



get ready for equality..

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



with the support from the  
Participation Programme of UNESCO

## Decolonise IVS! Newsletter

Nov 2023 - May 2024



Welcome to the fourth installment of the *Decolonise IVS!* newsletter. In this issue, we offer a glance into the results of our global questionnaire for IVS organisations and delve into the critical issues the project aims to advocate for. You'll also get to meet some of the key individuals driving the project and gain insights into their engagement and perspectives.

As the project nears its conclusion, our partners are inspired to continue the important discussions and work initiated during this journey. We hope that the tools developed—such as the self-assessment tool for organisations and the online pre-departure training course for volunteers—will provide valuable support for those committed to challenging mindsets, practices, and structures to decolonise the International Voluntary Service community.

### WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

#### Current Events

- Open Conference: Breaking Down Mindsets, Promoting Equitable Volunteering Models
- Steering Committee: Advancing Evaluation and Collaboration Towards Project Completion
- Building an Advocacy Strategy Together at the Advocacy Laboratory
- Policy and Position Papers: Shedding Light on Funding, Visa Processes, Narratives
- Unveiling Insights from the Global Questionnaire – A Sneak Peek

#### Member Feature

- Ian Tawanda Mugowa (CCIVS Youth Committee Member)
- Mariela Ortiz Suarez (Steering Committee Member)

#### News From the Field

- Embracing a Decolonial Lens: Online Pre-Departure Training for IVS Volunteers
- Introducing the "Decolonise" Self-Assessment Tool for Organisations
- Exploring Decolonial Concepts: Introducing "Reverse Injustice" Card Game
- "Level Up": How a Group of Young Activists Brought the Decolonisation Topic to the European Agenda

#### Resources & Communication

### CURRENT EVENTS

**Open Conference: Breaking Down Mindsets, Promoting Equitable Volunteering Models**



On November 23rd, we had the unique opportunity to meet several decolonisation experts in a Hybrid Conference. With about 40 organisations present in Greece and about 70 people connecting online, we had a very interesting afternoon listening to the experts' insights and discussing in small groups on what can be done to decolonise our IVS world. We were extremely thankful to have Helge Espe, Cecilia Milesi, Helene Perold, and Ratherford Mwaruta who gave us some great food for thought.

Cecilia, founder of Global Change, gave an introduction on the overall framework in which volunteer exchanges take place. Helene from South Africa mentioned how researchers and practitioners from the Global South have been asking for a place at the table for many years and how certain changes have taken place but also how there is still a long way to go. Helge from the Norec showed how our ideas of volunteer exchanges very often still have some "white saviour" connotations but also showed examples of how we can work on breaking down these mindsets and experiment with more equitable volunteering models. Finally, Ratherford stressed how in the Global South there is still a lot of work to be done; that IVS organisations in the Global South have to work on their own sustainability and put the needs of the local communities central. They should not depend on European volunteers to keep projects going.

The online break-out rooms and the on site group sessions further explored ways to engage in the Decolonisation work. The tools developed by the Decolonise project such as the Participatory Action Research and the self assessment tool. Other groups continued the debate on the main question of the conference: "How can donors contribute to an equitable and sustainable volunteer programme?" All in all, a very inspiring afternoon which ended with a nice musical intermezzo brought by the Palestinian participants and some graphical harvesting by Yorgos Konstantinou.

## Steering Committee: Advancing Evaluation and Collaboration Towards Project Completion



From December 12th to 16th, the *Decolonise IVS!* steering committee convened in Vienna, Austria to focus on evaluating the project's progress and planning its final phase. The meeting covered various aspects, including participatory action research (PAR), tool development, advocacy work, and overall project coordination.

Key findings from both international and local PAR efforts are nearing finalisation, with a comprehensive report in progress. A draft of the self-assessment tool for organisations was presented, emphasising its usability and testing methods, which include privilege checks and historical discussions. Initial feedback on the self-assessment tool has been positive, with the steering committee acknowledging its potential to foster dialogue between partner organisations.

The committee reviewed drafts for a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) designed for the pre-departure training of volunteers and policy papers addressing visa and funding issues. These drafts are set to undergo further peer and expert review. Discussions on visa policy incorporated global perspectives, and it was suggested that the funding policy paper should provide stronger arguments for its recommendations. Additionally, work on a position paper to change the narratives of international volunteering is still in progress. Advocacy strategy discussions included stakeholder mapping and plans for the Advocacy Lab. Upcoming tasks involve enhancing the think tank's engagement, improving the project website, and developing a comprehensive dissemination plan. The committee envisions broader project engagement through visual storytelling training, finalising guidelines, and organising a tools fair.

Looking ahead to the new year, the committee aims to increase organisational engagement and foster a community of practice focused on reversing hierarchies through dialogue. Transformational goals for 2024 include gaining wider policy support, reflecting on project lessons, and implementing meaningful changes. Future proposals highlight the need for deeper self-reflection, bilateral conversations, and expanding advocacy within volunteering networks.

## Building an Advocacy Strategy Together at the Advocacy Laboratory



In February, the Advocacy Laboratory of the *Decolonise IVS!* project took place in Brussels, Belgium. Over 25 passionate young individuals from IVS organisations across Argentina, Mexico, Togo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Indonesia, Nepal, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Albania, Hungary, Turkey, Finland, and Belgium gathered in the heart of Europe for an intensive week of training on advocating to decolonise volunteering and empower youth.

The aim of the training was to develop a long-term advocacy strategy addressing social injustice, visa barriers for youth volunteers, and decolonising funding opportunities. Anja Stuckert (Secretary General ICYE and mentor since 2023) and Mariela Ortiz Suarez (Subir al Sur, Argentina, ICYE BoM member, and mentor since 2023) facilitated the training using a non-formal education approach. Participants acquired new knowledge and skills on building effective advocacy strategies that consider various stakeholders and approaches. They actively contributed throughout the training, expressing their opinions and thoughts in a safe environment that welcomed diverse perspectives.

Participants developed a long-term advocacy framework and split into working groups to create materials for the Decolonise IVS! project and future advocacy efforts. A highlight was the Networking Event on February 27th, where over 40 participants from various organizations discussed decolonization. The event showcased the project's tools, such as the Decolonise Card Game, a self-assessment tool for organizations, PAR work, and policy papers on visa and funding opportunities for youth volunteers. Chafik Allal (ITECO) gave an inspiring speech that led to enriching discussions. Engaging methods like the World Café and Fish Bowl Debate were used, making the event one of the week's most memorable moments. It was a valuable opportunity to build an advocacy network with like-minded organizations.

Additionally, an external speaker from EuropaHuis shared valuable knowledge on advocacy, including practical tips on preparation and stakeholder mapping. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and gain insights that helped shape the next steps in their advocacy strategy. A visit to the European Parliament also provided the young advocates with a presentation on the structure of the European Union and the EU Parliament, and they learned about the decision-making processes. This visit also facilitated critical discussions on the challenges young people face when volunteering abroad.

The key takeaway from this training was that advocacy is a collaborative effort. By discussing various successful advocacy examples, participants left with a positive mindset, believing that change is possible and that it is up to them to continue the hard work. Equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, participants will continue working in groups on different tasks, moving forward in their advocacy efforts to decolonise power relations in IVS.

## Policy and Position Papers: Shedding Light on Funding, Visa Processes, Narratives

Finally, we are ready to present the policy papers! One of the young people who was very involved in bringing together all the input we collected from debates, discussions and consultations with different

stakeholders is Thomas Aubineau. Here is our discussion with Thomas: [Read More](#) (scroll down a bit on the page to find the interview)

Here are the links to the policy papers:

- [Decolonising EU Funding Mechanisms for Youth](#)
- [Decolonising Visa Mechanisms](#)

## Unveiling Insights from the Global Questionnaire – A Sneak Peek

The Global Questionnaire results will be out soon. We offer you a sneak peek at the results! We share with you insights on IVS' decolonial discourse and practice from 51 organisations, 30 countries, and 4 continents. The Global Questionnaire was envisioned, designed and distributed with these two questions in mind:

- Is IVS supporting a decolonised approach or reproducing neo-colonial relationships between the Global South and the Global North?
- And is the North-South subdivision of the world useful and appropriate to reflect, talk about and act for change?

Here is the Sneak Peek: [Read More](#).

### MEMBER FEATURE



**Ian Tawanda Mugowa**  
CCIVS Youth Committee Member

[Read Interview](#)

(scroll down on the page to find the interview)

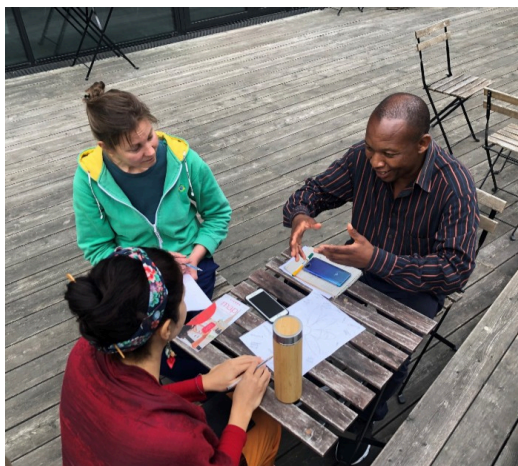


**Mariela Ortiz Suarez**  
Steering Committee Member

[Read Interview](#)

(scroll down on the page to find the interview)

### NEWS FROM THE FIELD



## Embracing a Decolonial Lens: Online Pre-Departure Training

To support the volunteers' pre-departure training, we have been creating a Massive Open Online Course. What can we expect from this? Let's ask Gianluca Bellotto, a member of the coordinating team: [Read More](#).

(scroll down a bit on the page to find the interview)





## “Level Up”: How a Group of Young Activists Brought the Decolonisation Topic to the European Agenda

From April 12 to April 14, 1300 activists from across Europe gathered at the #levelup2024 event at the European Parliament in Brussels. This event aimed to amplify young people's voices...

...providing them with a platform to connect, share ideas, and learn more about their role in democracy. Under the theme "My Europe - My Voice - My Vote," young Europeans participated in workshops designed to enhance their activism and democratic engagement.

SCI IS, the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations, Stichting VIA, the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service, and the ICYE Federation collaborated to facilitate an engaging workshop. This dynamic session focused on using cross-cultural volunteering as a tool for youth engagement, with a special emphasis on decolonisation. The participants explored how volunteering can be leveraged to challenge existing power structures and promote a more equitable, inclusive society.

## RESOURCES & COMMUNICATIONS

At *Decolonise IVS!*, we value knowledge-sharing and co-learning. We've curated a list of insightful resources that we believe are particularly reflective within the context of decolonisation. We encourage you to explore these materials to enhance your understanding and contribute to our shared journey. And if you want to share any resources, please feel free to send those to us at [secretariat@ccivs.org](mailto:secretariat@ccivs.org).

- [The Decolonise IVS! SAT or Self Assessment Tool](#)
- [Where do we go from here? Navigating power inequalities between development NGOs in the aid system:](#) A study on the nature, extent, effect of actions undertaken by Northern & Southern NGOs within partnerships and the broader aid system.
- [Managing organisational change: Tools and methods to become a diversity sensitive NGO:](#) Becoming a diversity-sensitive organisation is a learning and reflection process. This guide from ICJA Germany is a useful resource to start your own reflection process.
- [Digging into the colonial roots of gardening:](#) In this podcast, the guests explore how colonial history has affected what we plant and who gets to garden, and practical gardening tips with an eye to Indigenous knowledge.
- [Decolonisation and the case of Palestine:](#) This Middle East Monitor article explains how the decolonisation narrative, in the case of Palestine, unfolds with complexity, seeks to rectify historical injustices, and empowers marginalised communities.
- [Decolonisation: a buzzword or a real need to change our mindset and the way we work? Interview with Chafik Allal from Iteco:](#) The video was of Chafik was recorded during a networking event part of the *Decolonise IVS!* project; Based on his personal and work experience, with some reflections on the ongoing decolonisation debate.
- [Decolonial Feminism:](#) What is a decolonial feminism? Why talk about it? These and other questions were discussed between CABAR.asia and co-founder of the Kazakhstan feminist initiative “Feminita”, doctor of social sciences Zhanar Sekerbaeva.
- Instagram campaigns related to decolonisation topics: [The Slow Factory](#) | [Progressive International](#) | [Palestinian Youth Movement](#) | [DeSta - Dekoloniale Stadtführung](#) | [Decolonial Feminist Collective](#)

### Reflecting on ongoing settler colonialism and apartheid states.

#### ***THIS IS WHY WE DANCE (excerpt)***

*Written by Mohammed El-Kurd in 2021.*

*If you ask me where I'm from it's not a one-word answer.*

*Be prepared, seated, sober, geared up.*

*If hearing about a world other than yours*

*Makes you uncomfortable*

*Drink the sea,*

*Cut off your ears,*

*Blow up another town of bodies in the name of fear.*

*This is why we dance:*

*If I speak, I'm dangerous*

*You open your mouth,*

*Raise your eyebrows.*

*You point fingers.*

*This is why we dance:*

*Because screaming isn't free.*

*Please tell*

*Why is anger – even anger – a luxury to me?"*

**Sign the CCIVS ceasefire statement [here!](#)**



Interested to learn more about the project? Sign up now for the *Decolonise IVS!* Dissemination Webinars! We will hold sessions in Spanish and English (open to all).

**Session in Spanish**

Tuesday, 18th June 2024  
1 PM ART Argentinian time (UTC-3)  
6 PM CEST Paris time (UTC+2)

**Session in English**

Tuesday, 9th July 2024  
2 PM CEST Paris time (UTC+2)

[Register Now](#)

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

*Anita Venanzi, Chafik Allal, Courtney Kelner, Donna Mae Ocmeja, Gianluca Bellotto, Ian Tawanda Mugowa, Ingrid Danckaerts, Julieta Blanco, Kerry Hargadon, Mariela Ortiz Suarez, Minna Räisänen, Ruslana Bekyarova.*

**DISCLAIMER:**

*The opinions and views shared in this newsletter are those of the authors and don't necessarily represent the thoughts or beliefs of the project funders/sponsors. The content provided is for informational purposes only and should not be seen as an endorsement or reflection of our financial supporters' viewpoints. We aim to present a variety of perspectives, but readers are encouraged to form their own opinions and think critically about the content presented.*



If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter,  
[click here to unsubscribe.](#)

[Legal Notice](#) • [Terms of Use](#) • [Privacy Policy](#)