these gaps? IVCO 2022 was a moment where international and national voluntary cooperation agencies, governments, donors, academic institutions, the private sector, volunteers and partners came together to learn from the past and to design their pathways going forward.

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE: What does the year 2030 look like from where we now stand—both in time and from our varying perspectives? For instance, the conference advanced the exploration of inclusive volunteering that began at IVCO 2021, including the acceleration of South-South volunteering and other new modalities.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? After identifying common goals for 2030, what lessons have we learned from the pandemic period and what can we do better? These questions were directed to topics such as volunteer modalities, equality and inequality within voluntary cooperation, financial mechanisms, public engagement and reaching new audiences.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? What are the solutions we will implement together? What are our good practices and where are opportunities for innovation, such as promoting Global South volunteer expertise? Can synergies be created through different volunteer cooperation programmes and large-scale projects? How can volunteer cooperation organisations work together to strengthen systems and achieve the SDGs?



IVCO 2022 in Numbers



36 panellists and 17 sessions, including plenaries and workshops



4 side events and 2 photo exhibitions

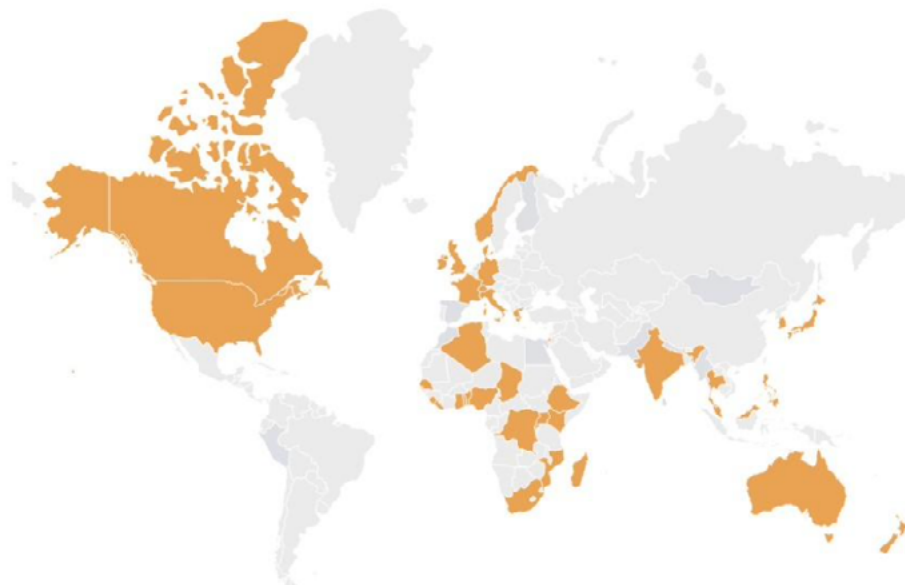


135 delegates, representing more than 60 organisations from 44 countries



98% of respondents of the post-conference survey rated IVCO 2022 as very good/good; 96% were very/satisfied with the programme

Countries Represented at IVCO²



2. Algeria, Australia, Benin, Canada, Chad, Congo, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, UK, USA, Zimbabwe

Interlude – Opening Ceremnoy



For the first time in three years, we are together in person, at an important time in the evolution of our work as a sector, emerging from a crisis that tested us and showed us just how innovative and resilient we can be. The world is constantly changing and it's vital that our upcoming activities and the strategic direction of Forum's members, of Forum itself, are rooted in the collective wisdom of you, of this network and of the sector.

Heather Shapter,

Executive Director, Crossroads International and Chair of the Forum Board



The African Union Standards Framework for Volunteerism builds on two theories of change. The first is that the effective mobilisation and channelling of the energy of African citizens through well-structured and well-managed continental, regional and national volunteer programmes will sustain development, promote social cohesion and avoid acts that could lead to instability and poverty.

The second theory of change is that the effective inclusion of volunteers in policy and development programmes will lead to greater spaces for African citizens to contribute to the development goals. After all, this is where the opportunities for our citizens exist to make meaningful contributions to development priorities, including the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is my humble opinion that we have been less successful when it comes to mainstreaming volunteerism into other sectors of development.

Daniel Adugna,

Program Manager, African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC)



I'm convinced, certainly as you are, that advice focusing on reciprocal solidarity and volunteering can bring a positive input for the development of our nations.

Pape Malick Ndour,

Minister for Youth, Entrepreneurship and Employment, Senegal

SESSIONS

Session 1 | Re-imagining the future of volunteering in development

Speakers: Nick Ockenden, consultant; Yann Delaunay, France Volontaires; Babacar Samb, Crossroads International

Aim: To introduce the findings of Forum's Collective Strategy Process and to set the scene for conversations on the future of volunteering in development. To learn about the conference framing paper, written by Nick Ockenden.

Key issues from the Forum Strategy Process

After COVID-19 and considering the rapidly changing world and its new challenges, Forum sought to collectively develop strategies for the next few years. The result was presented by Nick Ockenden as possible 'strategic pathways' for Forum members and the wider sector.



[Conference framing paper by Nick Ockenden](#)

- 1. Innovation and recovery:** COVID-19 has been a catalyst for innovation, adaptability and resilience. This should give the sector confidence and shouldn't happen only in times of crisis. New value is seen in different models and approaches that donors are appreciating as well.
- 2. Broadening our conversations:** It is time to discuss the role of other important trends, issues and challenges, such as the shrinking space for civil society, technology, Ukraine War or cost-of-living crisis. The sector should really think through how these issues are affecting volunteering in development.
- 3. Decolonisation:** There are different ways of seeing and approaching decolonisation in the sector. Most agree it requires challenging our assumptions as organisations. This means going back to core questions like: Why are we doing it like this? Is that appropriate? Does it need to change? In relation to this, the value of co-production is crucial. The sector should work with communities, beneficiaries and volunteers, making sure there is genuine equity in those relationships.



We have to become **comfortable with being uncomfortable**. Decolonisation shouldn't feel easy. And if it does feel easy, then we're probably not asking the right questions.

Nick Ockenden,
Consultant

- 4. Developing a blended approach:** Not all organisations find the same model appropriate. However, the future of volunteering in development lies in recognising the value of different forms of volunteering. By bringing different types of volunteering together and appreciating complementarity, successful (new) models can develop.
- 5. Understanding the volunteer journey:** It is essential for volunteer involving organisations to better understand what pushes people into volunteering and what prevents them from getting engaged. By seeing volunteering as a journey that is influenced by life events (having a child, changing jobs, illness), the sector can develop more satisfactory and impactful volunteering experiences, both for the volunteer and the communities where they serve.

Examples of how to re-imagine the future of volunteering in development

France Volontaires

- During COVID, many volunteers remained in post, and new national and international volunteering articulations and solidarities emerged.
- After the health crisis, France Volontaires is reinventing volunteerism by reinforcing the accessibility of volunteer opportunities for all, reinventing partnership relations and improving the measurement and publicity of the impact of international volunteering.

Crossroads International

- Their new twinning approach is bringing together international and national volunteers and partner organisations to promote the sustainability of local development.
- Such models have several advantages: They make better use of local expertise; they integrate national volunteering into the solution; they implement projects more efficiently; and they ensure the sustainability of volunteering achievements.



[Presentations by the speakers](#)

Session 2 | The Sustainable Development Goals and volunteering in development

Speakers: Tapiwa Kamuruko, UN Volunteers programme; Professor Rebecca Tiessen, University of Ottawa

Note: Musa Naroro from the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP) and Devotha Mlay from the Girls Livelihood and Mentorship Initiative, an AVP partner organisation, were unfortunately not able to attend the conference. Their slides are available in the session's PowerPoint document.

Aim: How can our sector—volunteers and the organisations that support them—help to realise the 2030 vision of the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063?

Documenting and measuring the contribution of volunteering to the SDGs

Tapiwa Kamuruko stressed that incorporating data on volunteer efforts in the implementation of the SDGs is important. Measuring the results of volunteering has historically focused on the activities and services volunteers provide for others. However, a multi-layered approach is needed to understand the relationship between volunteering and development. Volunteering is not only a delivery mechanism, but also an important way for people to participate in the development processes that affect them. There is growing awareness that the ways volunteering contributes to the 2030 Agenda are much more complex and need to be carefully documented. The UN Volunteers programme has contributed a lot to the discussion of how to document and present the contributions of volunteers and volunteering to the SDGs. However, more countries must focus on volunteers and volunteering in their Voluntary National Reviews regarding their progress toward the SDGs.



We need to discuss how we can capture the particular spirit of volunteering if we want to measure the contribution to the SDGs.

Tapiwa Kamuruko
UN Volunteers programme

Two examples of the UN Volunteers programme's efforts to document contributions of volunteering:

- State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR): The report helps to address existing knowledge gaps and provides evidence on how volunteer-state partnerships in the Global South play significant and diverse roles in decision-making, in co-producing services and in developing innovative solutions in the effort to achieve the SDGs. [Read the SWVR...](#)
- Knowledge Portal: This extensive go-to space offers access to data and evidence related to volunteerism. [Visit the UN Volunteers programme portal...](#)

The Idea of prosperity as flourishing to promote the SDGs

Rebecca Tiessen proposed rethinking the idea of prosperity, and suggested measuring prosperity in terms of human flourishing as an element of the contribution of volunteering to the SDGs. Prosperity is often seen in terms of economic growth, but can mean much more than that. How can we measure prosperity, and think about prosperity, the role of volunteers in development and their contributions to it?

The concept of human flourishing goes back to Aristotle, and his thinking has influenced, for example, Harvard University's Human Flourishing Program, which suggests six domains such as happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, and social relationships. For Rebecca, this approach could be an opportunity for IVCOs to ask: How does volunteering contribute to flourishing or well-being in people's lives? Does it, for example:

- expand friendships and other relationships and networks?
- reflect on the meaning, purpose, happiness or satisfaction of work and life?
- consider how loving relationships, bonds and friendships are formed and sustained over time?
- contribute to the 'whole human' experience and promote well-being, as well as relationships to land, the environment, other humans, other species and in one's spiritual life?



Think piece by Rebecca Tiessen on [Rethinking the Idea of Prosperity \(As Flourishing\)](#)



[Presentations by the speakers](#)

Session 3 | The role of volunteering standards in achieving the SDGs

Speakers: Georges Armand Deguenonvo, Senegal Ministry of Youth; Daniel Adugna, African Union Youth Volunteer Corps; Rahim Hassanali, VSO

Aim: To examine the role, links and interdependencies of volunteering standards at global, regional, national and organisational levels.

Overview

- From the **national perspective** in Senegal, national volunteering standards have evolved as part of the 1998 legal framework that promotes and institutionalises volunteering for civic engagement among youth. The standards have helped people understand the reasons for committing oneself to work for the community and why this is important for achieving the SDGs. The standards provide focus and structure for the volunteer programmes through which young people are mobilised, recruited, trained, placed and supported until the end of their mission, when they are demobilised.
- From the **continental perspective**, the [African Union Continental Volunteer Standards](#) are designed to support the 55 African states to create policy frameworks and operational mechanisms for national volunteer programmes in their countries. Their purpose is (1) to establish a common understanding of the concept and principles of volunteerism, and (2) to recognise and mainstream the role of volunteerism in development itself.
- From a **global perspective**, Forum's [Global Volunteering Standard](#) was created to bring together good practices from across the volunteering sector that are relevant to all types of volunteer involving organisations, volunteer modalities and contexts. It complements other frameworks and standards that exist at local, national and regional levels, and serves as an aid in creating an enabling environment for volunteering through four themes: designing and delivering projects, duty of care, managing volunteers and measuring impact.



Standards can show where our strengths are, as well as areas that one might want to look at. They encourage small steps of progress—working on pieces this year and identifying pieces you might want to work on next year.

Rahim Hassanali,
VSO

How can standards help achieve shared development goals?

- Decisions about applying standards need to be localised if they are to be relevant and meaningful.
- Standards are necessary to establish a minimum quality threshold; it's about having quality volunteer programmes.
- International volunteering organisations must be able to support the national volunteering structures in the implementation of joint programmes in the country, exchange of processes and sharing implementation methodology.
- Standards can help us be more ethical and responsible in our working practice, and can maximise our impact in development.
- The use of standards must be voluntary and serve as guidelines for volunteering in context.

[Presentations by the speakers](#)



Standards help to harmonise and mainstream the language we use to discuss volunteering—and that makes it easier to talk to each other and mean the same thing.

Standards also make it easier to mobilise resources because we are now talking about the same thing. It's easier for an organisation to find support when you have a similar concept across 55 countries than 55 concepts in each country.

Daniel Adugna

African Union Youth Volunteer Corps



What is important is to focus on the partnership structures with international volunteering organisations so from the beginning of the project, we have a precise idea of the volunteers' contributions.

Georges Armand Deguenonvo,

Senegal Ministry of Youth

Session 4 | Beyond new volunteer modalities

Speakers: Scott Beale, Peace Corps; Romanus Mtung'e, Cuso International; Alok Rath, VSO; Matt Baillie Smith, Northumbria University, UK

Aim: To examine how volunteer modalities are responding to massive global change, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and likely challenges in an uncertain future.

Contextual factors driving change

The speakers located their programmes within the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only have gains been reversed in relation to the SDGs, but there is also evidence of increased political polarisation within and between countries (as documented in the Human Development Report 2021-22). The killing of George Floyd has also triggered a racial reckoning in the United States and around the world. These are but some of the factors impacting the evolution of volunteer modalities through which IVCOs seek to operate.

In the process, a complex ecosystem has evolved in which different kinds of volunteering are being organised in different places. What are host countries asking for? What works best for host communities? And what opportunities are the volunteers themselves seeking?

It is important to realise that new volunteer modalities are being implemented in communities and societies that have experienced international development over decades, in the context of power hierarchies that have existed for a long time, and that those hierarchies are not going to be erased immediately.



We need to be reflective, particularly in this moment of change, about whether the tools that we're using are appropriate for the challenges that we're facing.

Scott Beale,
Peace Corps

So, how are the three IVCOs responding?

- The **Peace Corps** is 'excited about the opportunities to reimagine service and deliver quality in this new moment,' said Scott. These include creating a blend of one- and two-year periods of service, promoting national service and laying virtual service on top of it—'the right tool for the right challenge, meeting the right partner for the right need.' Some volunteers can't leave home for a year but want to engage virtually. Some host communities overseas would rather benefit from someone with the right skills volunteering for five or 10 hours a week virtually than have a volunteer move to the village for two years.
- In the face of restrictions posed by the pandemic, **Cuso International** turned its focus to recruiting national volunteers in its partner countries, as well as its former Canadian volunteers now living in those countries. Some of the most important lessons learned in this process:
 - Involving the in-country partners throughout all levels of recruitment gave them a strong sense of ownership. 'They feel it's theirs; they are their volunteers; they are part of the entire process,' said Romanus.
 - The impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries was greatest in those countries with the biggest number of national volunteers.
 - It takes time to adapt the tools and support for national volunteers.





Varying support packages can affect the dynamic between the volunteers and can also affect the volunteer satisfaction. We realised that issues of equity were coming up as well.

Romanus Mtung'e,
Cuso International

- VSO has adopted a blended approach to building a movement that shifts the epicentre from the international volunteer to the community volunteer. Alok explained that their research demonstrates:
 - the centrality of community volunteering in this blend, and why and how that is important in generating an active volunteering movement that leads to active citizenship
 - the impact of the international volunteers is probably greatest when they are working alongside the community and national volunteers
 - the need to design volunteer placements so they can add skills, competencies and behaviours into development programmes that are not primarily volunteer programmes
 - while the modality language we use is critical for programming, it is not always perceived in the same ways by community and national volunteers (their volunteer identities may change over time)

 [Presentation by Romanus Mtung'e, Cuso International](#)

 Think piece by Agnes Lam and Kris Besch: [The Key Ingredients in the Peace Corps Recipe for Success](#)

 Think piece by Rebecca Pursell-Gotz and Alok Rath, VSO: [Blended Volunteering: A Decolonised Volunteering for Development Approach to Achieve SDGs](#)

“

Very often we talk about skilled “international volunteers” and “locals.” Locals are experts and international volunteers are experts. I think we have a big job to do in changing that language.

Matt Baillie Smith,
Northumbria University, UK

Session 5 | Climate change and environmental sustainability

Speakers: Lily Adjoa Elogo Bright, Coalition of Volunteering Organisations Ghana; Benjamin Lough, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

Aim: This session aimed to discuss how to harness the power of volunteers for climate action. It explored the ways in which volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) are contributing to climate action and climate justice. The results of the workshop will inform the plan for Forum's Climate Action Group.

Input on 'VIOs for climate justice'

Ben Lough set the scene for the workshop by presenting the results from a survey that he and a team conducted with IVCOs on climate change in 2020. One result showed that most Northern IVCOs were focusing on mitigation strategies, while their Southern partners and VIOs were focusing on adaptation strategies. The latter are very localised, based on context. This raised questions about whether we should focus on local volunteering and national volunteering for adaptation strategies, or if international volunteers and IVCOs can support the adaptation strategies. And, if so, how can we make sure those strategies are localised and contextually relevant?

One major challenge emerges in relation to conflicting priorities: Many local livelihood strategies, such as deforestation, are against climate protection efforts. How can volunteering support community priorities on one hand while not undermining the climate change efforts that we have?

Adaptation: Dealing with the effects that have already happened because of the climate crisis.

Mitigation: Preventing the effects of climate change from happening.

 Think piece by Benjamin Lough et al.: [*Volunteering for Development and Responding to Climate Change*](#)

Overview of workshop results

1. How can IVCOs support adaptation locally?

- Interpersonal communication and advocacy
- Transfer of competencies
- Sensitisation and promotion of innovative techniques
- Dialogue between experts of the Global South and North
- Integration of all parties in the design of projects related to climate change
- Practical local solutions and innovative techniques from communities

2. How can volunteers support adaptation locally?

International volunteers

- Qualified/expert volunteers can provide technical assistance, knowledge and share experiences with national and local volunteers (capacity-building)
- Can provide and participate in research and education at different levels, including schools
- Can be mobilised to deliver national climate action commitments
- Can influence policy


National volunteers / local volunteers


- Are first responders and mobilise very quickly
- Can provide information to local communities, with appropriate communication channels, language and ownership
- Create awareness on local issues, e.g., through campaigning (radio programmes/podcasts)
- Can influence policy through a bottom-up approach by engaging the communities

3. How can we support the Global South to advocate for climate justice in the Global North?

Or, how do we create space for conversations about climate issues?

- South-North volunteering can amplify voices
- Players in the Global North can arrange meetings with governments and actors from the Global South about climate change
- Support volunteers from the Global South to conduct advocacy work in the Global North
- Connect people from around the globe on topics related to climate change

 Think piece by Chris O'Connell and Sive Bresnihan: [We Need to Talk – Hosting Conversations on Climate Change and Unsustainability](#)

 [Presentations by Speakers](#)

“

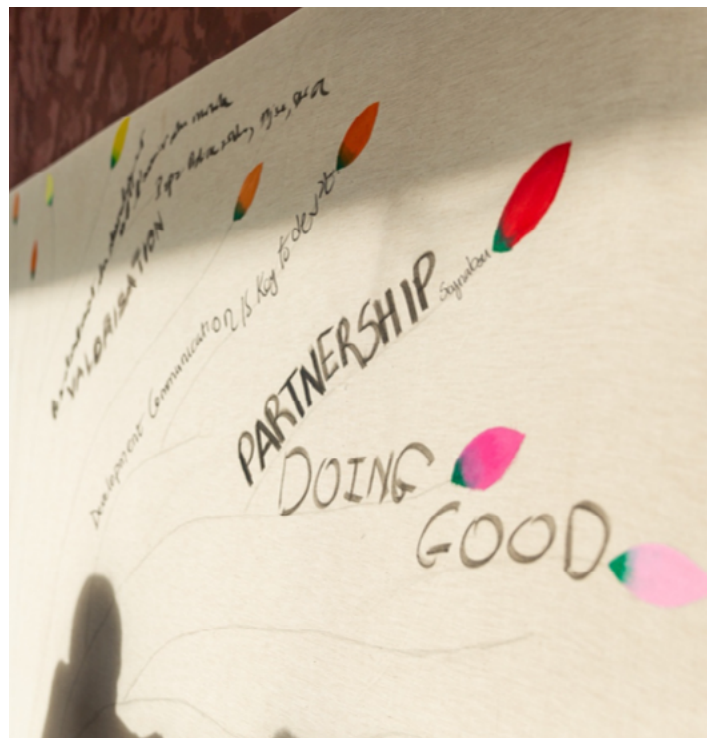
The role of volunteers should be different in so many ways so we learn from each other. We need everybody on board. We need strategies, action plans and volunteer engagement plans. Online volunteers can find technical solutions to make these work for us. And offline, people go into the field to do the waste collections and education work. Then, we involve the individuals from the communities who might not have heard about volunteerism but get involved. At the end of the day, we are also advocating on the blind side for everybody to become a climate volunteer.

Lily Adjoa Elolo Bright,

Coalition of Volunteering Organisations Ghana

Interlude – Collaborative Wall

IVCO 2022's Collaborative Wall was an interactive exercise facilitated by Senegalese artist-facilitator named **Aissatou Sene**. A framework of a baobab tree was populated by delegates on the opening day of the conference, and around this Aissatou created the beautiful mural (pictured). In Senegal, the baobab tree symbolises longevity. The mural asks what we hope to achieve, as organisations and as a sector, in the coming years.



Session 6 | Inequalities in voluntary cooperation

Speakers: Kaynan Rabino, Good Deeds Day; Benjamin Lough, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA; Stéphanie Simard, Fondation Paul Gérin-Lajoie, and Emmanuelle Parent, International Bureau for Children’s Rights

Aim: What does meaningful, sustainable change look like in our practice, across our organisations and in our sector to reduce inequalities within and through volunteer cooperation?

The persistence of inequality in the volunteering space manifests in many different ways. This session provided three perspectives on whether programmes can reduce inequality in and through voluntary cooperation.

Kaynan’s perspective focused on the importance of **encouraging individuals to do good deeds**. His belief in the ability of every person to do good, and the multiplier effect this creates by inspiring others to do good, is the foundation of the Good Deeds Day organisation, which supports events and volunteer involving organisations in over 100 countries. ‘How we conduct ourselves in volunteering, that’s how we can make inequality smaller and smaller,’ he says. In his view, this involves listening to communities; partnering across government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); trusting partners by giving them funds up front; and building on the ideas and experience of others.



Measurement so important—just to know that we are on track, just to see that we don’t do the same thing twice, getting the same results. Let’s measure our work to see that inequality gets smaller and smaller.

Kaynan Rabino,
CEO, Good Deeds Day

Ben introduced a level of complexity into the discussion when he examined the possibility of **reciprocity** as a means of reducing inequality in volunteer cooperation. While there is the potential for reciprocity in relationships between different parties that benefit each other, he asked: 'Can we reduce the power dynamics in the volunteer cooperation relationship by expecting both parties to give in some way?' Where one partner has more resources or more power, reciprocity might put a burden on the other to give back something equal in return. This suggests that reciprocity may not always be a virtuous goal, particularly if it creates a sense of indebtedness in the less powerful partner.

Often we talk about **relative equality in reciprocity** so it's not that we must give equally in return, but it has to be a fair exchange of value, possibly captured in a memorandum of understanding (MoU). A fair exchange is an exchange of both tangible and intangible contributions, and the partner organisation could articulate in the MoU what they are giving to the international volunteers who very often say 'we received more than we gave' when they return home. Reciprocity also depends on creating mechanisms for mutual joint cooperation, and mutual joint decision-making between the parties.

Stéphanie and Emmanuelle addressed the topic at an even broader level, talking about the need for a **systemic approach** to fighting inequalities in voluntary cooperation. They described how every system (e.g., education or health) involves several stakeholders such as the individual, community institutions, public institutions and international bodies. The objective of a systemic approach is to achieve deep change within several stakeholders at different levels of the system. The approach helps the stakeholders identify their priorities and frame a change objective that is going to have a positive impact at a high level. The rights of all actors are respected as they work toward the complementarity of their roles and active collaboration.



Reciprocity depends on a multidirectional relationship of mutual giving and learning, which enables different parties and different relationships to benefit each other. An aid relationship is unidirectional between a giver and receiver, and essentially that creates an unequal relationship.

Ben Lough,
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

Programme CLÉ and Pride are two programmes designed to improve the protection of children and increase social wellbeing, particularly for girls and women within marginalised communities. Using the systemic approach, they help a diversity of actors build their capacity to create inclusive and multilateral power dynamics so they can play their roles in the education sector more effectively. This contributes to greater equality by addressing obstacles that prevent access to rights.



Think piece by Helge Espe on [*'Partnership – Just Another Buzzword?'*](#)



Think piece by Ingrid Adovi and Olga Houde on [*Volunteering through the Lens of Intersectionality*](#)



[*Presentations by the speakers*](#)



To shrink inequalities, we need to look at how we are working in the sector, and how we interact with a wide diversity of actors in a way that is inclusive and respectful and sees value in what everyone brings to the table. By using a more systemic approach and by changing the way we structure our programmes, we can have more impact on influencing those power imbalances.

Emmanuelle Parent,
International Bureau for Children's Rights

Session 7 | Engaging the public for volunteering in development

Speakers: Christina Munzer, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); Maximillan Ventura, Philippine Coalition on Volunteerism; Tina Sweeney, Cuso International

Aim: To explore the ways in which volunteer involving organisations engage the public to win support for volunteering as an approach to development cooperation. This session was structured around two main guiding questions; the report of this session is presented in line with this format.

Question 1 to the panellists: What does your organisation do and why is engaging the public critical to its mission?

Christina Munzer: 'The 10-year design of the current Australian Volunteers Program has a specific objective to increase the programme's visibility to the Australian public to better appreciate the value of volunteering. However, it has been challenging to achieve and to measure this, especially in the context of domestic and global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in the midst of an ever-increasing and already very crowded communications and media landscape. Hence, we reflected on why we are trying to engage the Australian public and how to best use our resources. We redefined our objective to intentionally focus on key stakeholders in Australia and partner countries, because we believe now that targeted and intentional engagement is a better approach.'

Maximillan Ventura: 'I am representing not only the Philippine Coalition on Volunteerism, but also one of our member organisations. During the last elections in our country, something unprecedented happened. Citizens, especially the youth, were really campaigning for our candidate. As a result of that, although we lost the elections, the movement and the spirit that was created was parlayed into this organisation. One of our key programs is trying to engage the 16 million people who voted for our candidate, especially through social media.'

Tina Sweeney: 'Cuso International is an international cooperation and development organisation that works to create economic and social opportunities for marginalised [communities] through partnerships. When we talk about public engagement and engaging volunteers, we're really looking at our slogan of "skills to share, futures to build." When we talk about public engagement, for me, it is really around reciprocity and about global citizenship opportunities. Everybody should have the same opportunities. My passion for public engagement really comes from engaging marginalized communities. It is to bring awareness to international volunteer opportunities for Canadians. And we are engaging and enhancing Canada's and Canadians' participation in development efforts.'

Question 2: How have you engaged your 'public' in volunteering for development?

Tina: 'Public engagement encompasses so many things, which makes it so exciting. For example, we work with spokespeople, telling stories, trying to have the voices heard of our local partners and the communities we're working with. Then, we're partnering with civil society or diaspora organisations or with academia. Our activities include digital interactions and alumni engagement.'

Max: 'The profile of our audience is mostly digital natives. So, we were making a conscious effort to reach out to that segment of our stakeholders. This is faster and cheaper opposed to traditional publications in the newspaper and so on. A lot of the digital-savvy people who we work with really come out with content that drives engagement. One of the approaches is to work with influencers and key opinion leaders. If there is a campaign or a launch of any engagement activity for volunteering, we definitely leverage that resource.'

Christina introduced AVP's Indigenous pathways program, which is an example of a targeted and intentional activity to engage a specific group. The program was featured in the [IVCO 2021 Framing Paper...](#)

The panel closed by showing examples of **how digital technology impacted their engagement strategies**. Those examples can be found in the speakers' presentations.



The logo of the program incorporates elements of Indigenous Australian art and culture, derived from a ceramic artwork. This visual identity has been developed for this initiative specifically to strengthen Indigenous ownership, visibility, engagement. Visual identity to be able to be the kind of central point for our program.

Christina Munzer,
AVP

After the presentations, the Q-and-A session produced the following views:

A participant from Zimbabwe was concerned about how Indigenous people can be reached through digital media considering the **digital divide and the lack of internet coverage** in many regions of the world. Tina reported that at Cuso, conversations about this issue are currently ongoing. Based on the desire to hear voices from community members, especially from remote areas, Cuso has had internal conversations on what can be done if they don't have access. 'We are checking how we can support them with financial opportunities, for example,' Tina said.

Another question evolved around how to make sure that we can reach out to more young people and encourage them to volunteer, but the same time make sure they are fully informed about **responsible volunteering** compared to other formats, such as **voluntourism**. Christina from AVP explained how the Australian government introduced a campaign called [smart volunteering](#). Its aim is to discourage voluntourism and working in orphanages, for example. Official travel advice websites always include a link to the smart volunteering feature.



[Presentations by the speakers](#)

Session 8 | The role of institutions in creating an enabling environment for volunteering

Speakers: Dr. Meshesha Shewarega, African Union Commission; Elizabeth Agatha Musah, VIONet Sierra Leone; Moyosoluwa Oladayo, VSO

Aim: To explore good practice in policies, legislation, standards and institutions that promote and support an enabling and impactful environment for volunteering.

Mainstreaming volunteering occurs **formally** through state policy, legislation or standards that shape, monitor and ensure the quality of volunteering activities, but can also occur **informally** at the community level where civil society arranges and regulates its volunteer engagement. Dr. Meshesha said volunteer policy frameworks are helpful in that they articulate the values underpinning volunteering, set out the guiding principles for volunteer activity, and create the conditions for inclusive, equitable and safe participation in the development project by all members of society. He outlined, for example, how volunteerism is institutionalised through the African Union Youth Charter that has created the Pan-African programme known as the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps.

Moyo said VSO has been able to help create an enabling environment for volunteering by building systems while working with government, institutions and networks in different countries, and helping to see how this translates globally, regionally and nationally. She emphasised the importance of institutions being functional and developing sustainable processes and plans: 'When you're designing policies, rules and strategies for volunteering, how are you trying to mitigate or minimize the risk attached to them?' This, she said, is essential to maximize the benefits of voluntary engagement in terms of development or social outcomes.



It is important to distinguish between institutions and organisations. Organisations involve people who are there to implement a predetermined objective. Institutions use norms and rules to embed volunteerism in the social system with the intention of standardising, systematising or regulating practice.

Dr. Meshesha Shewarega,
African Union Commission



Volunteers are really key to driving things, especially to the grassroots level, and when there are no existing structures, we speak with organisations that are there.


Moyosoluwa Oladayo,
VSO


Elizabeth described how VIONet has struggled for a national volunteer policy in her country, Sierra Leone, and has persuaded government that civil laws were not sufficient to recognise and safeguard the many volunteers who are contributing to the SDGs. She and Moyo stressed how important it has been in Sierra Leone and in Nigeria, respectively, to enable the young people in urban, rural and remote communities to voice the issues affecting them and to have those issues reflected in national volunteer policy and in the review processes that follow implementation.

VIONet institutionalises volunteering at the community level by developing a memorandum of understanding so people can understand what it means when you volunteer in Sierra Leone. 'We train, coach and mentor a lot of young people so they realise that volunteering goes beyond having a job. This way, they're able to articulate the issues at the community level and are able to take action,' said Elizabeth.

One challenge concerns state accountability. Dr. Meshesha pointed out that because states are autonomous, they may not cooperate unless they are party to international conventions. For this reason, it's important to hold states accountable to the agreements they've made. Elizabeth added that it is equally important for volunteer involving organisations to hold their government to account for the implementation of their national volunteer policy and to visibly celebrate the contributions of their volunteers to development.

 Think piece by Wendwossen Kebede on [*In Time, an Egg will Walk on its Feet! The Experience of Ethiopia in Building National Voluntary Infrastructure*](#)

 Think piece by Oluwafunmilayo Taiwo on [*Omólúwàbí: Rethinking Volunteering Through the Lens of African Communalism*](#)

 Think piece by Nichole Cirillo and Wendy Osborne on [*Time of Crisis: Leadership for Volunteering and Community Resilience*](#)

 [*Presentations by the speakers*](#)



If the enabling environment is not provided at governmental level, it becomes very challenging for you to actually operate, even with all the ideas and resources that you've got.

Now that government [in Sierra Leone] understands exactly what it means to volunteer and the impact volunteering is creating in the communities, it has demonstrated a lot of willingness and support for collaboration and partnership.

Elizabeth Agatha Musah,
VIONet

Session 9 | Volunteering by and for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

Speakers: Dr. Matt Baillie Smith, Dr. Moses Okech, Northumbria University, UK; Wendell Wesley, Australian Volunteers Program (AVP); Yasmin Rajah, Refugee Social Services, South Africa

Aim: To learn about how volunteers support refugees and asylum-seekers; to explore the importance of refugee- and migrant-led organisations; and to understand how refugees and migrants could become active agents and leaders in the volunteer activities rather than beneficiaries.

The discussion started with a vivid testimonial by the session's moderator Syed Hasnain, which acknowledged the value of partnering with refugee- and migrant-led organisations in the volunteering sector and highlighted the agency of refugees. Syed is the founder and president of Italian National Union of Refugees and Exiles (UNIRE), the first national union of refugees in Italy. UNIRE brings together refugee communities, activists and civil society organisations and seeks to change toxic narratives of migration by highlighting the positive participation of refugees in host societies.

“

The situation in Europe is quite critical for refugee voices, especially regarding the rise of far-right parties. We are struggling to have our space, to contribute meaningfully to policy discussions and to represent our perspectives, our experiences in the societies where we live. So, we empower refugee communities at the local level. I want to highlight the agency of refugees. When I arrived in Italy, I was sleeping in the streets for three months. Civil society organisations were bringing us tents, but there was a big communication problem between those organisations and the refugee community. I was there to translate and to assist these organisations. This is just one example of how we, from the start, are engaged and contribute. Still, we struggle a lot to be equal partners in projects and programs, so we try to bridge this gap through our meaningful participation, our agency, by sharing our lived experiences as expertise.'

Syed Hasnain,
Italian National Union of Refugees and Exiles (UNIRE)

The first speaker, **Yasmin Rajah**, the director of Refugee Social Services, a local NGO that serves as a bridge and provides services to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Durban, South Africa, described the difficult legal situation of different people they work with. Among them are refugees, asylum-seekers and economic migrants. Since 1994, South Africa has had a progressive refugee policy in place, but 'the context in which we work is anything but easy,' Yasmin reported. She highlighted the importance of organisations like hers to guide and support refugees and migrants through the process of arriving and getting their documents.

The AVP partners with Refugee Social Services. **Wendell Wesley** explained how AVP was very pleased to be able to provide some support to Yasmin and her team's work by, for example, finding an international volunteer with the required IT skills. AVP currently runs a pilot programme to engage in national volunteering in South Africa. Through this, Refugee Social Services can employ young graduates to support their work as well as enabling the participants to gain work experience.

The Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda (RYVU) Research Project

Dr. Matt Baillie Smith and **Dr. Moses Okech** introduced key findings from their research project in Uganda. The project was about the **lived experience of young refugee volunteers** and asked questions such as: *What do we actually know about the lived experience of a refugee? Who is volunteering? What does their volunteering look like? How do they feel about it? What are the languages they use to describe what they're doing? And what are issues they face as they try to volunteer? What impedes them from doing so?* 'This project was an attempt to really reconceptualise volunteering from the bottom up,' Matt said.

Key Findings

- 'Refugee' is a misleading term, as it flattens out different inequalities such as cultural differences, ethnicity, language, experiences, age, etc.
- Volunteering literature is rooted in the northern construction of voluntary work, based in formal programmes. Very little is said about everyday and informal volunteering. The RYVU research findings make volunteers' informal work visible.
- Livelihood and work: For many refugees, volunteering and getting a small stipend is a livelihood strategy. Not having access to work is frustrating, and volunteering can often be a way of providing a sense of value and self-worth. But, it can also lead to exploitation and inequality because humanitarian organisations use refugee volunteers as low-paid workers.
- Refugees can develop skills and employability through volunteering, but they face barriers to participation that need to be addressed.



What we discovered is the language of volunteering that exists in the wider sector and academic research is really often inadequate for understanding what people were saying to us. What we're trying to do is shift some of the boundaries and edges of the meanings and languages of volunteering.

Dr. Moses Okech,
Northumbria University, UK

- Volunteering helps young refugees make new friendships and connections when navigating new environments.
- Volunteering can enable young refugees to contribute to the development of refugee and host communities and the relationships between them.

The group discussion that followed focused on two questions: (1) How could refugees and migrants become active agents and leaders in the design, development and implementation of volunteer activities, rather than beneficiaries of service and support provided by volunteer organisations? (2) How can we make the migrant- and refugee-led organisations equal partners in volunteering programmes?

Some key aspects raised by the groups were:

- There is a need to change mindsets in the volunteering space: Refugees are not seen as full human beings or citizens; they are reduced to refugee or migrant status and are seen as victims. The sector needs to acknowledge them as 'people who have agency and who can contribute to the development of a country.'
- To fully integrate migrants and refugees into volunteerism requires support from grassroots networks and organisations. Many refugees do not trust governments. If funds are channelled through governments, it can be a pitfall.
- It is important to identify gatekeepers in the community and to involve them in the design of programmes. They can help to find out what people may need. We should not assume what those needs may be. Likewise, it is important to think about the role organisations want to play as an external agent; there are also elements of positionality involved.
- Programmes and activities can also emerge independently of any external intervention. Refugees can organise themselves and identify needs and respond accordingly.

 Think piece by Andrée Ménard on [Volunteering By and For Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#)

 [Presentations by the speakers](#)



For me, the main outcome of this session [is to emphasize] that refugees and migrants have competencies, skills and expertise. Let us bring this expertise into our partnerships, organisations, projects and programmes when we're back in our home countries.

Syed Hasnain,
UNIRE

Interlude – Uganda Research Project

Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda (RYVU) is an international collaborative research project looking at how volunteering affects skills, employability and inequalities experienced by young refugees in Uganda. The photographs in this report were taken by young refugees who documented their experiences of volunteering across four locations within Uganda (Bidibidi, Kampala, Nakivale and Rwamwanja) through participatory photography. Chosen by the young photographers themselves, the images are presented alongside their explanations and the roles volunteering plays in refugees' lives. For more information, visit www.ryvu.org.



Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda Project,
Photographer Wilfred Mukulia (Bidibidi)

'Youth-friendly sustainable career: There is some sign of skills acquisition from voluntary work by the youth, especially this girl... she was trying to practice how to plait hair in the salon. Plaiting hair is something voluntary; you do it from your own heart.'



Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda Project,
Photographer Issa Bagarira (Nakivale)

'A young lady, who used to volunteer, gained entrepreneurial skills and started her own business in order to improve her standards of living.'



Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda Project,
Photographer Shallon Uwinsenge (Rwamwanja)

'Volunteers addressing the community about what to do and how to abide by COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs): The community is attentive and willing to listen to the volunteers; it also shows how different volunteers from different organisations come to address the community about COVID-19 and other guidelines that they have to follow before the food distribution.'



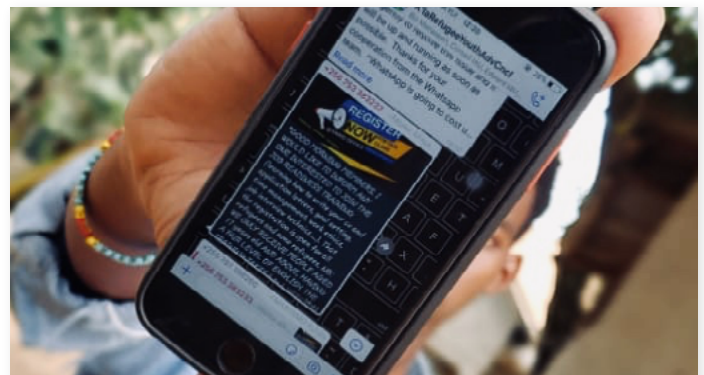
Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda Project,
Photographer Peace Amahoro (Rwamwanja)

Caring for the disabled: Volunteers building for a person with a disability. The house had fallen due to the strong winds, but these youth helped her repair it and she was very happy.



Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda Project,
Photographer Denilson Polepole (Kampala)

'I saw him repairing and he volunteers there from the road, so I decided to take a picture. Actually, he is helping us because without him, we cannot move.'



Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda Project,
Photographer Jean Harabangezi (Kampala)

'I took a photo of a WhatsApp group. This is my personal experience because this is our subgroup where I get most of my volunteering... Here, we get people posting opportunities for volunteering, job opportunities and all that.'

Thank you to all the research participants and Youth Advisory Board members involved in the project, and to the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [Grant number: ES/S005439/1] who funded the work.

Session 10 | The impact of technology in volunteerism

Speakers: Vanessa Dickey, Peace Corps; Rebecca Boon, Singapore International Foundation; Damilola (Fash) Fazoranti, Prikkle Academy, Nigeria

Aim: Using different examples, the workshop explored how organisations can better leverage technology to increase their impact and reach in volunteering for development.

Virtual service complementing on-site service

In 2020, the Peace Corps developed a virtual service pilot to find innovative ways to continue to live out the agency's mission during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vanessa explained that virtual service complements the other Peace Corps models of on-site service, and enables the Peace Corps to respond to partner requests for support in areas that have been off-limits to on-site volunteers (for safety, security or logistical reasons), or to offer short-term support from highly skilled individuals.

In this way, virtual service has the potential to reduce barriers to service and enhance the diversity of the organisation's volunteer corps. To date, virtual engagements have been conducted in 44 countries across six sectors: agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health and youth development.

There are, however, some challenges like working across time zones and organisational capacity. It can also be difficult to find highly skilled individuals with the specific technical skills required by the partners; partner expectations need to be managed since virtual service volunteers engage for only for five to 15 hours weekly; and partner organisations need to manage community participant engagement with the virtual service volunteer.



Our partners are asking for skill sets that they knew they couldn't ask for in an onsite volunteer. It just wasn't on the menu of things that we could offer.

Vanessa Dickey,
Peace Corps

Building relationships

The use of technology in volunteering is complicated by the challenge of building relationships between people who don't know each other, and are working at a distance through technology. A 2021 survey by the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) found that online workshops and e-volunteering did pose a challenge to developing cross-cultural and mutual understanding. Rebecca described how SIF responded by launching a new e-volunteering programme to build digital skills among partner communities, particularly given low levels of digital readiness in Asia. Using DigiLABS and Climate Hack, both virtual training programmes, they prepared youth and professionals with skills for the digital economy, and to use these to solve real-world issues.

The SIF strengthened engagement and community-building in the digital realm by using people-centred strategies such as: (1) a blended learning approach that combines self-paced learning with live sessions run by e-volunteers each week; (2) the e-volunteers were mentors and industry experts who helped teams apply their skills and develop digital solutions; (3) participants used community engagement tools such as Discord, Gather Town and LinkedIn to exchange ideas, build support networks and form communities of practice; and (4) project-building and group work developed participants' soft skills and grew their understanding of global citizenship and social innovation frameworks.



The new initiatives also allowed us to tap into a new stream of volunteers—digital natives and talents as volunteer instructors, mentors and coaches—to help build digital capacity.

Rebecca Boon,
Singapore International Foundation

Prioritise the purpose and use the tool that fits

Fash described how Prickle Academy started in 2016 with a simple online search (using Google and Twitter) and grew into a community and volunteer-led initiative that became a 'school without teachers' for children and young people to discover their talents and leverage these assets for co-created development. 'A simple phone call and text—the most basic tools—led to collaborating with our first participants and creating exciting solutions,' he said.

“

Instead of asking, “How do we get money to buy all the materials to learn design?”, we ask, “Who is likely to have those materials in their pantry, unsure of how to put them to use?”

Damilola ‘Fash’ Fasoranti,
Prickle Academy, Nigeria

In addition to refashioning ‘readily available materials, tools and resources to fit the work of [its] volunteers,’ Prickle uses Trello and WhatsApp to facilitate collaboration. A simple spreadsheet supports curiosity by co-creating a personal development plan with the volunteers, which is reviewed every 14 days to ensure they are building the required skills for personal transformation.

He shared four lessons from the Prickle Academy experience:

1. Working in grassroots communities, don’t discard simple everyday tools such as pen and paper, which can be used creatively and which ‘help get away from ceaseless distracting digital notifications.’
2. List and calculate the cost-benefit of the digital tools available to you, then prioritise and master simple ones based on their usefulness.
3. Join the community of volunteer-led organisations across the world to find out what tools, such as Techsoup (techsoup.org), are available to them. Advocate for the tools to become available in your region, based on potential impacts and relationship-building.
4. Continue to engage volunteers and support their growth as active citizens. ‘Creating a group on WhatsApp or Slack channel can be a simple way to start,’ he advised.

After the presentations, **group discussion** produced the following views about the value of technology in the volunteer space.

“

Technology is actually a bridge within an existing divide that we have at the moment.

Group rapporteur

Is technology a bridge or a divider to establishing relationships in the volunteer space?

- Some said that, depending on how it is used, technology provides a tool to bridge divides in the volunteer space. It provides opportunities for continuity between returned volunteers and their host organisations, and can overcome barriers caused by time limitations, cost and the complexity of getting visas to travel to host countries. Technology can also facilitate communication between participants in countries that speak different languages. 'It's how we are able to use it, apply it and innovate so it can truly become a bridge,' concluded one group.
- Others were concerned about two ways in which technology can create barriers between people. The first relates to how communication is interpreted: 'If you are going online with people who are not understanding what you are trying to give to them and there's no one else to interpret that, that means there's already a division there, and the objective is not going to be achieved,' reported one group. The second relates to a group's concern about unequal access to the skills and resources required to use technology, particularly in rural areas. 'It brings inequality because of those challenges —a lot of people will be left behind,' they said.

What technology tools are you using to support the volunteer, community, partnership experience?

- The group that discussed this question listed a number of technological tools that are being used, but concluded that 'it depends on who you are engaging with.' Technology can work effectively when it's used with partner organisations and volunteers, but at the community level, access to technology is a serious challenge. 'Even in communities where social media is present, we don't yet know how effective it is.'

[Presentations by the speakers](#)

Briefing papers

 [Peace Corps' Virtual Service Pilot Experience](#) by Vanessa Dickey

 [The Impact of Technology in Volunteerism: Singapore International Foundation](#) by Rebecca Boon

 [The Impact of Technology in Volunteerism:](#) Prickle Academy by Damilola Fasoranti

Session 11 | Rethinking financial structures

Speakers: Julie Gervais, Quebec Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie; Raji Sultan, Unité

Aim: To share insights on new opportunities for diversifying funding for volunteering in development and for supporting volunteer involving organisations in a fast-changing environment.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, IVCOs are increasingly recognising the need for their financial support models to respond more flexibly to the needs of their southern partners who are working in unpredictable climatic and conflict environments, some of which are hostile to civil society action. Furthermore, the donor environment is changing. In several donor countries, there has been a decline in state and private funding for development; many have set stringent reporting standards that limit access to funding by smaller and more vulnerable organisations; and in Europe, for example, some countries are reprioritising budgets, risking a decline in funds for public development aid in favour of military and refugee support.

Julie and Raji both described how, in this context, their entities have been through intensive processes of introspection and consultation to develop new approaches to financing their international development cooperation strategies.

The Quebec government's Ministry for International Relations and La Francophonie has placed international solidarity at the centre of its new approach to development cooperation and, in 2021, replaced its programmes with a new funding model called 'Quebec Without Borders.' The initiative is characterised by flexible funding, rapid responsiveness and simpler administration. It aims to meet basic, diverse and unanticipated needs in the context of sustainable development, human rights, equality and women's empowerment.

Quebec Without Borders operates in two parts: three-year funding for innovation support to the global mission, and one-off project funding of one to three years. The model means partners choose whether to include volunteering in their activities. If they do, they are free to determine its nature and directionality, and to use in-person as well as virtual modalities, depending on what works best for their purposes. To date, partners have responded positively to the flexibility that enables them to respond quickly in crisis situations. Also evident is the financial and organisational stability that Quebec Without Borders provides, which has strengthened its relationships with local partners. Ongoing aspects for development include adaptation, accountability and programmatic areas still to be defined.

“

The organisations are free to include volunteering or not, depending on the local need. We have to allow flexibility to organisations. We are in the universe of possibilities and are open to several offers.

Julie Gervais

Quebec Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie

Unité is a 13-member organisation located in Switzerland, a donor country. In the changing environment, Unité is focusing on its strength, which is programmatic funding. This will support all the activities (not only volunteering) of local organisations in Africa, Latin America and Asia, in order to sustain their resilience and effectiveness in civil society. Volunteering is seen as complementary to other development approaches.

The funding model includes an impact system aligned with the needs and participation of the partner organisations, and to this end, Unité has developed indicators that contribute to Swiss and other official indicators related to the 2030 Agenda. Practical project successes will be used to advocate to local government actors for public policy change in the development space. Also critical is the advocacy by northern volunteers who return to their home countries, where they can influence perceptions of what works in development, based on partner action at the local level. Raji stressed it is cynical for northern donors to support development projects working for resilience to climate change (e.g., in Africa), without simultaneously holding their own countries accountable for the commitments made to meet climate targets.

“

We strengthen the local organisation capacity, which in turn can provide better services to local populations or to a wider range of local populations.

Raji Sultan,
Unité



Donors must prioritise programmatic strategic contributions over several years with flexibility, agility and with a focus on impact.

Raji Sultan,
Unité

Discussion

In response to questions from the floor, Julie clarified that the Quebec government supports the Quebecois community sector to provide services to the population, and is open to proposals that meet local needs in a range of sectors. She added that Quebec Without Borders has widened its target group to include youth as well as older volunteers.

Is there a difference between volunteering and technical cooperation? Raji pointed out that volunteering is about cooperation between people who learn from each other and create new ideas. It brings benefits such as global citizenship, strengthening civil society, local ownership and civic participation. The challenge is to quantify the strength of these assets for donors who work with specific logical frameworks.

If participatory impact assessment is important, what about the need for people to participate actively in the design of financial structures and funding opportunities? Raji indicated that, indeed, participation in the creation and design of programmes creates expectations among partners for similar involvement in the design of financial structures. But, it seems there is some awareness emerging among donors that they are not challenging their own standards and requirements in relation to ethical issues, transparency and the 'leave no one behind' principle, which they require from their grantees. He also said the goal is to create greater access to funds for the local organisations, and that micro-finance has a role to play in this regard.

 [Presentations by the speakers](#)

Final Session | United for common goals – What comes after IVCO 2022?

Aim: Discuss how IVCOs can collaborate around their specific areas of interest and how they can help each other by sharing their different types of expertise. Identify priorities and strategies at the programmatic level, as well as common programmatic priorities for the sector.

This session took place in three different venues, each with a separate theme for collaboration: strategy, research and programmes. Through structured networking using a World Café format, participants shared their needs and expertise to connect with each other for post-conference collaboration.

Strategy

A central focus of discussion was **preparing for the next phase of development cooperation**. Contributions included the need for IVCOs to challenge their theories of change and programmes, and the need for all volunteer involving organisations to reflect on things that aren't working. Organisations offered to share tools that develop **indicators that provide evidence of development outcomes** and speak to government development aid measures. Donor countries need advice on how better to **use returned volunteers** and need to be convinced of the **benefit of taking Global South volunteers** into those countries. Among the participants were organisations who can share their **expertise on advocacy** within donor countries.

Participants from the Global South stressed the need for their **international and regional partners to listen critically** to the challenges they face and draw on their ability to **facilitate exchange programmes**. More needs to be learned about the experience of **local and national volunteering** and what motivates volunteers, and how IVCOs can work in countries where there are no country offices.

Programmes

Participants discussed what they will take home to their organisations and programmes from the different IVCO 2022 sessions. Another focus was on the question of opportunities for collaboration or collective advocacy.

Blended approaches, hybrid volunteering, digital and other new models, as well as different types of volunteers collaborating, were identified as some essential features of the **future of**

volunteering in development. To enhance such approaches, research and capacity-building is needed. In this regard, the Global North can learn from the Global South and vice versa. Furthermore, donors must be convinced of the value of volunteering in development, policy changes might be necessary and new sources for funding must be identified.

The **role of different volunteering standards** and their possible complementarity will certainly be further discussed within the different organisations. Participants agreed the global standard can be used as a guideline but must be adapted to local needs and programme specifics. An open question remained on how to use the standards in online volunteering programmes.

Regarding the **SDGs**, a central focus of discussion was on the importance of locally driven solutions and projects. Building sustainability at the local level was seen as crucial for the future of volunteering in development and the achievement of the SDGs. A lack of connection between volunteerism and local policy change was identified, and participants saw this as an essential field for future collaboration.

National and local volunteers will play a crucial role in the future when it comes to **climate change**, but participants stressed it is the collaboration of different types of volunteers that will be most fruitful. It was agreed that the conversation on different models and their opportunities to combat the climate crisis through volunteering should continue beyond the IVCO conference.

Research

Three key issues were surfaced as areas of common concern. First, the notion of how research about different modes of volunteering is conceptualised and by whom. The Global South is not a homogenous entity, and richer contextual information is needed to understand the **complexity of different forms of volunteering** that manifest at different times in its varied contexts.

Second, **greater collaboration** is needed between academics across the Global South, and between North and South. Fostering working partnerships between academic institutions is an important factor in creating sustained efforts to grow the field. Furthermore, integrating volunteering into sectoral development debates could be a way of sparking more interest and activity in this field than presently seems to be the case at African universities.

Third, **volunteering is a form of labour** and in a context of high youth unemployment, policies in the Global South tend to link volunteering to work or employability strategies (career pathways). But these are not sustainable forms of work. This complexity needs to be teased out, particularly in relation to inequalities and technological changes in development.

Interlude – Voices from Volunteers on the Future of Volunteering

“

The future of volunteering should have an environment that makes informal volunteering flourish, that actually gives more value to indigenous volunteering, where we know the bulk of the work has been done. An appropriate enabling environment, backed by strong and inclusive policy, laws and incentives that value and promote informal volunteering globally, will lead to, what we call, empowered volunteerism.

Samuel Turay

VIONet National Coordinator and Africa Regional Coordinator,
IAVE Global Network of Volunteering Leadership

“

From our experience, we recommend for the future of volunteering in development to adopt and implement the intersectional approach, which takes power dynamics into account and leads to integrating a decolonial culture at all levels. Intersectionality is not merely theoretical; the approach has been tested with partners and volunteers. This perspective also calls for increasing the participation rate of South-South volunteers.

Olga Houde and Ingrid Adovi

Programme CLÉ by Fondation Paul Gérin-Lajoie



We feel that in the future the Global South volunteer expertise will be recognised and supported, with platforms for collaboration and knowledge-sharing. South-South exchange programmes will be enabled and supported by national governments and other platforms. We will gather evidence about the success of such programmes and will get more supports from the private and the public sector.

Samuel Turay

VIONet National Coordinator and Africa Regional Coordinator,
IAVE Global Network of Volunteering Leadership



It is very important for volunteering organisations and donors to make a commitment to reach a more diverse group of volunteers in the future, be it regarding nationality, gender, age or work experience. Our programmes should consist of diverse volunteer teams to encourage cross-cultural exchanges of ideas and learning.

Mame Diarra Senghor

Oxfam-Québec volunteer



[Presentations by the speakers](#)

LOOKING AHEAD – CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS FROM IVCO 2022

IVCO 2022 demonstrated that in the wake of COVID-19, the thinking about international voluntary cooperation in development is undergoing a sea-change.

The challenges discussed the previous year at IVCO 2021—inequality, exclusion and injustice, among others—are persistent features of the volunteering in development sector, made more complex by the climate crisis, ongoing conflicts that threaten democracy and wars that fuel displacement. IVCO 2022 showed that decolonisation remains a central task for the sector, requiring that organisations and individuals from the Global North, in particular, challenge themselves even more and ‘become comfortable with the uncomfortable,’ as Nick Ockenden framed it.

In Senegal, it became clear that Forum members have wrestled with their purpose, methodology and envisaged role in the development field, and in the process have made some important shifts in their thinking. **Five important insights became evident.**

1 The first is the realisation that volunteering needs to be integrated more deliberately within the different development sectors. ‘We have been less successful when it comes to **mainstreaming volunteerism** into other sectors of development,’ said Daniel Adugna of the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps. Without doing so, the volunteering sector is at risk of talking to itself, thereby shrinking its influence and cutting itself off from opportunities for innovation.

2 Second, a number of presentations and debates signalled a shift to **viewing volunteerism** more broadly as **a form of active civic engagement**. Some IVCOs mentioned the importance of strengthening local organisations as a base for civic action; others talked about the role of community volunteering for active citizenship, about strengthening indigenous participation and about the value of partnering with refugee- and migrant-led organisations in the volunteering sector; and some described efforts to re-imagine the notion of service in different forms, and to work at relational cooperation using technology.

3 Third, there has been progress in strengthening the volunteer infrastructure for improved development outcomes. For example, by bringing the Global Volunteering Standard to fruition, Forum and its members are complementing the efforts of regional bodies such as the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps to strengthen the quality of volunteer programmes. These developments signal a move to underpin the notion of civic engagement with the knowledge and practice of volunteer infrastructure—modalities, standards, measurement, safety, accountability and participation in programme design, financing, etc.

4 Fourth, we heard how some IVCOs are actively crafting more flexible approaches to their funding strategies to support vulnerable organisations that are otherwise excluded from the resources located in donor countries. It also became clear that despite shrinking budgets for development aid, donors themselves are being challenged to apply the principles of transparency and participation that they require from grantees, to their own practice.

5 Finally, there is a real concern about the need to increase the presence and impact of Global South participation in the knowledge space about volunteering in development. Mentioned at the outset in the IVCO 2022 framing paper, the issue was reiterated in the ‘common goals’ sessions and tackled most directly at the Research, Policy and Practice Learning (RPPL) Group Day, during which practical scenarios were crafted about how to create a supportive research ecosystem for evidence-based work driven from the Global South.

Interlude – Pictures from UN Volunteers Programme Exhibition

The UN Volunteers Programme (UNV) contributed to the marketplace and photo exhibition at IVCO 2022.

Throughout the conference, UNV exhibited photos highlighting the work of their volunteers in the field, and also displayed key publications including the 2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report on Building Equal and Inclusive Societies, the UNV at 50, Stories behind 50 years of volunteerism in West and Central Africa and the 2021 UNV Annual Report.

The exhibition provided an opportunity to interact and exchange ideas on volunteering with diverse stakeholders representing governments, academia, the private sector and volunteer involving organisations, and most importantly, to learn from each other.



See you at
IVCO 2023 in
Malaysia!



APPENDIX

Sessions and speakers

Note: URLs lead to the speaker's presentations of each session.

Day 1: Looking back and reimagining the future

- [Session 1: Reimagining the future of volunteering in development](#)

Facilitators: Martin Causin and Emmanuelle Parent

Speakers: Nick Ockenden, consultant; Yann Delaunay, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France; Babacar Samb, Crossroads International

- [Session 2: The Sustainable Development Goals and volunteering in development](#)

Facilitator: Erin Bateman

Speakers: Tapiwa Kamuruko, UN Volunteers programme; Professor Rebecca Tiessen, University of Ottawa

[Session 3: The role of volunteering standards in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Facilitator: Lucie Morillon

Speakers: Georges Armand Deguenonvo, Senegal Ministry of Youth; Daniel Adugna, AU-YVC; Rahim Hassanali, VSO

Day 2: Where do we go from here?

- [Session 4: Beyond new volunteering modalities](#)

Facilitators: Dr. Matt Baillie Smith and Samuel Turay

Speakers: Scott Beale, Peace Corps; Romanus Mtung'e, Cuso International; Alok Rath, VSO; Dr. Matt Baillie Smith, Northumbria University, UK

- [Session 5: Climate change and environmental sustainability](#)

Facilitators: Seynabou Gaye and Pablo Dourojeanni

Speakers: Lily Adjoa Elolo Bright, Coalition of Volunteering Organisations Ghana; Benjamin Lough, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

- [Session 6: Inequalities in voluntary cooperation](#)

Facilitator: Gerasimos Kouvaras

Speakers: Kaynan Rabino, Good Deeds Day; Benjamin Lough, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA; Stéphanie Simard, Fondation Paul Gérin-Lajoie, and Emmanuelle Parent, International Bureau for Children's Rights

- [Session 7: Engaging the public for volunteering in development](#)

Facilitator: Jean Tan

Speakers: Christina Munzer, DFAT; Maximillan Ventura, Philippine Coalition on Volunteerism; Tina Sweeney, Cuso International

- [Session 8: The role of institutions in creating an enabling environment for volunteering](#)

Facilitator: Yvette Macabuag

Speakers: Dr. Meshesha Shewarega, African Union Commission; Elizabeth Agatha Musah, VIONet Sierra Leone; Moyosoluwa Oladayo, VSO

- [Session 9: Volunteering by and for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers](#)

Facilitator: Syed Hosnain

Speakers: Dr. Matt Baillie Smith, Dr. Moses Okech, Northumbria University, UK; Wendell Wesley, Australian Volunteers Program; Yasmin Rajah, Refugee Social Services, South Africa

- [Session 10: The impact of technology on volunteerism](#)

Facilitators: Helene Perold and Emmanuelle Parent

Speakers: Vanessa Dickey, Peace Corps; Rebecca Boon, Singapore International Foundation; Damilola (Fash) Fazoranti, Prickle Academy, Nigeria

Day 3: What are we going to do differently?

- [Session 11: Re-thinking financial structures](#)

Facilitator: Heather Shapter

Speakers: Julie Gervais, Quebec Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie; Raji Sultan, Unité

- [Session 12: Insight from volunteers on the future of volunteering in development](#)

Facilitators: Fazirah Naser and Joelle Alijimy Ratsirarson

Speakers: Olga Houde, Ingrid Adovi, Mame Diarra Senghor, Samuel Turay

- Session: United for common goals

Facilitators: Wan Ahmad Hazman, Benjamin Lough, Marie-Claude Mercier and Emmanuelle Parent

IVCO 2022 conference library

Briefing papers

- [Peace Corps Virtual Service IVCO 2022](#)
- [The impact of technology in volunteerism – The Singapore International Foundation](#)
- [The Impact of technology in volunteerism – Prikkle Academy](#)

Framing paper

- [A New Dawn: Strategic Pathways for the Future of Volunteering in Development](#) (Nick Ockenden, consultant)

Think pieces

- [Volunteering By and For Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#) (Andrée Ménard, World University Service of Canada)
- [The Key Ingredients in the Peace Corps Recipe for Success](#) (Agnes Lam and Kris Besch, Peace Corps Office of Global Operations)
- [Rethinking the Idea of Prosperity \(As Flourishing\)](#) (Dr. Rebecca Tiessen, University of Ottawa)
- [We Need to Talk – Hosting Conversations on Climate Change and Unsustainability](#) (Chris O’Connell and Sive Bresnihan, Comhlámh)
- [Time of Crisis: Leadership for Volunteering and Community Resilience](#) (Nichole Cirillo and Wendy Osborne, International Association for Volunteer Effort)
- [Partnership – Just Another Buzzword?](#) (Helge Espe, Norec)
- [In Time, an Egg will Walk on its Feet! The Experience of Ethiopia in Building National Voluntary Infrastructure](#) (Wendwossen Kebede, Cuso International)
- [Rethinking Volunteering Through the Lens of African Communalism](#) (by Oluwafunmilayo Taiwo, BeyGOOD x Global Citizen Fellow)
- [International Voluntary Service Praxis: A Vehicle Reinforcing Colonial Legacies?](#) (Ratherford Mwaruta, Zimbabwe Workcamps Association)
- [Blended Volunteering – A Decolonised Volunteering for Development Approach to Achieve SDGs](#) (Rebecca Pursell-Gotz and Alok Rath, VSO)
- [Le volontariat sous le prisme de l’intersectionnalité pour lutter contre les inégalités](#) (Olga Houde and Ingrid Adovi, Programme CLÉ). Also available in English.
- [Southern Expertise in Volunteering for Development](#) (Dr. Alice Chadwick El and Samuel Turay, IAVE)
- [Volunteering for Development and Responding to Climate Change](#) (Cliff Allum, Peter Devereux, Rebecca Tiessen and Benjamin Lough)

About the authors

Benjamin Haas is a researcher at the University of Cologne, Germany and a freelance consultant with over 10 years of experience in the volunteering for development sector, international cooperation and volunteering research. He has developed, implemented and facilitated strategies, projects and conferences for various national and international NGOs and IVCOs as well as government agencies and ministries. He is editor of [*Voluntaris – Journal on Voluntary Services and Civic Engagement*](#) and the author of the [*IVCO 2021 Framing Paper*](#) and the [*IVCO 2021 Conference Report*](#). // www.benhaas.de

Helene Perold is a South African researcher, writer, evaluator, publisher and strategist who founded and directed two organisations over a period of 30 years: [*Helene Perold & Associates*](#) and [*VOSESA*](#) (Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa). She has worked in the areas of volunteering, youth development, community service, education, public health, media and communication, and continues to participate actively in debates about solidarity, equality and justice in the development field.