

SURVEY REPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT



**MUSIC AND VOLUNTEERING
FOR A DECOLONIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA**



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INTRODUCTION

This Needs Assessment was developed as part of the Voices for Change project, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Programme – Cooperation Grant.

Voices for Change empowers the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement through music, storytelling, and advocacy. It connects grassroots activism with institutional advocacy, ensuring that local realities inform global decision-making through a de-colonial approach to social and climate justice.

This survey gathers direct input from organizations active in IVS to better understand their challenges, priorities, and capacity-building needs. The insights collected will directly contribute to shaping future activities within the project and beyond. Including policy recommendations, training programmes, and international partnerships that reflect the lived realities of IVS actors.

We thank you for taking the time to read these perspectives and experiences in this global effort to re-imagine and reinforce the role of IVS in advancing solidarity, sustainability, and youth empowerment.

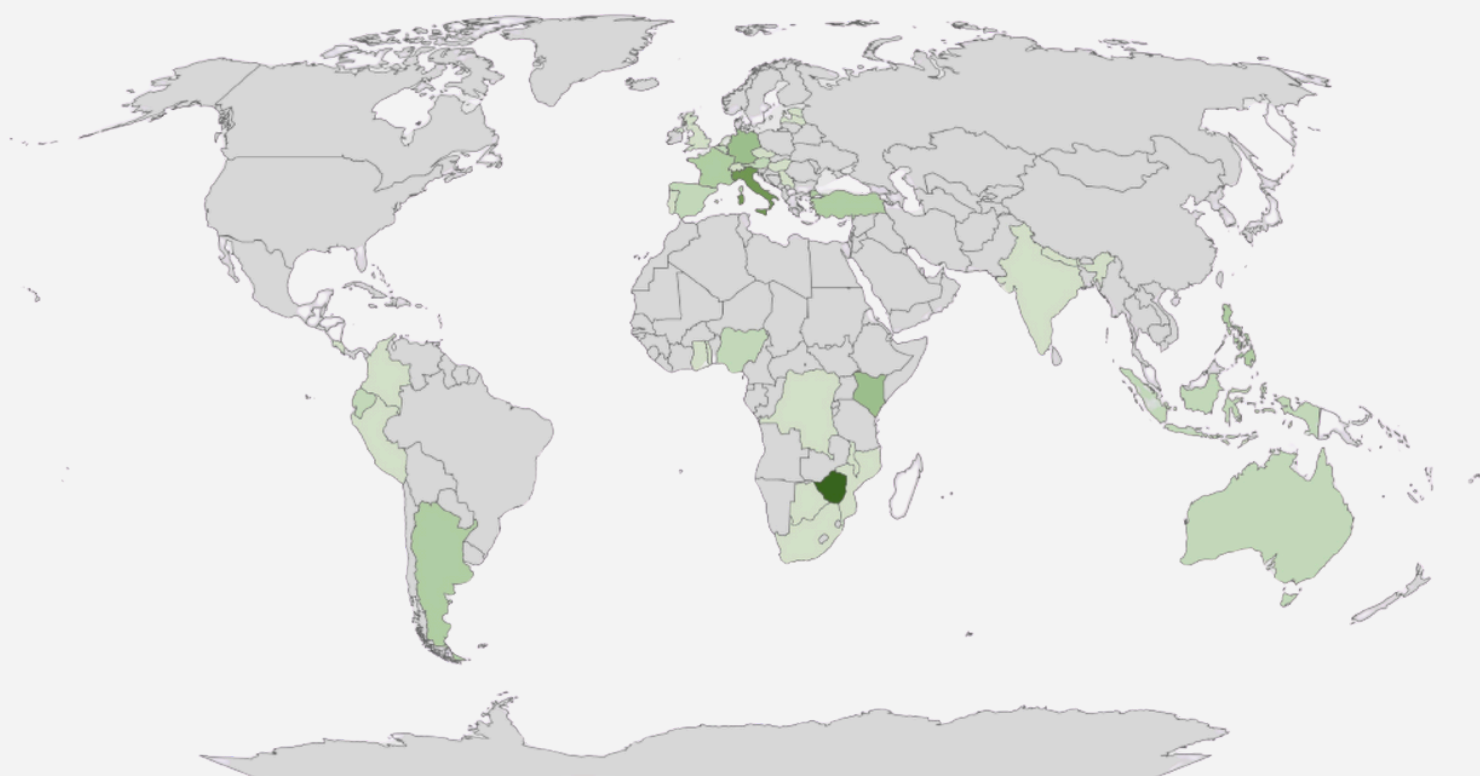
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS



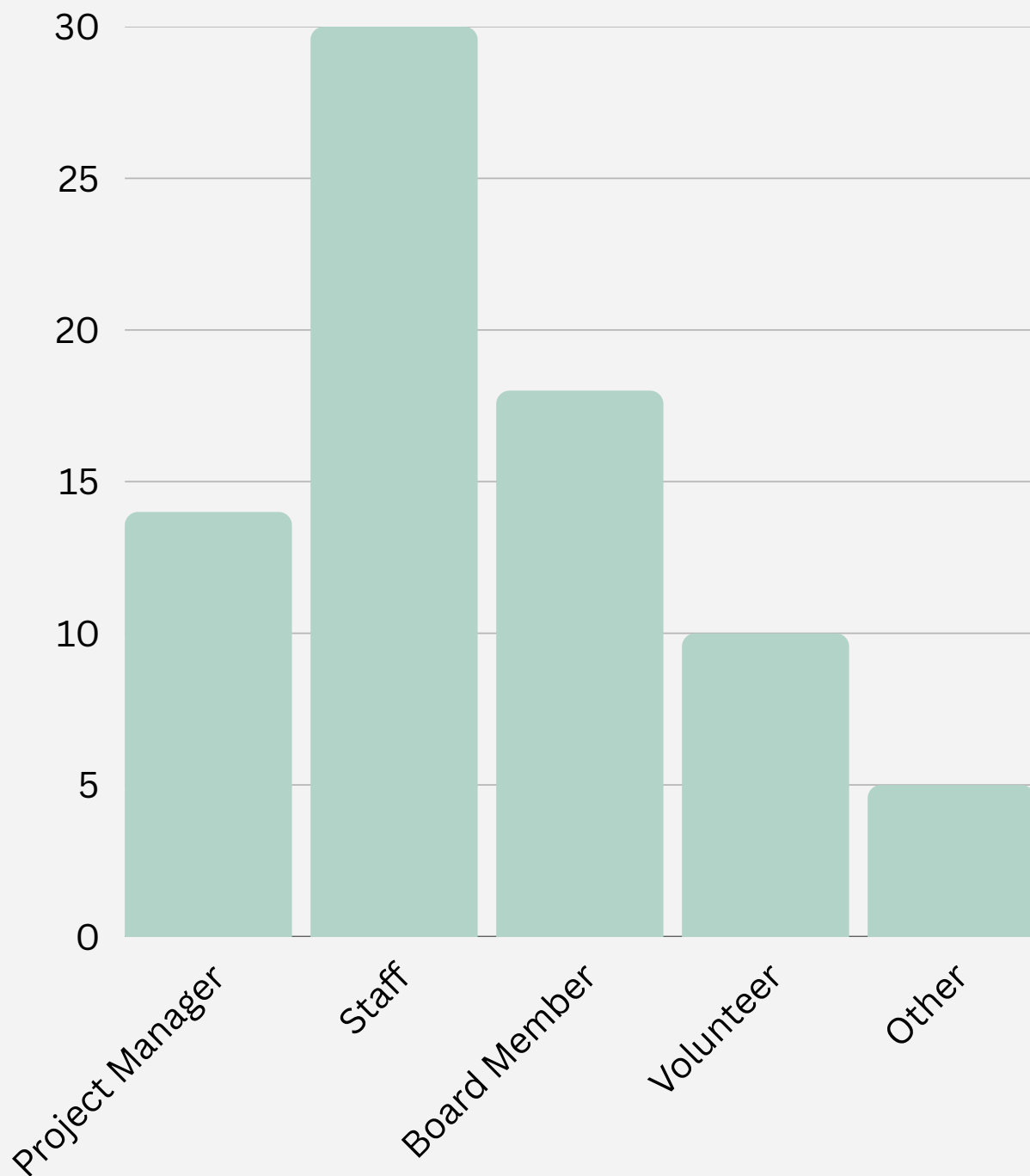
SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Countries that are represented in the survey

CONTINENT	PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE %
America	8	10.81 %
Asia-Pacific	11	13.51%
Africa	21	28.38
Europe	35	47.30
TOTAL	75	100



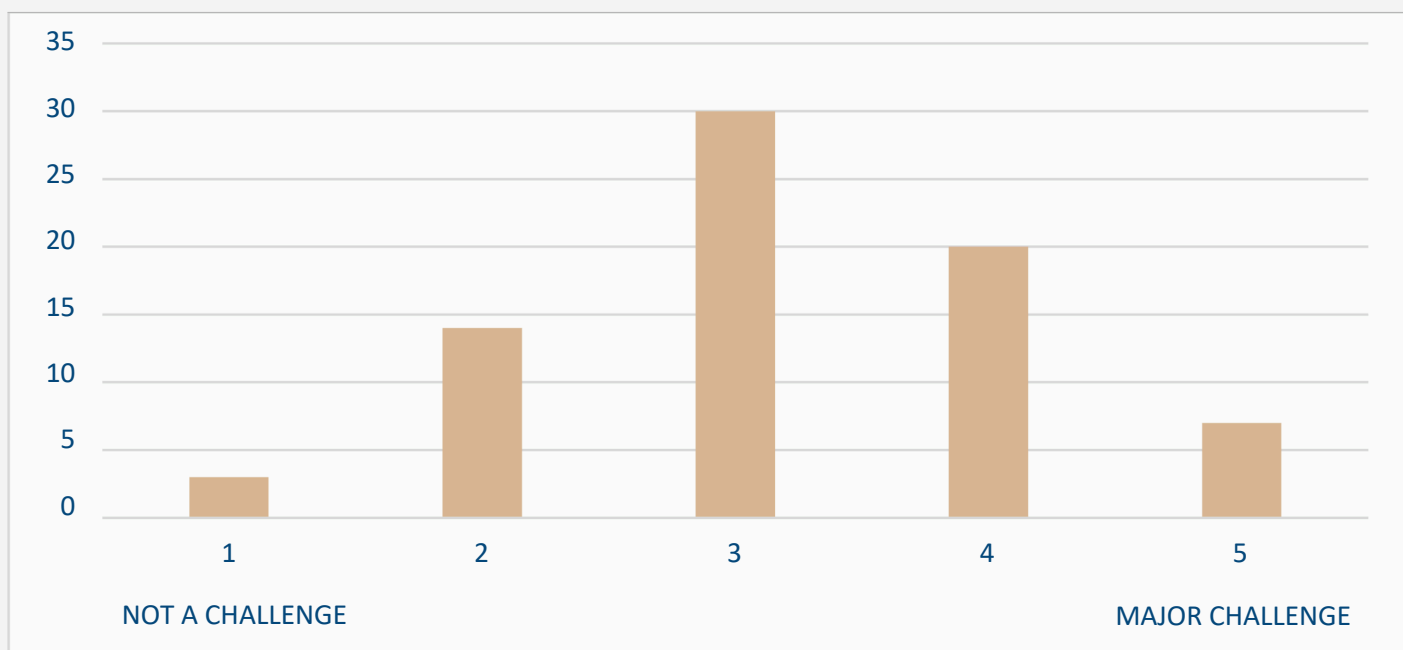
ROLE OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS



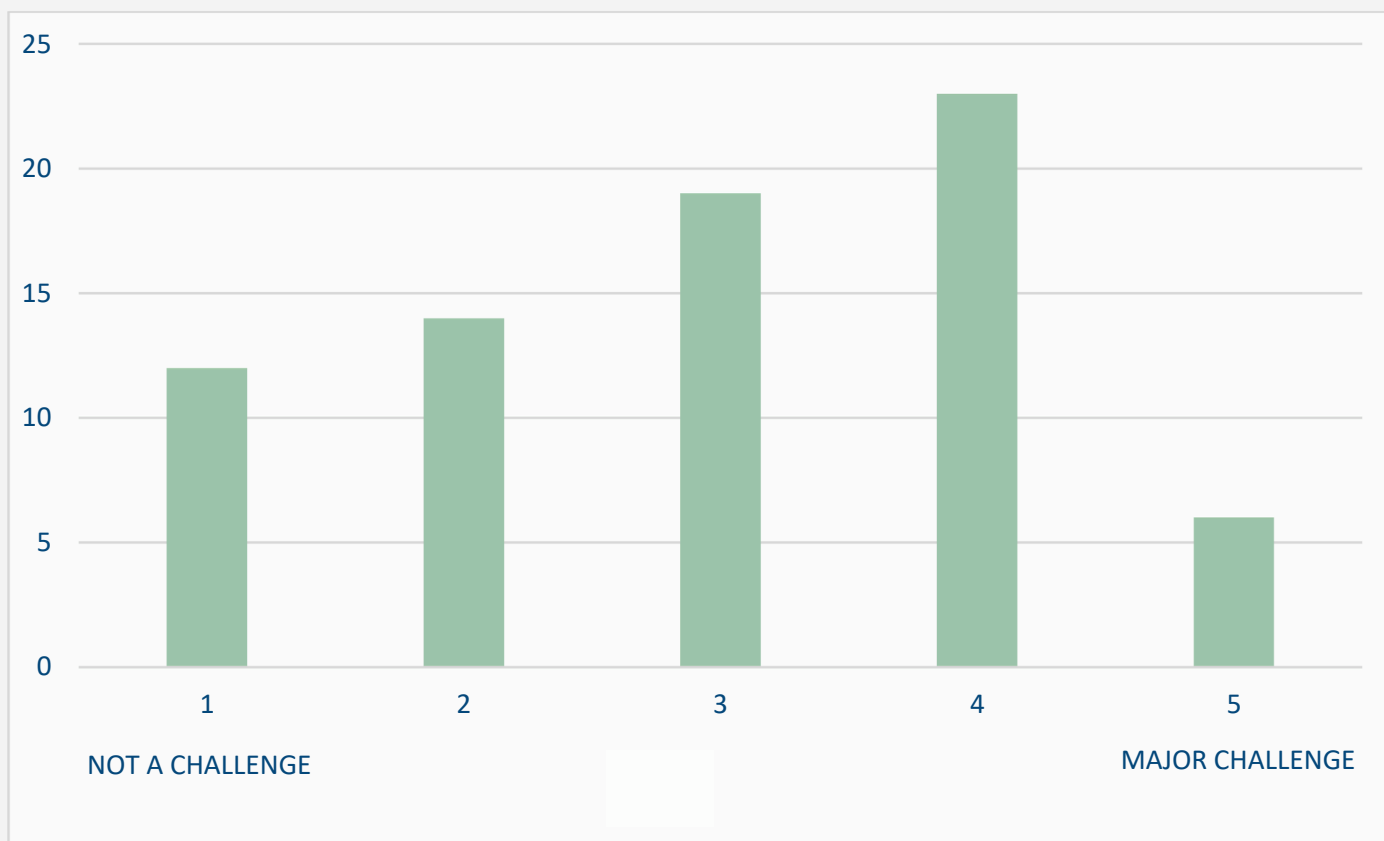


SECTION 2: ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS & CAPACITY

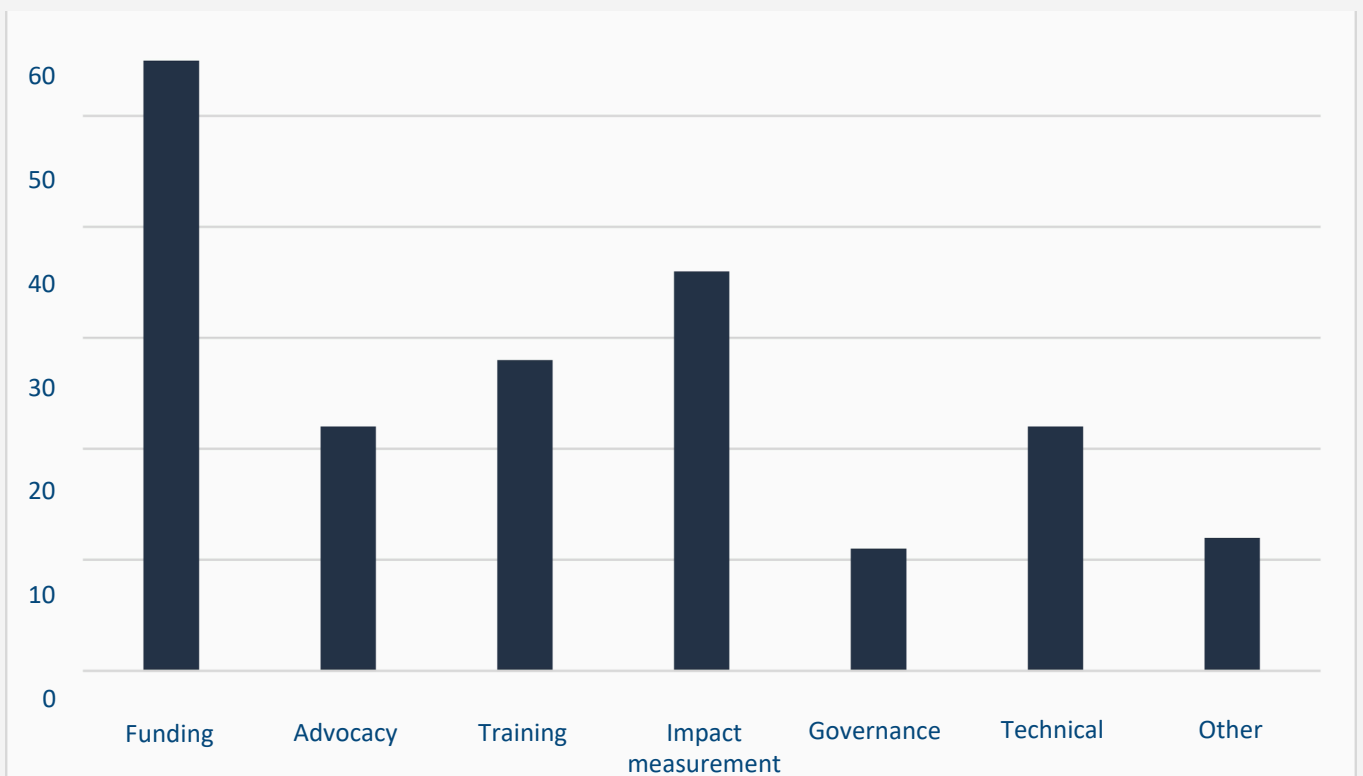
**To what extent does your organization face challenges in
Implementing IVS projects?**



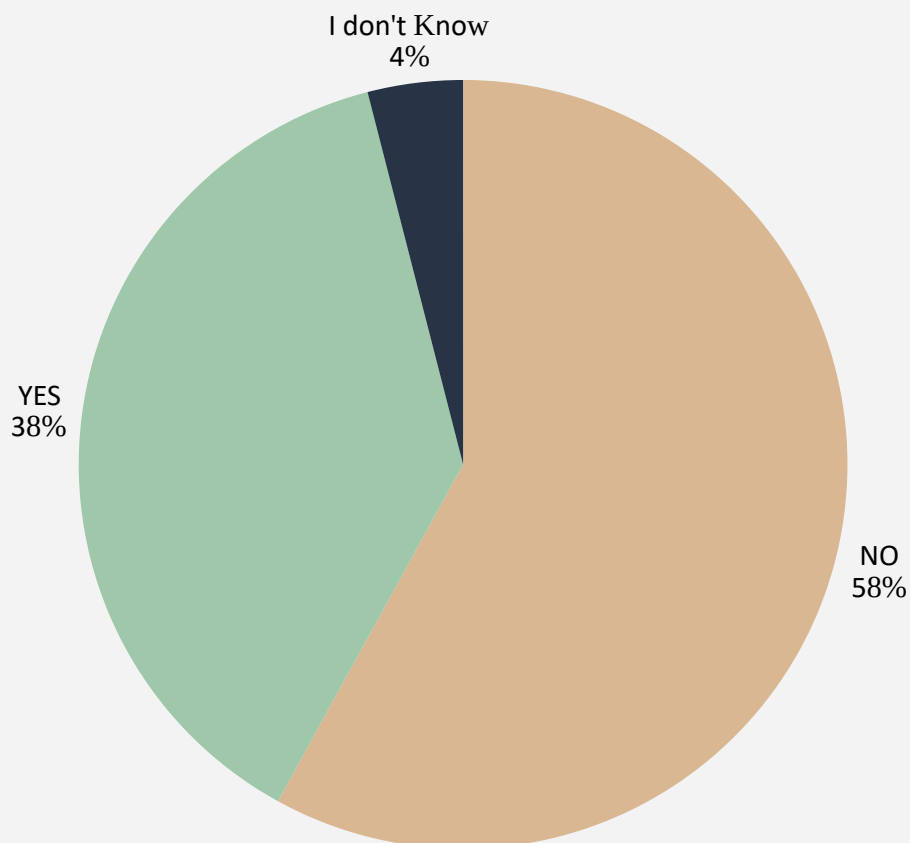
**How well-equipped is your organization to engage in cross-border
partnerships?**



What are your main capacity-building needs?



Do you currently use impact assessment tools to evaluate IVS projects?





Evaluation Methods Used by Participating Organizations

Participants who responded “yes” to having evaluation mechanisms in place elaborated on the tools and methods their organizations use. The majority shared that they regularly conduct questionnaires and surveys to assess several aspects of their programs. These include evaluating volunteers’ experiences, the performance of hosting partners, and the effectiveness of local projects.

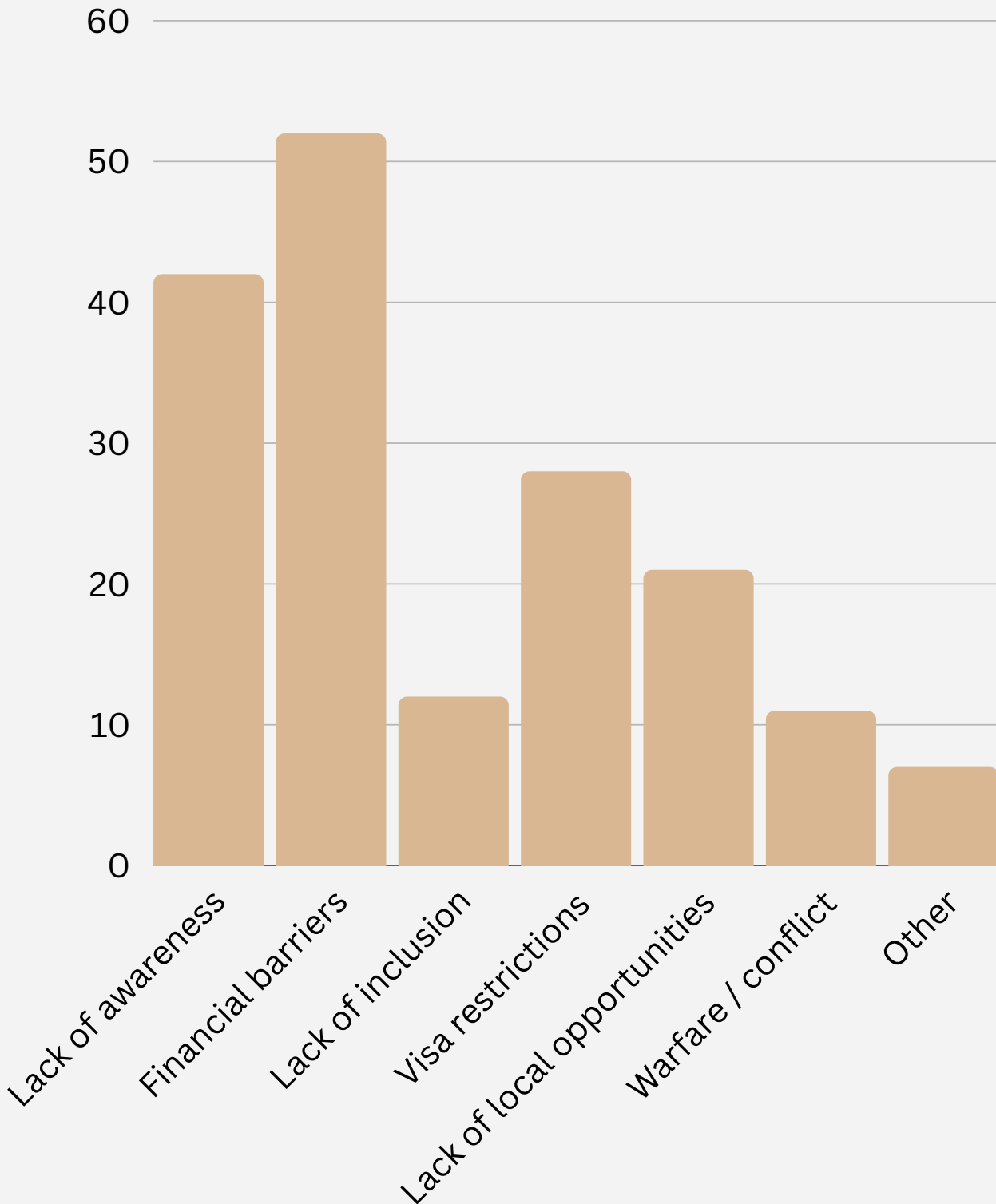
In addition to standard feedback forms, some participants highlighted that their organizations have implemented structured evaluation systems designed to measure impact across multiple levels—from individual volunteer growth to broader community outcomes. These systems are often adapted to fit the specific goals, contexts, and challenges of each project or program, ensuring that evaluation remains both relevant and effective.

Such tools not only help in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the initiatives but also serve as a basis for continuous improvement, strategic planning, and accountability to stakeholders.

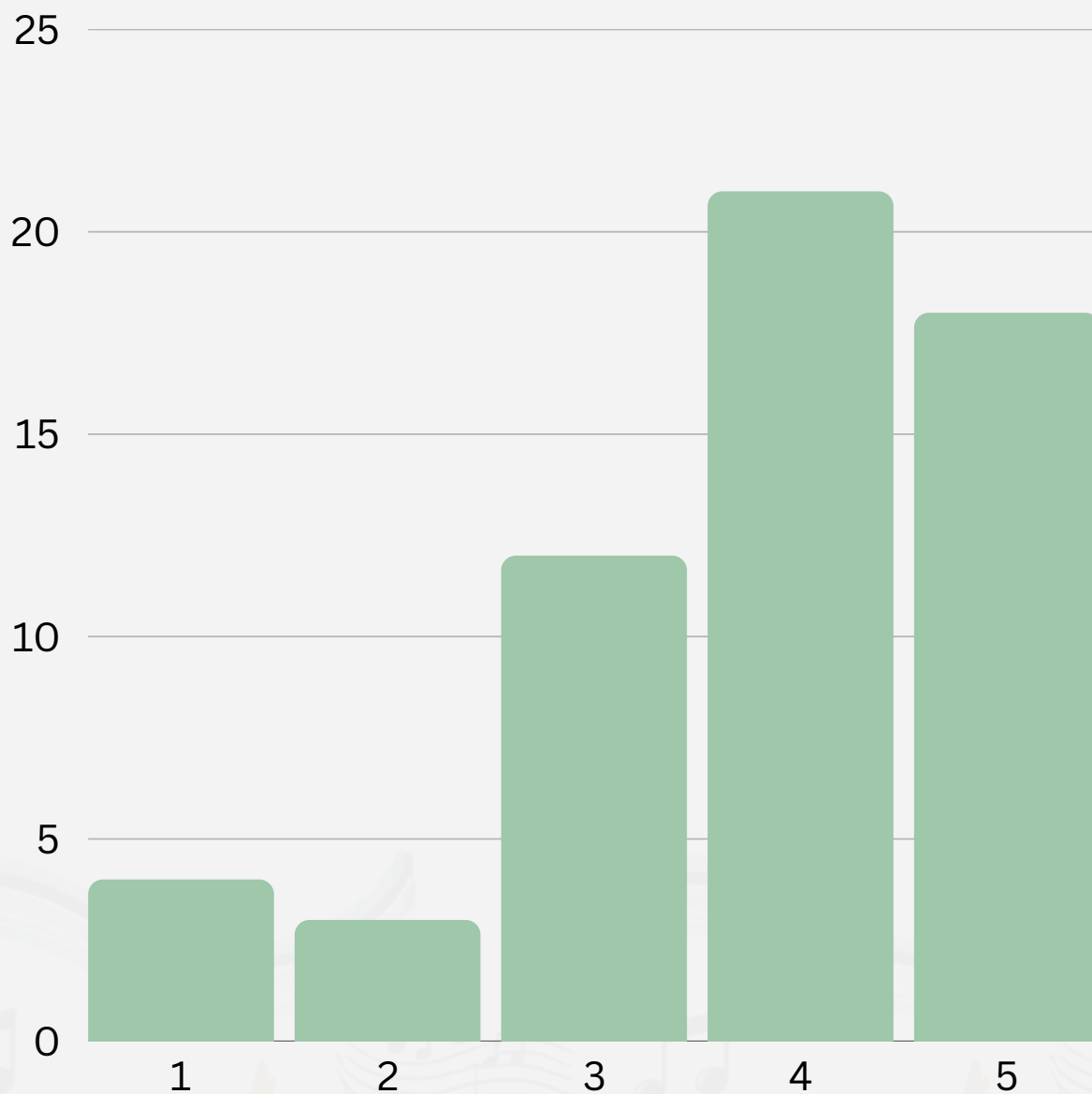


SECTION 3: YOUTH PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

What are the main barriers preventing young people from participating in IVS in your country?

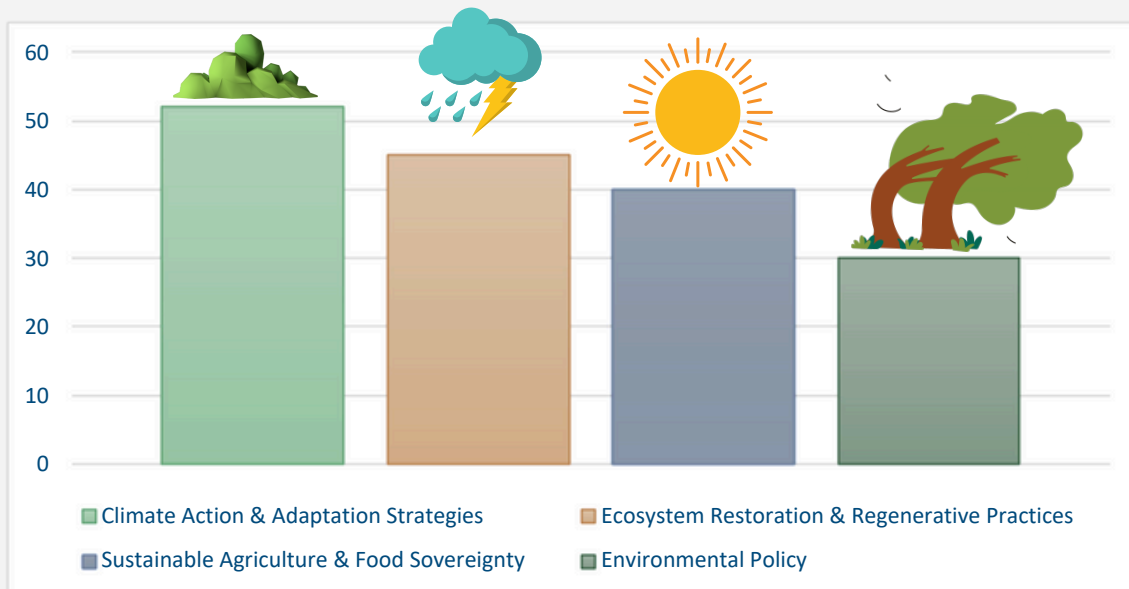


How effective are current non-formal education approaches in IVS in fostering leadership and civic engagement?

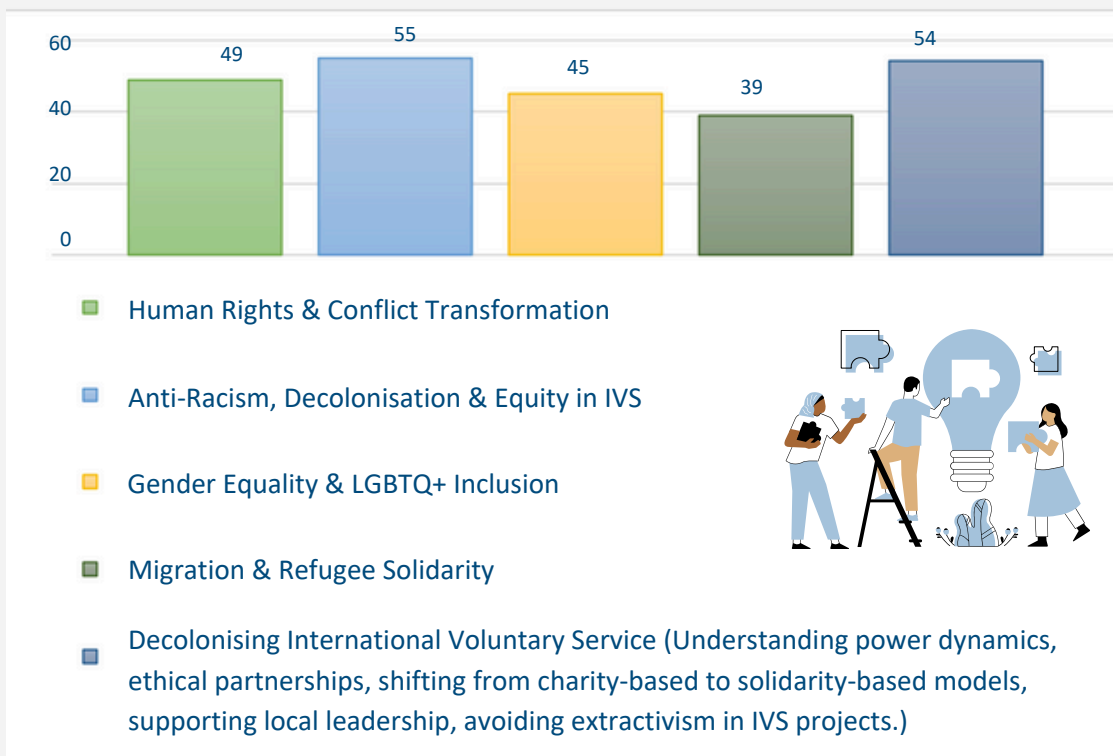


What training opportunities would help young participants be more effective?

ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE ACTION

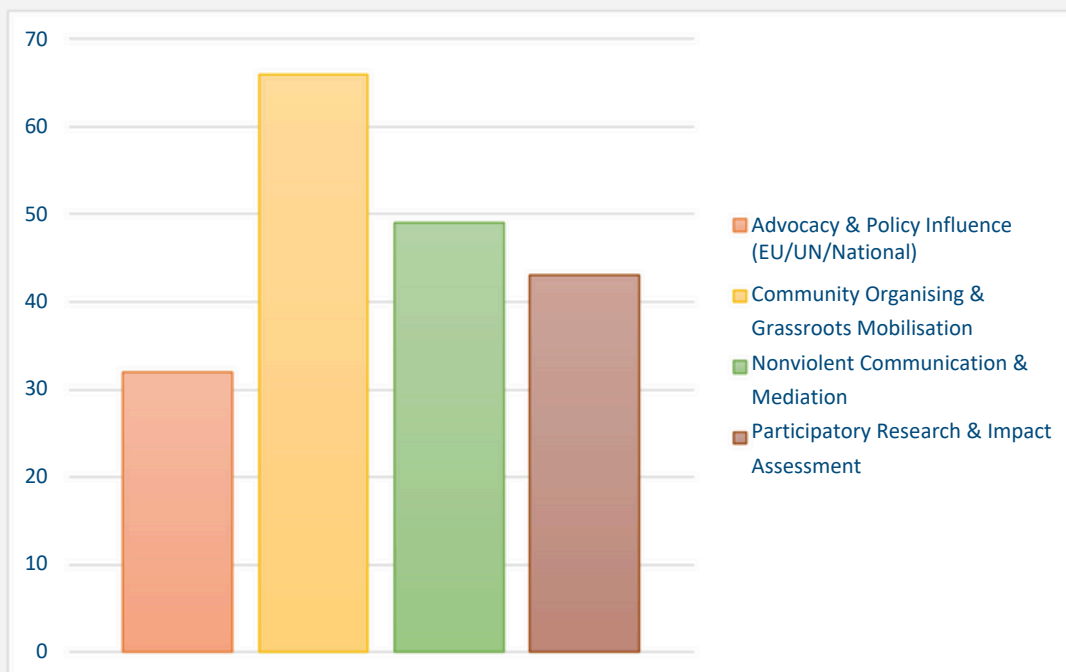


SOCIAL JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS

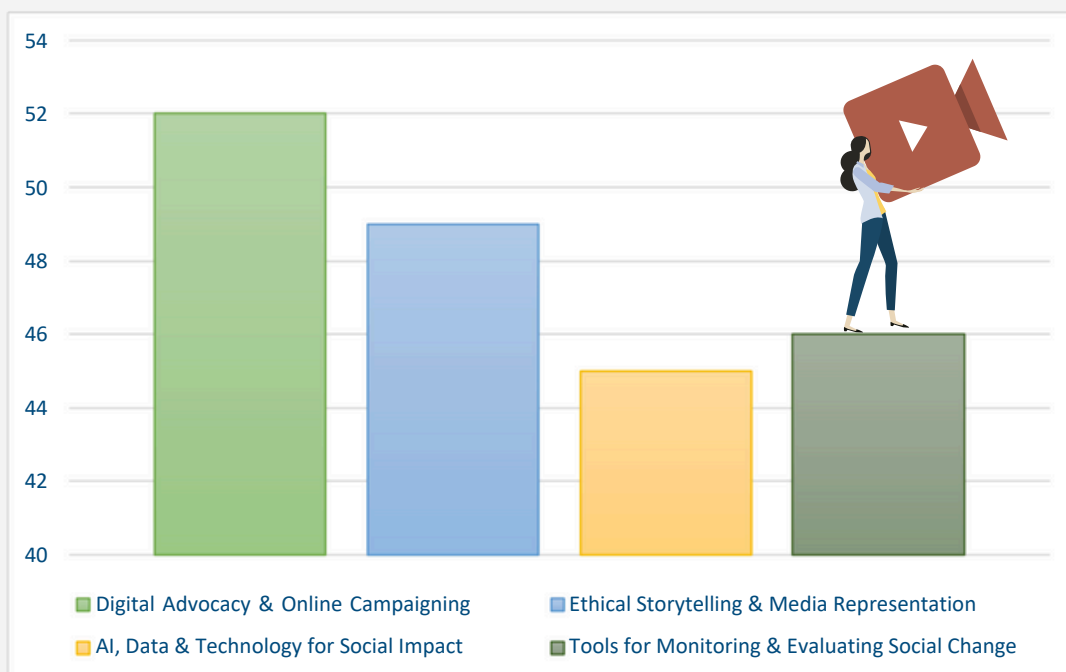


What training opportunities would help young participants be more effective?

ADVOCACY & POLICY ENGAGEMENT

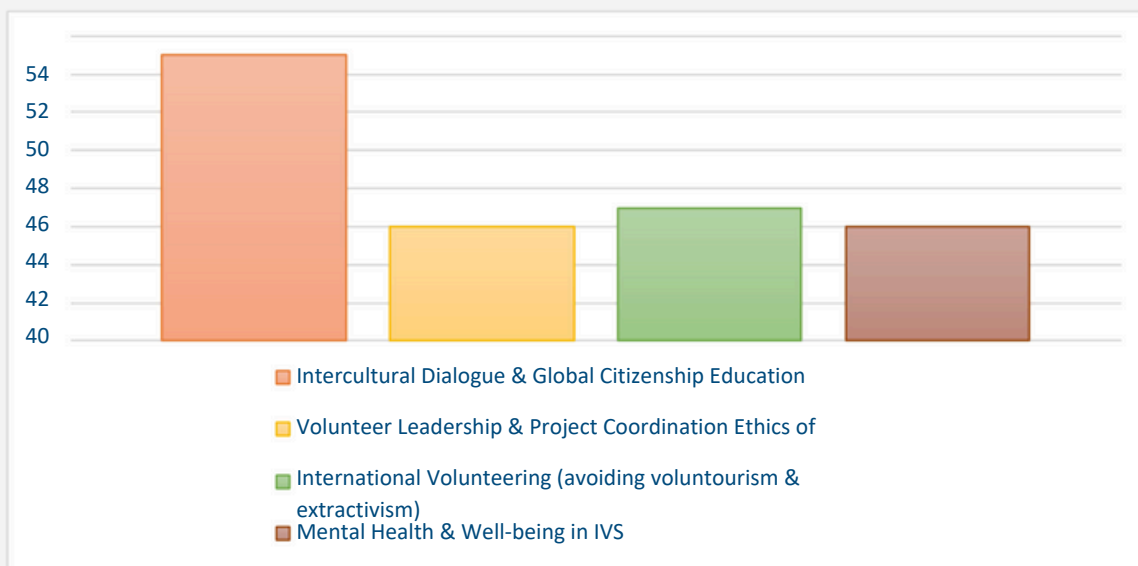


DIGITAL & MEDIA SKILLS

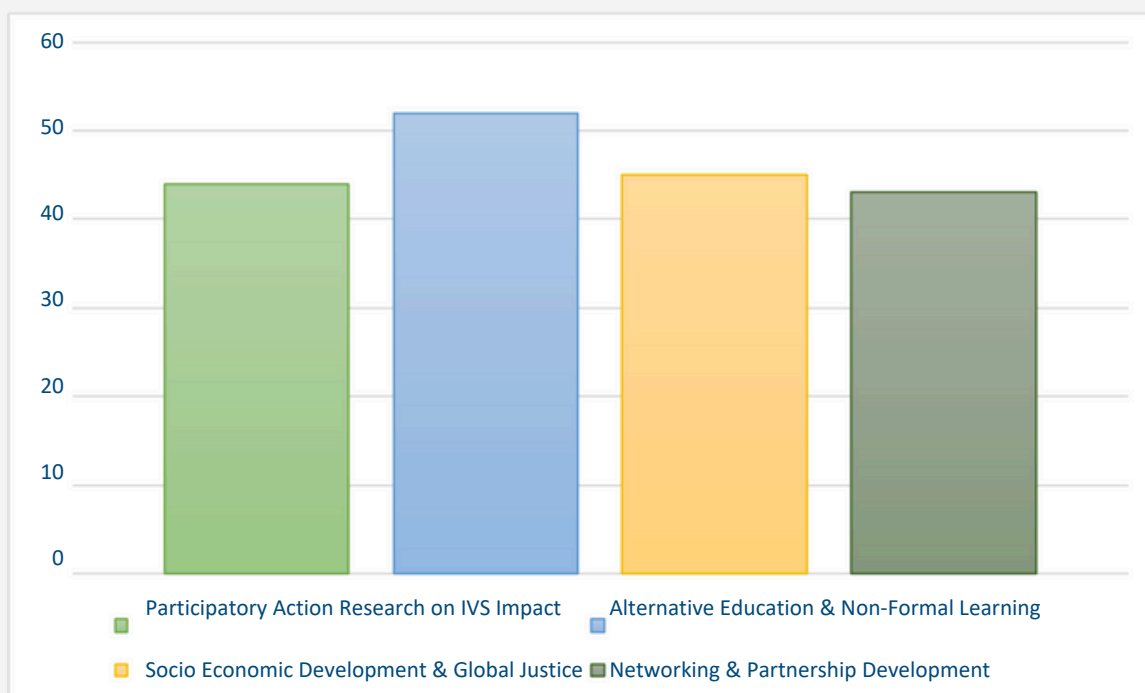


What training opportunities would help young participants be more effective?

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT



RESEARCH, TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



What training opportunities would help young participants be more effective?

- Cultural exchange and Workcamps for building understanding and collaboration.
- Learning about economics, community structures, family dynamics, and the history of conflict and trade is essential.
- Focus on empowering individuals and promoting entrepreneurship
- There is a need to secure more funding to support volunteer efforts.
- Before engaging in more abstract topics, individuals need to learn basic physical skills, such as how to manage everyday tasks like changing a tire or fixing a bike
- Importance of outreach and involvement in public affairs
- Emphasizing the importance of peace education, critical thinking.
- Improving project management skills.
- Focusing on youth rights, local policy engagement, and grant writing.



SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE NEEDS

What are the most pressing environmental and climate justice issues in your region?

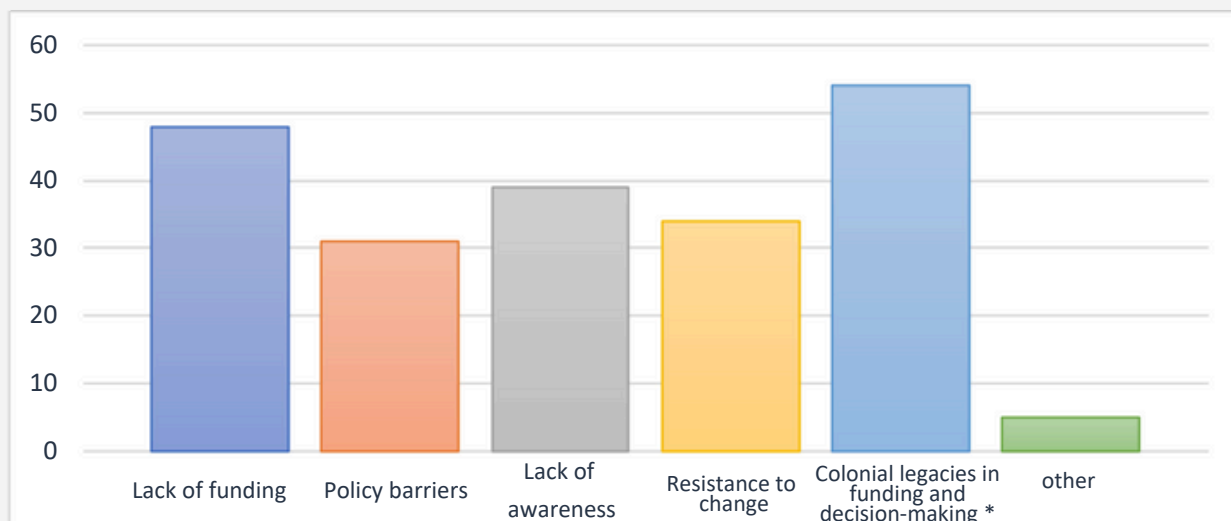
- 1. Deforestation and Land Degradation:** Mass deforestation, particularly in countries like Indonesia and Zimbabwe, is contributing to biodiversity loss, affecting ecosystems, water quality, and global climate.
- 2. Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events:** The effects of climate change, such as rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, floods, and rising sea levels, are severely impacting food security, water resources, and the health of communities. The most vulnerable regions are those least responsible for the crisis, such as Africa.
- 3. Water Scarcity:** Water scarcity is an increasing challenge in various areas, exacerbated by reduced rainfall, over-exploitation of aquifers, and water pollution. This affects both urban and rural areas, such as in Ankara, India, and Malawi.
- 4. Inequality in the Energy Transition:** Many countries, like Ankara, face challenges in adopting renewable energy due to dependence on fossil fuels and lack of adequate policies that promote more sustainable energy sources.
- 5. Pollution and Air Quality:** Air and water pollution are major concerns, especially in urban and industrial areas. In some countries, unchecked industrialization and mining are causing severe environmental degradation, as seen in Ghana and Zimbabwe.
- 6. Biodiversity Loss:** Destruction of natural habitats, climate change, and pollution are threatening biodiversity worldwide. This has devastating effects on iconic species and ecosystems that provide vital services like pollination and climate regulation.
- 7. Land Use Conflicts:** In many areas, land use for agriculture, mining, and urban development is generating conflicts that affect the most vulnerable communities and threaten food security and ecosystem sustainability.
- 8. Climate Justice and Inequality:** The poorest and most vulnerable communities suffer the most from the effects of climate change, despite being the least responsible for the crisis. Initiatives to address these issues include seeking reparations and compensation for historical climate damages and promoting sustainable solutions at global and local levels.
- 9. Misinformation and Lack of Public Awareness:** In many regions, the lack of access to reliable information about climate change and nature-based solutions is hindering collective action. Misinformation and skepticism around climate change are also significant issues.
- 10. Extractive Exploitation:** The extraction of minerals and natural resources, as seen in Switzerland, is tied to postcolonial practices that perpetuate inequality, such as unfair pricing in products like coffee and chocolate, and environmental devastation in the Global South.

How do you see the role of International Voluntary Service and youth engagement in addressing these issues?

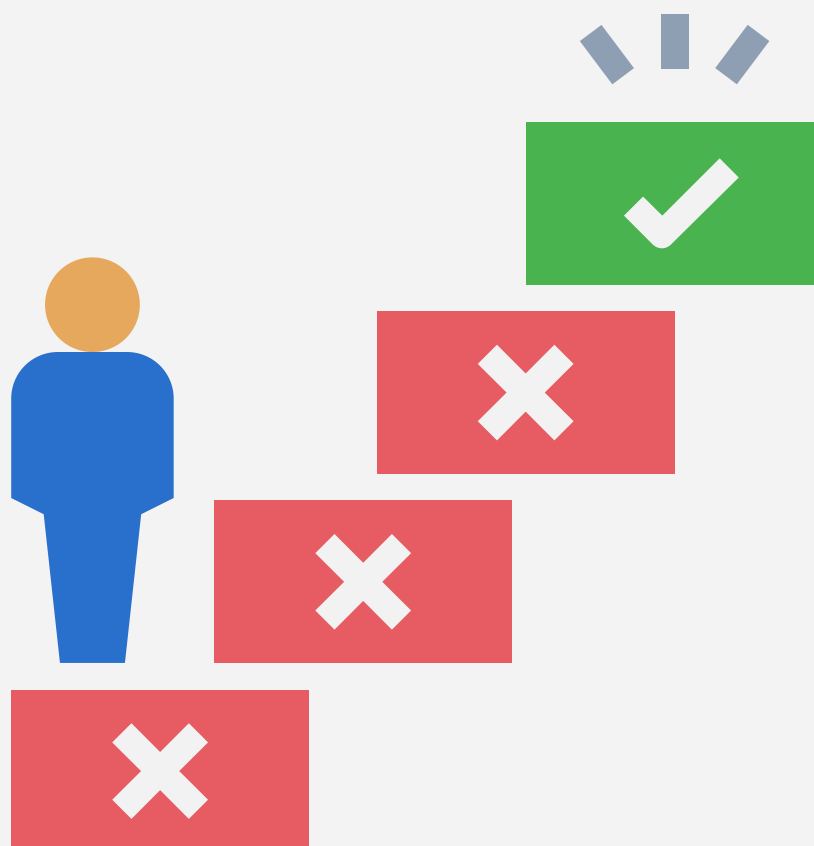
- 1.** IVS helps young people reflect on environmental issues and actively participate in existing solutions. This engagement often includes workshops, training, and field projects that encourage practical involvement, from tree planting to waste management.
- 2.** IVS serves as a platform for youth to take the lead on environmental projects and advocacy. It provides opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, build capacity, and become advocates for sustainable practices.
- 3.** Volunteers collaborate with local communities to address environmental issues by fostering participatory approaches and empowering local populations with knowledge and skills for sustainability. Examples include water conservation initiatives, sustainable farming, and promoting renewable energy.
- 4.** IVS supports awareness campaigns that educate communities about climate change, resource conservation, and the impacts of capitalist practices. Volunteers help amplify the voices of marginalized communities and advocate for policies that prioritize sustainability and climate justice.
- 5.** IVS fosters cultural exchange, connecting young people from different countries to share ideas and solutions. This helps build global solidarity, with volunteers working together across borders on shared environmental and climate challenges.
- 6.** Through direct involvement in projects like tree planting or promoting sustainable agriculture, IVS volunteers actively contribute to environmental protection and resilience- building within local communities.
- 7.** IVS programs also focus on influencing policy at both local and global levels. Young volunteers can advocate for environmental justice and sustainable development by participating in global summits and pushing for fair climate policies.
- 8.** Training youth in green skills, such as renewable energy technologies or sustainable farming practices, not only builds local capacity but also provides employment opportunities while promoting long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, IVS plays a crucial role in raising awareness, empowering youth, and facilitating community-led environmental action. Through education, hands-on projects, and advocacy, it contributes to the global movement for climate justice.

What are the biggest obstacles to mainstreaming climate justice and de-colonial approaches in voluntary service?



*Colonial legacies in funding and decision-making (e.g., reliance on Global North-led programs, lack of local autonomy)



There are many arguments about the climate impact of IVS, however, this may not be the most pressing concern when it comes to the climate. Should we not focus more on calling out unsustainable methods of production, export and import practices, construction methods, food production, the private travel of the world's richest people, etc..

Bringing people together enables a true exchange and learning process. If we stop international travel, we will no longer be able to confront the climate situation together or be aware of what is happening in different countries around the world. Meeting people face-to-face and seeing realities on the ground is extremely important for raising our understanding. Promoting the use of AI and digital means is not a sustainable option, considering the massive energy required for this.

What are your thoughts on the above statement ?

1. Systemic Causes Over Individual Blame: A strong consensus emerged around shifting focus from individual actions (e.g., air travel by IVS participants) to holding major polluters— corporations, fossil fuel industries, the ultra-rich, and governments—accountable. The climate crisis is structurally driven, rooted in extractive economies, capitalist overproduction, and unregulated consumption, especially by the Global North.

2. Climate Justice Must Be Equitable: From a Global South perspective, the debate on climate must include equity and historical responsibility. Countries and communities contributing the least to emissions suffer the most, while economic and visa barriers limit their participation in global solutions and exchanges.

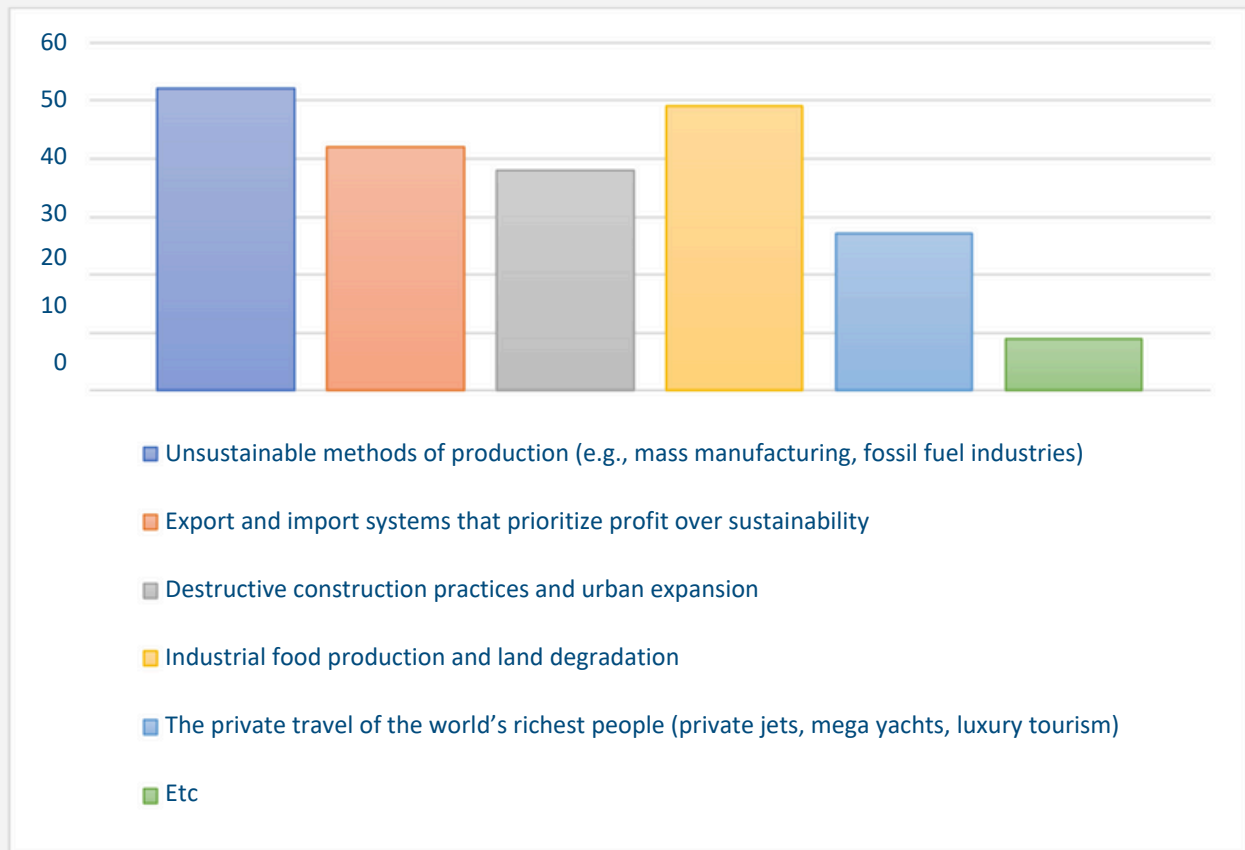
3. Value of IVS and Human Connection: IVS is seen not just as travel but as a mechanism for solidarity, mutual understanding, and capacity-building. Face-to-face interactions are essential for empathy, cultural exchange, and understanding complex local realities— things digital tools can't fully replicate.

4. Balance Between Sustainability and Solidarity: While air travel contributes to emissions, it's not the biggest problem—unsustainable industries and luxury consumption are far more damaging. Most agree on a balanced approach: minimize environmental impact of travel (e.g., longer stays, green travel, local action), while preserving the essence of international collaboration.

5. Skepticism Toward Digital and AI Solutions: While digital tools can bridge gaps, concerns were raised about their energy consumption, accessibility, and potential to replace meaningful human interactions. AI should be used cautiously, only when it enhances climate efforts without deepening inequalities or ecological damage.

6. Need for Policy and Structural Change: Regulatory frameworks are essential to make industries and the ultra-wealthy accountable. There's a call for degrowth, decolonization, and rethinking economic models, beyond just incentivizing greener individual behaviors.

Which of the following global systems most contribute to environmental destruction and climate injustice in your region?



In the context of IVS, how can we justify international mobility while remaining committed to climate justice?

- 1. Individual vs. Structural Change:** While individuals should make conscious decisions (e.g., greener travel options, reducing personal consumption) to combat climate change, the focus should also be on the larger impact of corporations and governments. Individual actions like not using plastic straws are less impactful than larger systemic changes, such as shifting diets or lifestyles.
- 2. Value of International Voluntary Service (IVS):** International mobility within IVS helps foster global understanding and climate justice by connecting people across borders. In-person exchanges enable participants to witness environmental issues firsthand, gain deeper empathy, and share sustainable solutions. This creates stronger, more meaningful connections than digital exchanges, which are often less impactful.
- 3. Sustainability in International Travel:** Despite the ecological footprint of international travel, it can be justified if it leads to long-term positive outcomes, such as greater environmental awareness, solidarity, and systemic change. Strategies like prioritizing low-carbon transportation (trains over flights), longer stays, and carbon offset initiatives can mitigate environmental impact.
- 4. Hybrid Models:** Combining in-person exchanges with virtual collaboration can reduce unnecessary travel while still enabling cross-cultural dialogue. Hybrid models can balance the need for global cooperation with the goal of reducing environmental harm.
- 5. Cultural Understanding and Climate Justice:** International exchanges foster intercultural understanding, critical to solving global issues like climate justice. Exchanging ideas and strategies from different regions helps in finding sustainable solutions. Emphasizing regional exchanges can also promote sustainability while still ensuring meaningful connections.
- 6. Local and Global Action:** It's important to involve local communities in global efforts by empowering them to lead sustainability projects. Volunteers can learn from local solutions and bring that knowledge back to their home countries to advocate for change.
- 7. Collective Responsibility:** Addressing climate change requires global cooperation, and stopping international travel is not a solution. The focus should be on reducing the ecological footprint of travel while ensuring that everyone, including marginalized communities, is part of the climate justice discussion.
- 8. Critique of Elite Consumption:** Acknowledging that the biggest environmental impacts come from states, corporations, and the ultra-rich, IVS can serve as a platform for raising awareness about these issues and advocating for more responsible practices among these powerful groups.
- 9. Long-Term Volunteering and Education:** Encouraging sustainable volunteer practices, long-term stays, and educating participants about climate justice and sustainability are key. Participants should also be aware of the impact of their travel and the environmental practices of the regions they visit.

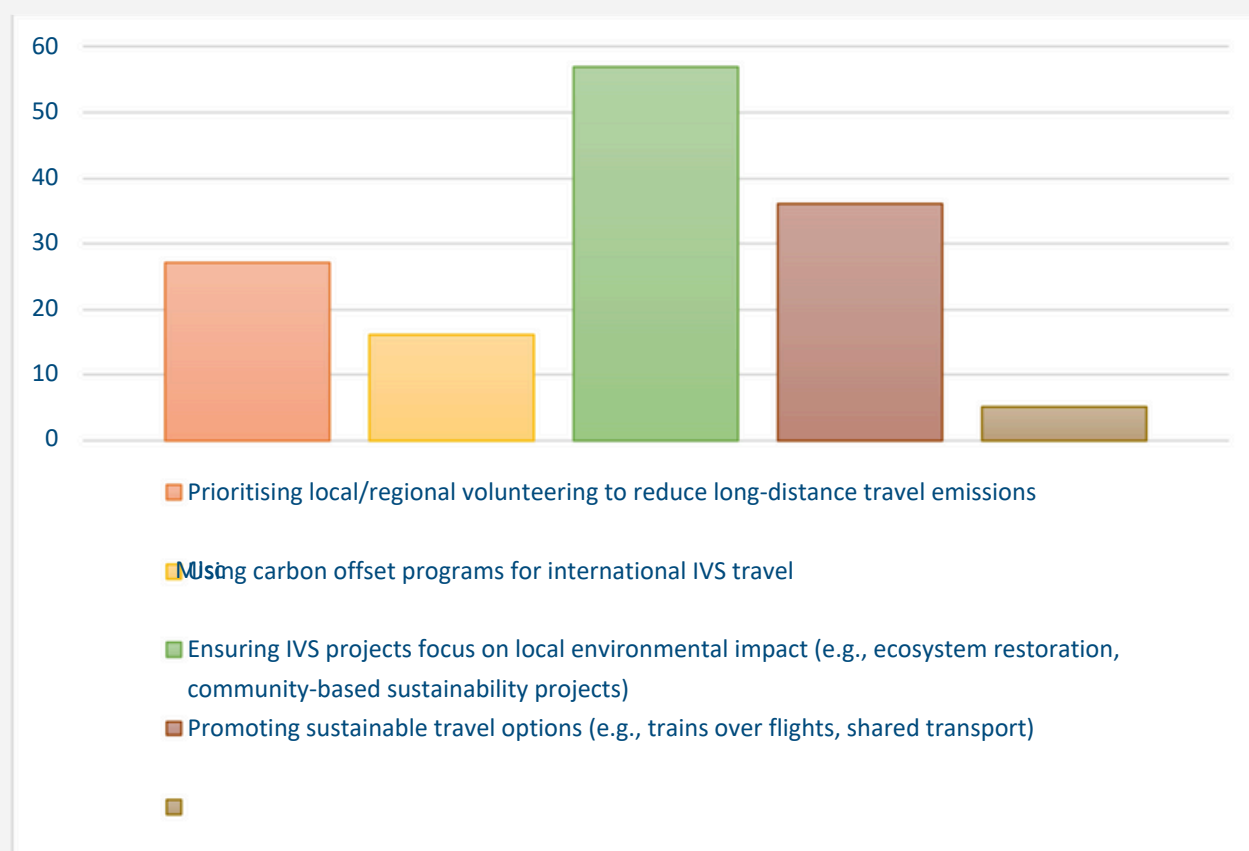
10. Measuring Impact: It's essential to evaluate the environmental and social impact of travel and projects to ensure that the positive outcomes outweigh the negative. This involves promoting green travel, supporting eco-friendly initiatives, and offsetting the carbon footprint of travel.

Overall, the importance of balancing the need for international exchange with the urgency of reducing environmental harm, fostering both global understanding and sustainable practices.





Which strategies does your organization use to mitigate the environmental impact of international IVS travel?





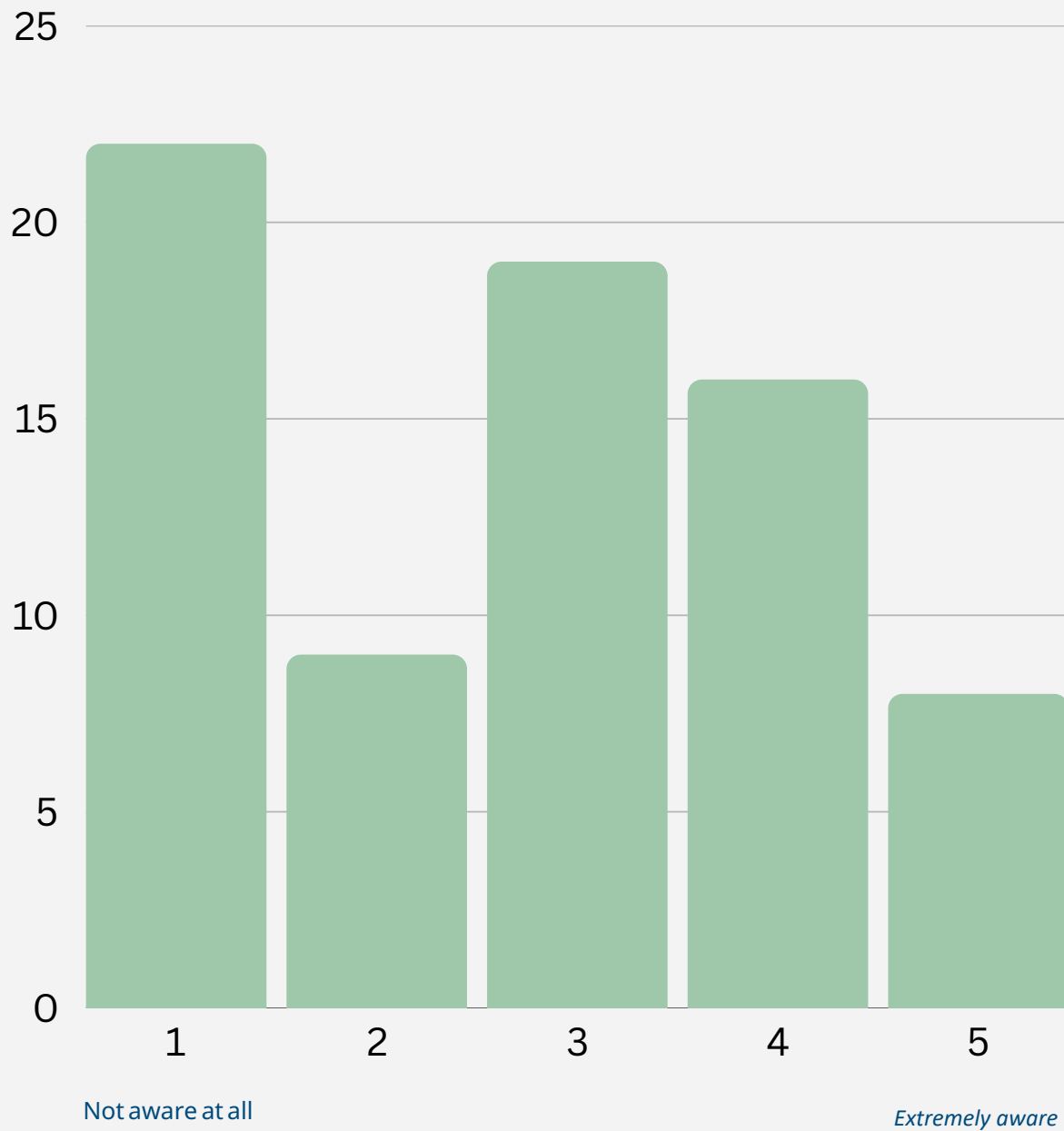
SECTION 5:

ADVOCACY & POLICY

DEVELOPMENT

Awareness of Policies Supporting IVS Advocacy Asks.

How familiar is your organization with the 5 IVS Advocacy Asks ?



(Likert scale: 1 = Not aware at all, 5 = Extremely aware)

Would you have any suggestions for changes, including policy suggestions etc?

1. Recognition of Volunteering and Social Benefits

- There is an ongoing national debate on recognizing non-formal education gained through youth volunteer programs for individuals aged 18 to 30.
- Volunteering should be formally recognized in policies, especially in areas such as medical care access, employment opportunities, and retirement benefits. Experience gained through volunteering should count in public job competitions and be considered in retirement policies.

2. Inclusive and Transparent IVS Frameworks

- IVS frameworks should have inclusive and flexible funding mechanisms, especially for organizations based outside the EU. These mechanisms should be more equitable, and the Quality Label process should be transparent, ensuring human rights-based organizations are not disadvantaged.
- Recognition of volunteering should focus not just on mobility but also on its social, educational, and civic impact, particularly in less visible regions.

3. Advocacy and Policy Support

- Support is needed for IVS advocacy, with a call for governments and organizations to formally recognize IVS, simplify cross-border opportunities, and integrate climate action into IVS programs.
- Policies should ensure equitable funding and uphold human rights through ethical guidelines and accountability mechanisms. More structured cooperation between IVS organizations and local public institutions (e.g., municipalities) is encouraged through EU-supported partnerships.

4. Climate Justice and Environmental Impact

- Climate justice is closely tied to economic inequality. Environmental damage often stems from political and economic power imbalances.
- IVS programs can play a role in fostering environmentally-conscious youth who will lead sustainable states and companies in the future.

5. Resource Mobilization and Focus

- Although there are concerns over the environmental micro-damages caused by IVS activities, the overall positive environmental influence of IVS training and awareness outweighs these issues.
- There is a need for multiple streams of resource mobilization to ensure long-term sustainability. Some participants feel there are too many topics to address at once.
- They suggest that CCIVS and its members should focus on one issue at a time and push collectively toward that goal.

Most of the participants did not have any suggestions and a few are concerned there are too many topics to consider and CCIVS and its members should focus on one at a time and push together towards that topic.

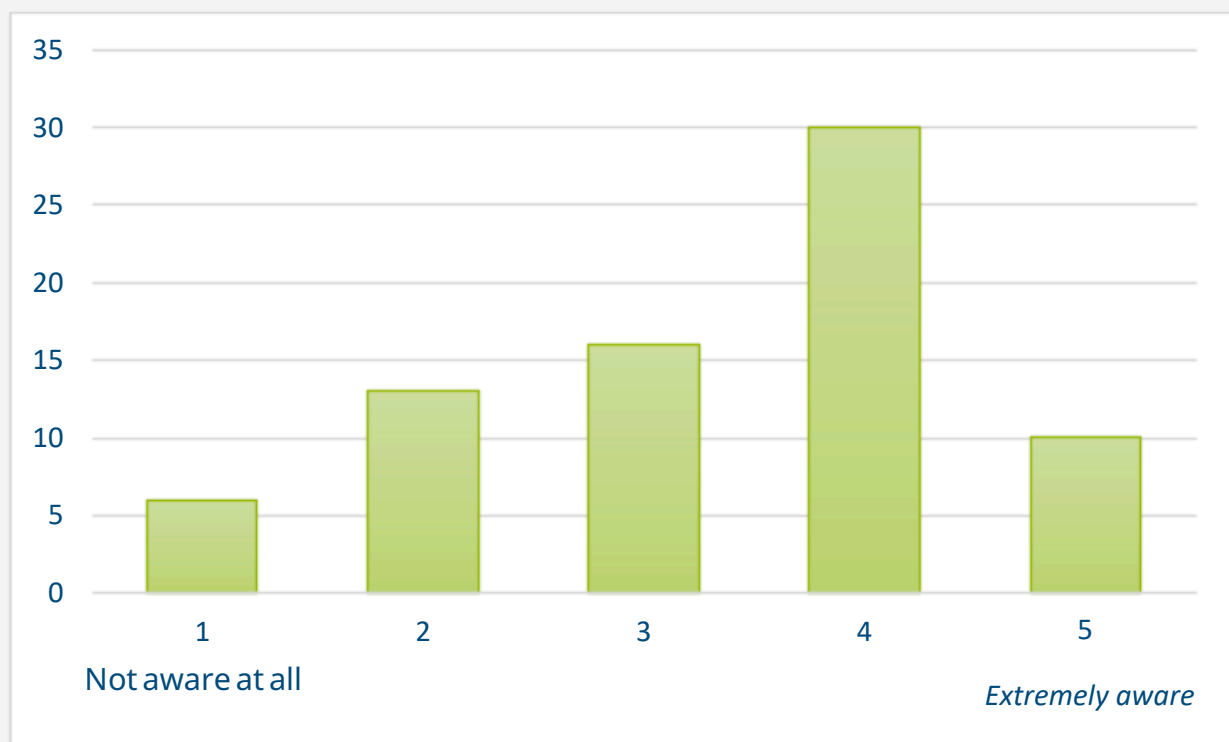
In ICYE they are promoting the inclusion of these topics in the training and evaluation process that they develop with volunteers. In Portugal they are debating at national level for recognition of the non-formal education for youth. Between 18 till 30 from our national youth programs





How aware is your organization of EU policies that impact IVS?

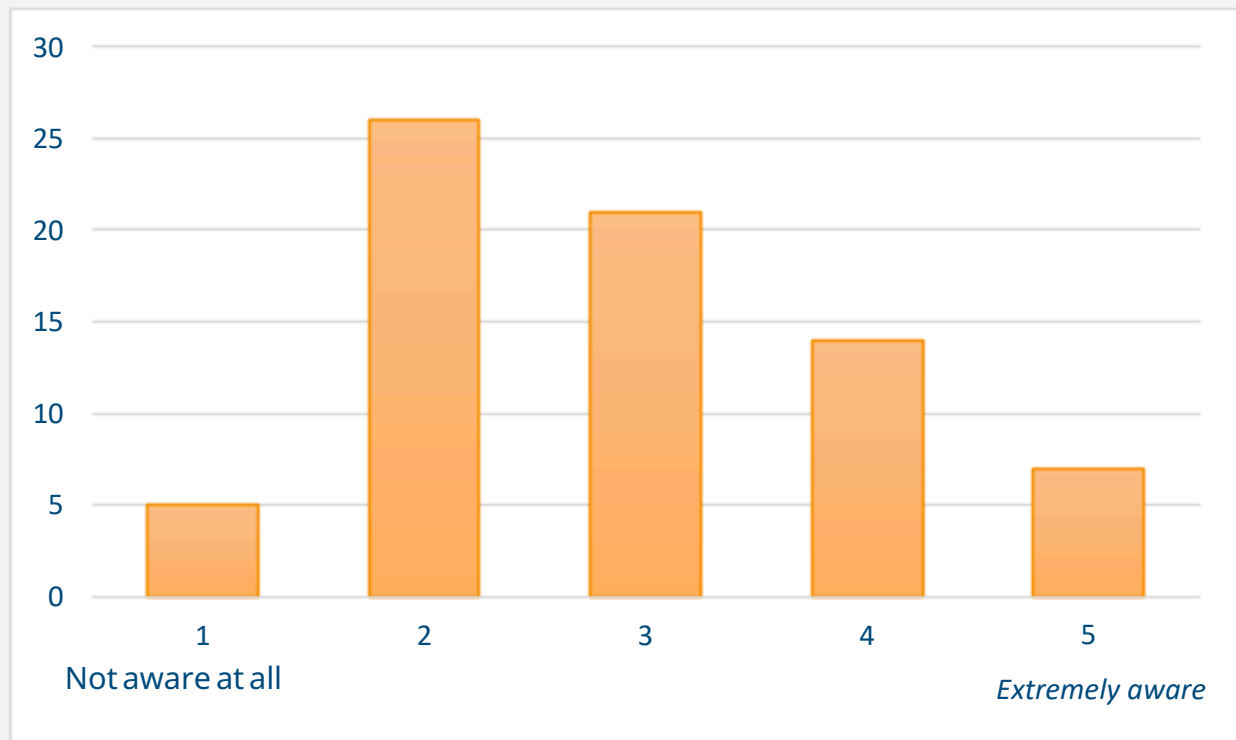
(e.g., Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, Horizon Europe, Youth Policy Frameworks, etc.)



(Likert scale: 1 = Not aware at all, 5 = Extremely aware)

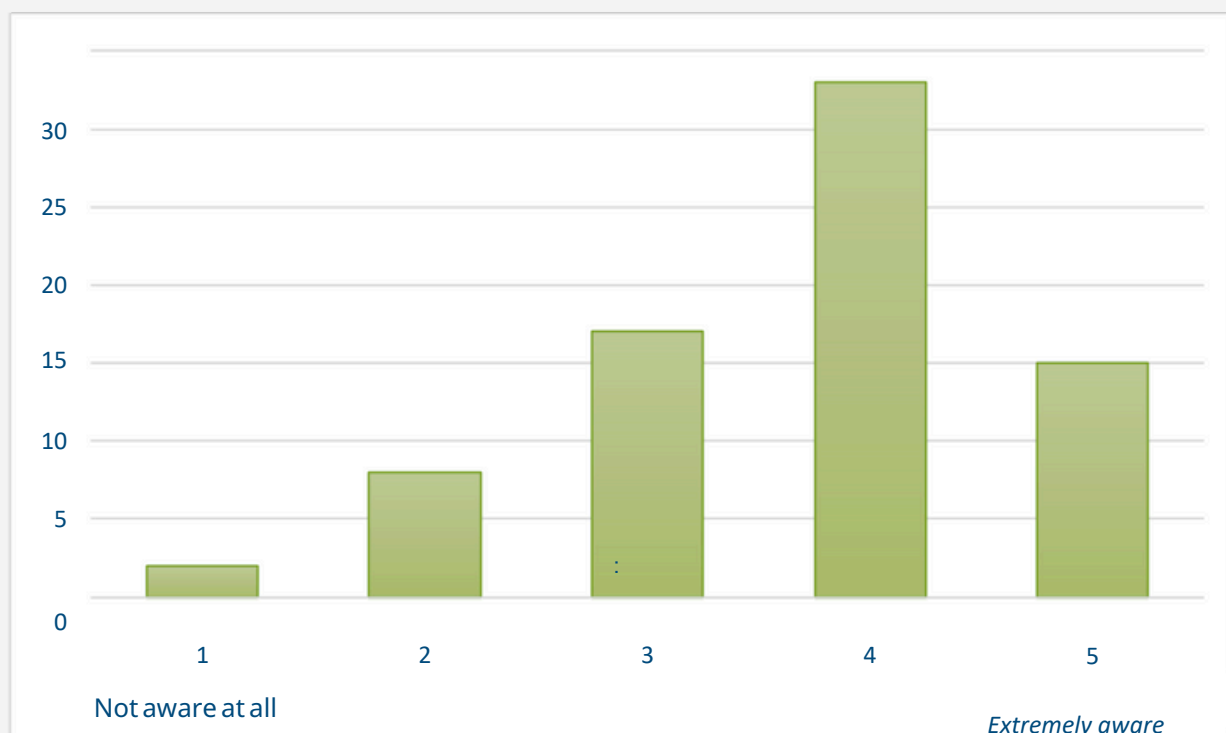
How aware is your organization of UN policies related to IVS?

(e.g., SDGs, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, Global Citizenship Education, UN Volunteers, etc.)



(Likert scale: 1 = Not aware at all, 5 = Extremely aware)

How aware is your organization of national-level policies supporting IVS, including volunteer recognition, mobility, funding, and climate action?



(Likert scale: 1 = Not aware at all, 5 = Extremely aware)

Policy Gaps and Contributions

What role does your organization currently play (or wish to play) in shaping EU policies on IVS, environmental sustainability, human rights, and youth empowerment?

1. Advocacy and Representation

(25%): Many organizations focus on advocacy for policies that promote IVS, youth empowerment, and environmental sustainability. Participation in EU-led forums and consultations is common, with organizations actively sharing insights from local and global contexts. A significant number of organizations are involved in campaigns and awareness-raising activities to advocate for these policies.

2. Youth Engagement and Empowerment

(20%): Many organizations highlight the importance of amplifying youth voices in EU policy discussions, particularly in relation to climate action, cross-cultural exchange, and human rights. There is a shared goal of increasing youth participation in governance and improving their inclusion in policy processes.

3. Best Practices and Collaboration

(15%): Showcasing successful IVS projects and fostering partnerships with EU organizations is a key strategy for influencing policy. Sharing evidence-based research and best practices helps inform EU policies, especially in sectors like sustainability and human rights.

4. Environmental Sustainability

(15%): A strong emphasis on environmental justice, including climate action and sustainable practices, is present across many organizations. Several groups are particularly focused on integrating climate justice, decolonization of IVS, and anti-racism into their efforts.

5. Global South Perspective

(10%): Some organizations, particularly those outside Europe, stress the need for more inclusive EU policies that take into account global South perspectives, especially in IVS-related matters. There's a call for greater representation of non-European voices in EU policy formation.

6. Networking and Alliances

(10%): Building networks and alliances with EU-based IVS organizations and other NGOs is another strategy for advocating for policy change. Several groups emphasize their involvement in joint advocacy efforts through networks like the European Youth Forum and other thematic alliances.

7. Challenges and Limitations

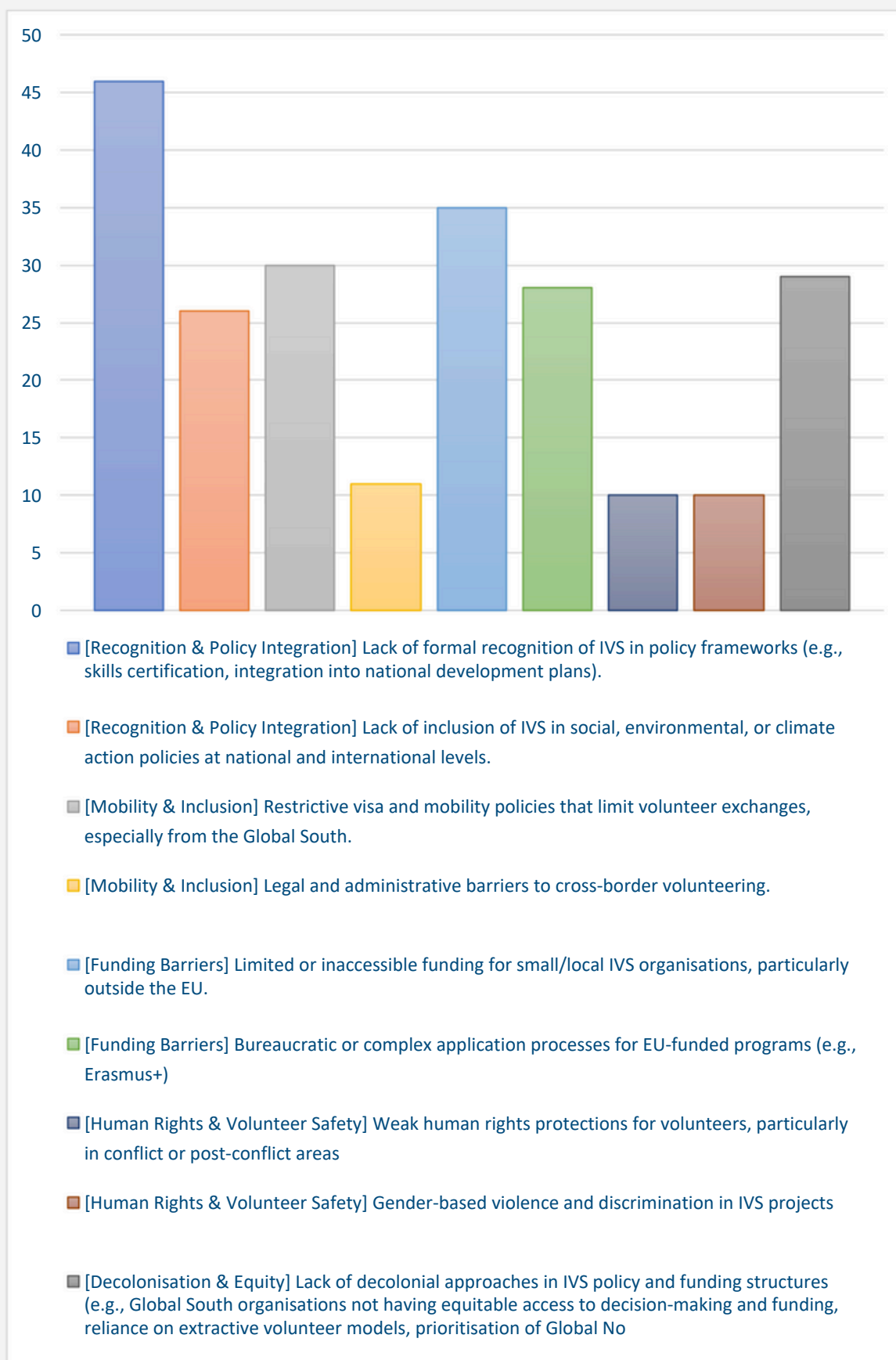
(5%): Many organizations outside the EU acknowledge that their influence is limited, with some only able to offer technical and operational support. Post-Brexit, some organizations report a diminished role in EU policy discussions, while others express frustration with the EU's decision-making processes in certain regions.

8. Other:

At SCI Switzerland, they have a strong focus on Climate Justice, De-Colonize IVS, Anti-Racism and Extractivism. Also Gender/LGBTIQ+ projects have their priority.

In conclusion, the text highlights that while many organizations are committed to influencing EU policies on IVS, environmental sustainability, human rights, and youth empowerment, their roles range from active participation in policy-making to advocating for more inclusive practices that consider the perspectives of the global South. Collaboration, networking, and showcasing best practices are central to their strategies. 27% of the responses come from organizations outside the European Union, so they do not have a role in the EU. However, 5% are interested in being heard, even though they are not part of the EU.

Which of these policy challenges most affect your IVS activities?



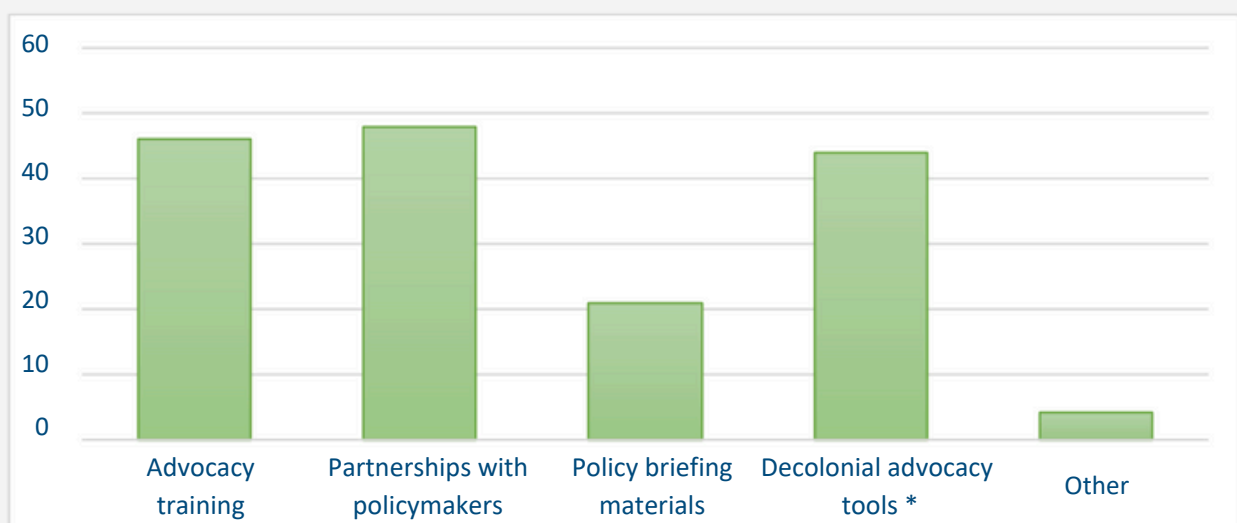
Organizational Advocacy Role

Does your organization currently advocate for IVS policies at the EU, UN or National level?

From the answers, we can conclude that 44.59% of the participants answers said that they do not advocate for IVS, the other 55.41% are advocating for IVS through different actions such as:

- National level, on ensuring a more proactive and less bureaucratic approaches on volunteer mobilization.
- In Türkiye people know IVS and provide local support for all our projects. Thanks to this, we can carry out IVS projects in Türkiye without charging volunteers. We are also the Turkish partner of the North-South Center of the Council of Europe Global Education Network. All our IVS projects are organized with the "Global Education Through Volunteering" approach. This connection was also very much appreciated by the CoE. We are increasing our relations.
- Governmental organization in Portugal responsible for implementing youth policies.
- Voting for motions presented by the European Youth Forum related to IVS interests. Learning to develop advocacy asks and get involved in policy drafting.

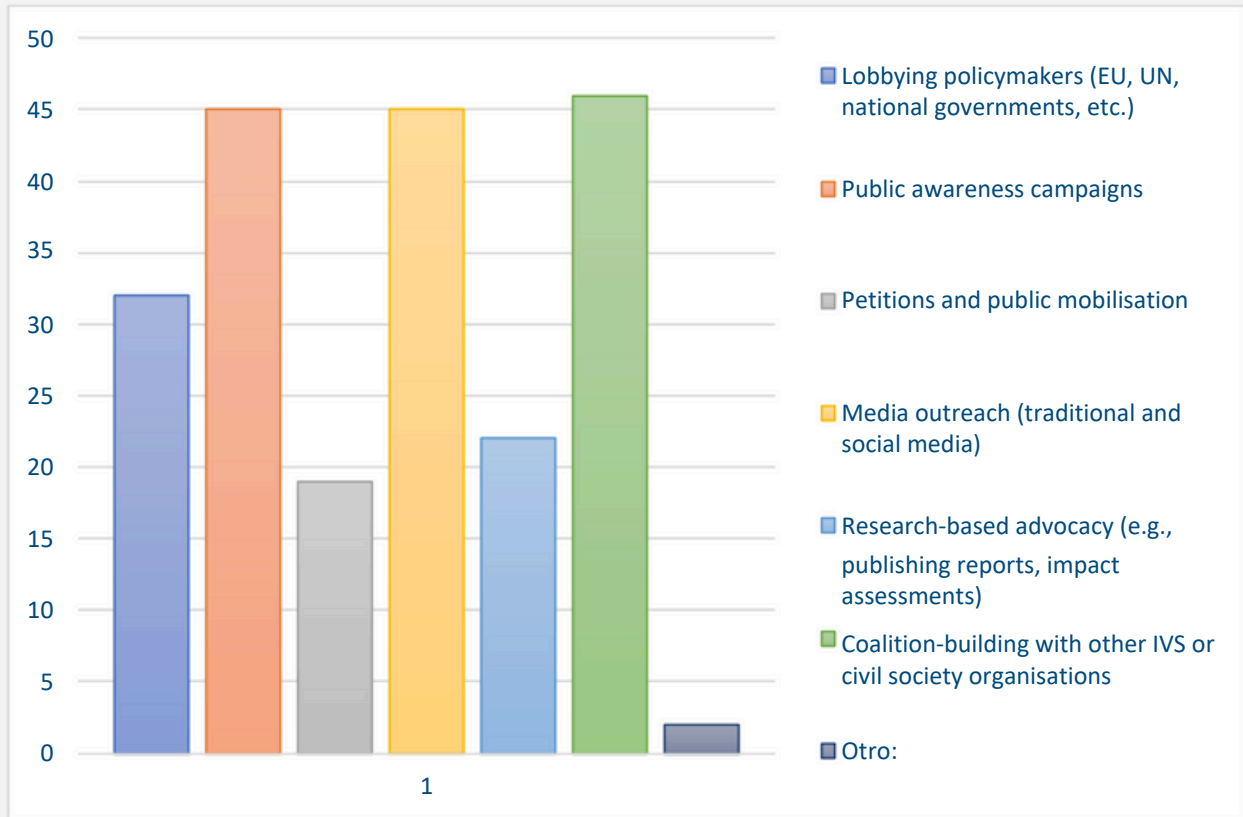
What type of support or training would help you engage more in policy discussions?



*funding structures, and build solidarity-based partnerships (learning how to shift IVS narratives, create equitable rather than charity-based models)

Advocacy Strategies and Stakeholder Engagement

Which advocacy strategies does your organization currently use, or plan to use in the future?



Which stakeholders should be engaged to advance IVS policy?

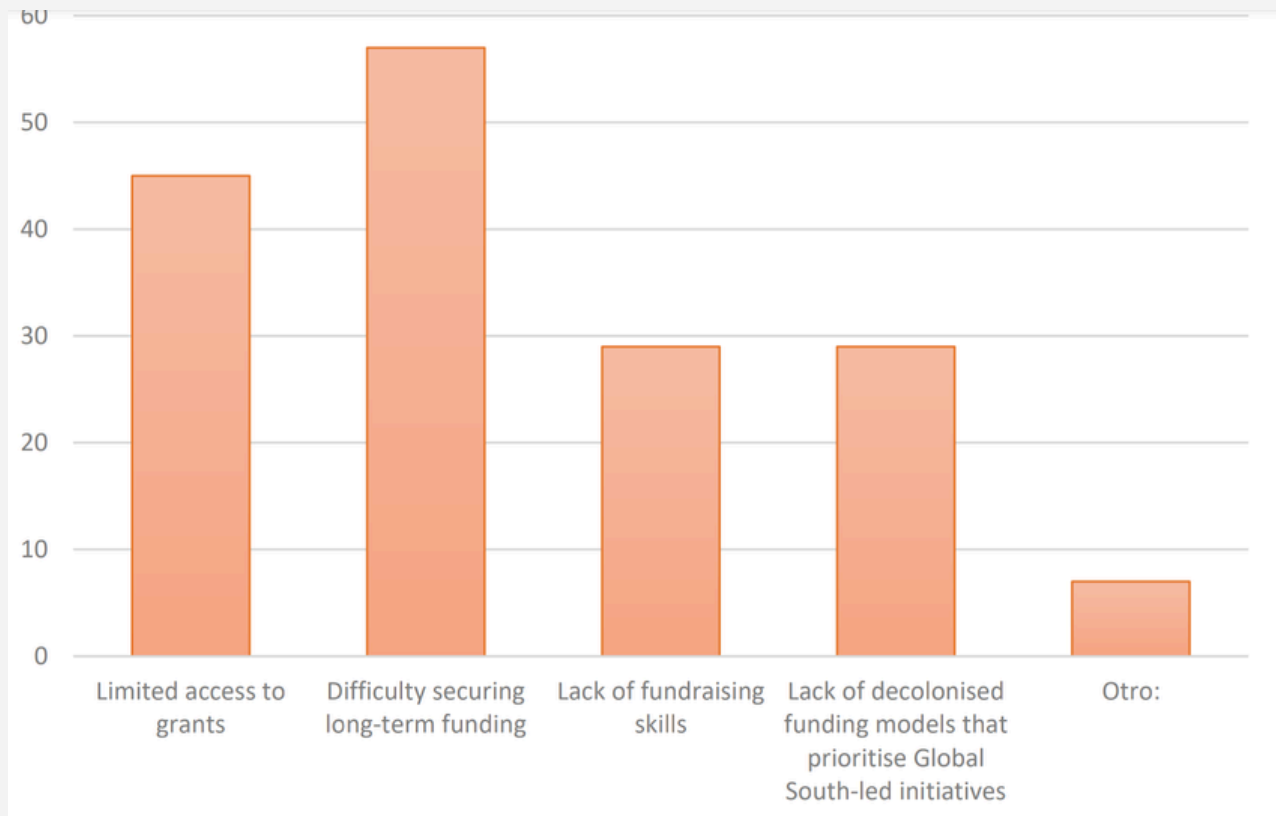




SECTION 6:

FUNDING & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

What are the main funding challenges your organization faces?



Other comments for the question were: limited human resources in the organizations and lack of national support or even when there are funds, the impossibility of getting them due to hard processes or ethical differences.

Have you experienced challenges in accessing EU funding for IVS?

53% of the answers are organizations that do not belong to the European Union, therefore they are not able to get EU funding. For the European participants sometimes, it is difficult and it depends and the size and experience of the organization because of the time, requirements and experience and the need of certain skills, and other bureaucratic processes.

EU Funding Limitations: Since 2022, there has been no EU funding available for global partners (non-EU, non-Balkan countries). This restricts access to many opportunities, particularly for organizations in the Global South.

Challenges for Non-EU Organizations: Organizations based outside the EU, like GSM, face structural challenges in accessing EU funding, including the inability to obtain the ESC Lead Quality Label. This prevents them from accessing coordination roles and funding. Additionally, EU funding for activities like advocacy and rights-based approaches is often limited or unavailable.

Restricted Opportunities: Opportunities for non-EU countries, like Argentina or Colombia, are increasingly limited. In many cases, participation is only possible through EU partners, and countries like Argentina are often not prioritized.

Bureaucracy and Complexity: The bureaucratic processes involved in obtaining EU funding are complicated, with stringent selection criteria, complex forms, and short deadlines. Many organizations, especially those in the Global South, struggle to meet these requirements.

Ineligibility and Dependence on EU Partners: Many organizations cannot apply directly for EU funding. They need to partner with an EU organization to access funds. This creates a dependency on EU partners and can limit the range of activities they can pursue.

Specific Barriers: For some organizations, like those in Turkey, even years of experience in a certain field haven't been enough to secure the ESC quality label. This is often influenced by the relationships with National Agencies or bureaucratic hurdles.

Limited Funding for Global South: Most available funding is directed towards EU countries, limiting the ability to support non-EU branches and partners of organizations like SCI.

What support would help you improve your financial sustainability?

1. Long-Term and Core Funding

- A strong need for long-term, stable, institutional funding as opposed to project-based grants. This would allow for sustainable operations, particularly in countries where there is limited governmental support for non-profits (e.g., in African nations).
- Access to multi-year grants would foster continuous work, particularly in promoting the value of international volunteering and youth engagement.

2. Capacity Building and Training:

- Organizations need training in fundraising and grant writing, especially to enhance competitiveness in securing diverse funding sources. This includes training in researching suitable grants, donor relations, and improving visibility for fundraising campaigns.
- Capacity building to strengthen staff resources and skills, especially for fundraising, partnership development, and creating robust funding strategies, is crucial.
- Training for project managers and youth leaders is also vital to increase organizational capacity and sustainability.

3. Partnership Development:

- Fostering strategic partnerships with other NGOs, businesses, and governmental entities to share resources and networks. Building long-term partnerships can ensure the programmability of IVS experiences.
- Collaboration with ethical funders, corporate sponsors, and foundations that prioritize values like human rights, youth participation, and equity will strengthen financial resilience.

4. Diversified Funding Sources:

- Creating multiple-stream funding strategies to avoid dependency on one source. This includes a combination of EU funding, private foundations, corporate sponsorships, and individual donations.
- Crowdfunding, major donor programs, events, and annual giving programs were identified as useful tools for diversifying income.

5. Grants and Funding for Specific Initiatives:

- Specific calls for funding for south-south volunteering, youth projects, climate-focused
- Support for financial support for IVS and project sustainability, such as operational grants or support for endowment funds to provide long-term income.

6. Networking and Knowledge Sharing:

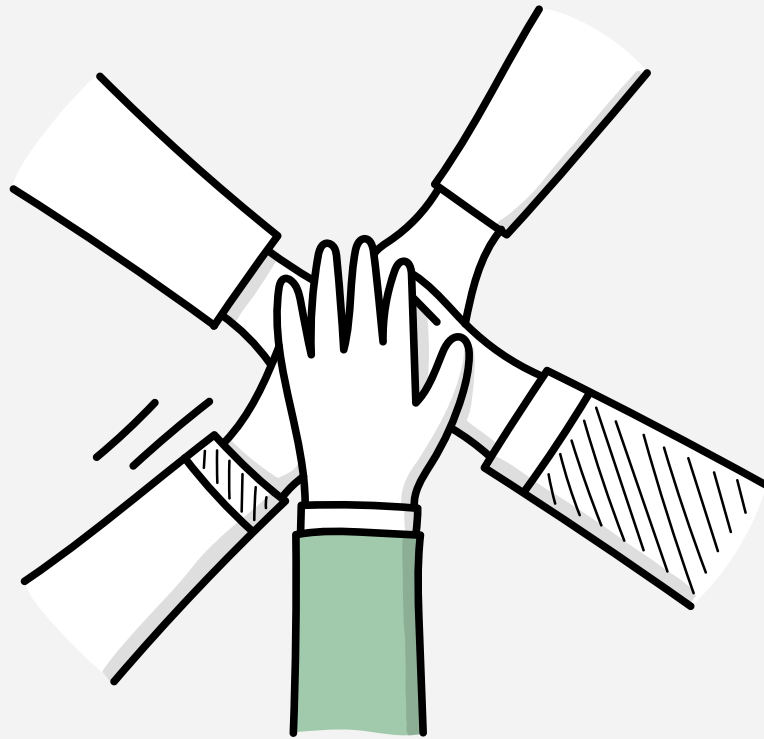
- Creation of a catalog of potential funders and funding opportunities, particularly for global south organizations. Additionally, having a database of funding options would help in identifying new financial support.
- Sharing technical experiences on financial sustainability and access to networks and mentors for improving fundraising skills.

7. Government and Institutional Support:

- Governments are often not supportive, especially in non-EU regions, but there is still a need for advocacy to raise the profile of IVS and make the case for funding. This can include support for volunteer exchange programs and youth engagement at a policy level.
- EU-level funding mechanisms, including Erasmus+ and ESC, are mentioned as key sources of funding for IVS, though they are not always accessible to all organizations.

8. Awareness and Recognition:

- Improving awareness of IVS at the local level and promoting its long-term value for personal and professional growth, particularly among young people and activists.
- Recognizing IVS as a foundational activity in life course and the working life of youth can help attract more participants and ensure financial sustainability.



SECTION 7:

PARTNERSHIPS &

COLLABORATION



What support would help you improve your financial sustainability?

1. Collaboration and Networking: There's a strong emphasis on the importance of collaboration, building connections, and sharing knowledge among organizations. By establishing common goals, creating open communication channels, and involving decision-makers at different levels, partnerships can thrive.

2. Capacity Building: It is essential to invest in capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the abilities of local organizations. This includes project management, volunteer engagement, and resource sharing, helping partners develop long-lasting, impactful initiatives.

3. Financial Support and Resource Sharing: Collaborative funding opportunities and sharing resources, expertise, and best practices are crucial for international partnerships. Organizations should work together on joint projects, such as disaster relief or community development, to enhance relationships.

4. Cultural Sensitivity and Technology: Providing cultural sensitivity training and leveraging technology for virtual meetings and coordination can help overcome geographical barriers and improve collaboration across cultures.

5. Equity and Inclusivity: Partnerships should prioritize equitable collaboration, with Global South organizations playing an active role in decision-making, project design, and resource allocation. Moving away from donor-recipient models toward co-creation is key to fostering true partnerships.

6. Improving Organizational Management: Many organizations in the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement struggle with organizational management, including administration, finance, HR, fundraising, and communication. Strengthening these areas is critical for the movement to grow and achieve sustainable social change.

7. Improving Access to Funding: Easier access to funding, particularly for organizations in the Global South, is necessary. Co-funding and pooling resources can help alleviate financial constraints and improve project viability.

8. Advocacy and Policy Influence: Advocacy work should be strengthened, particularly in relation to policy changes like simplifying visa processes and ensuring adequate funding for IVS projects. Building partnerships with other civil society organizations and aligning with global policies will enhance the movement's impact.

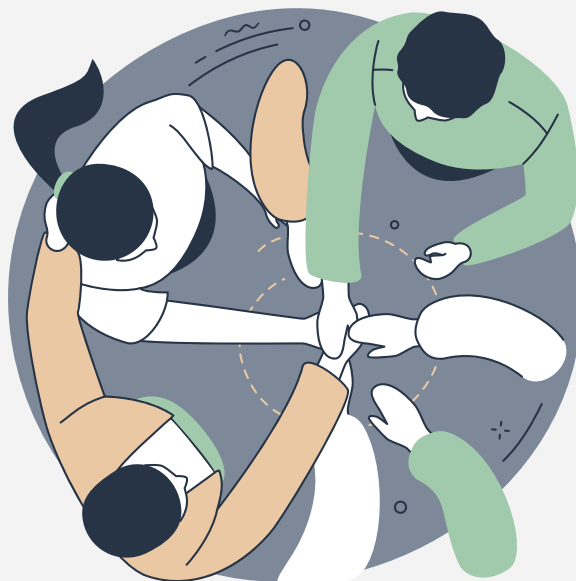
9. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact: Focus should be placed on sustainable funding, reducing environmental impact, and ensuring that IVS projects are not just short-term interventions but have long-term benefits. Additionally, creating a unified, inclusive monitoring and evaluation framework will help track progress.

10. Continuous Learning and Improvement: There should be a strong focus on learning from both successes and challenges, continuous training, and fostering peer-to-peer exchanges. This will help strengthen the IVS movement and adapt to changing needs and contexts.

11. Grassroots Empowerment: Strengthening collaborations with grassroots organizations and ensuring they are empowered to lead projects will help avoid neo-colonial dynamics and ensure that local contexts are respected in decision-making processes.

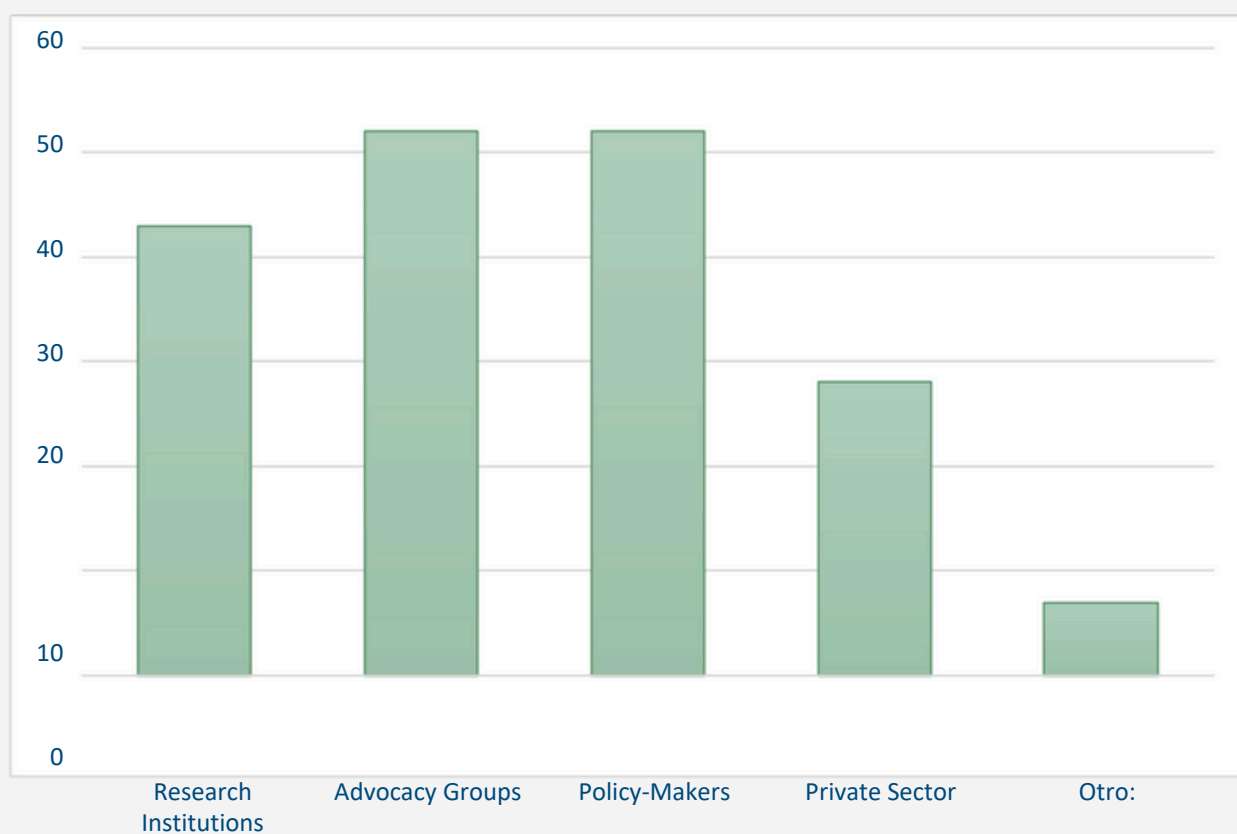
In summary, improving international partnerships in IVS requires equitable collaboration, capacity-building, financial support, cultural sensitivity, and a focus on long-term sustainability.

Emphasizing shared responsibility, transparent communication, and mutual learning will make these partnerships more effective and transformative.





What support would help you improve your financial sustainability?



How do you ensure that local communities and grassroots organizations are meaningfully engaged in IVS projects?

The main ideas from the survey have been organized as follows:

1. Horizontal Relationships and Collaboration: Emphasize building more equal, horizontal relationships between organizations offering international volunteering opportunities and those providing job opportunities within local communities. This includes involving local communities and grassroots organizations in every stage of the project process, from planning to decision-making.

2. Active and Inclusive Partnerships: Partnerships should be active and inclusive, with local organizations being informed, consulted, and involved as decision-makers. This approach ensures shared leadership and avoids top-down imposition of agendas.

4. Cultural Sensitivity and Local Context: Volunteers and organizations need to respect the cultural context of the communities they work with, ensuring that projects are culturally appropriate and sensitive. This includes understanding local practices, knowledge, and traditions.

5. Capacity Building and Empowerment: One of the primary strategies for engaging local communities is capacity building. This involves providing training and resources to empower local organizations and individuals, enabling them to lead and sustain initiatives long after volunteers leave.

6. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact: Projects should be designed with long-term sustainability in mind. This means focusing on building local capacities, establishing ongoing relationships, and ensuring that projects have a lasting impact beyond short-term volunteer placements.

7. Inclusive Planning and Decision-Making: Local stakeholders should be involved from the outset in identifying project needs and goals, and they should have an active role in decision-making and project design. This approach ensures that projects are genuinely responsive to local realities.

8. Feedback and Evaluation: Establishing mechanisms for ongoing feedback from local communities throughout the project's lifecycle is essential. This ensures projects can be adjusted in real-time and that local perspectives are continuously shaping the work.

9. Equitable Resource Sharing: There needs to be an equitable distribution of resources, with funding and support directed to local organizations, allowing them greater control over how funds are used and ensuring they can continue their work independently.

10. Engagement Beyond Volunteering: Volunteering initiatives should also support local community development, offering young people opportunities for meaningful engagement in various activities. This includes promoting youth participation and building social impact through both local and international projects.

11. Communication and Transparency: Open, transparent communication is crucial to building trust between international organizations and local communities. This includes sharing information about the project's progress and addressing any concerns that arise during its implementation.

12. Avoiding External Imposition: Projects should not impose external values or solutions on local communities. Instead, they should be based on mutual agreement, with an emphasis on collaboration and respect for local needs and priorities.

In summary, the key to successful international voluntary service (IVS) projects lies in building equal, inclusive partnerships, ensuring local communities are deeply involved in all stages of project development, respecting cultural contexts, and focusing on long-term sustainability and mutual benefit.



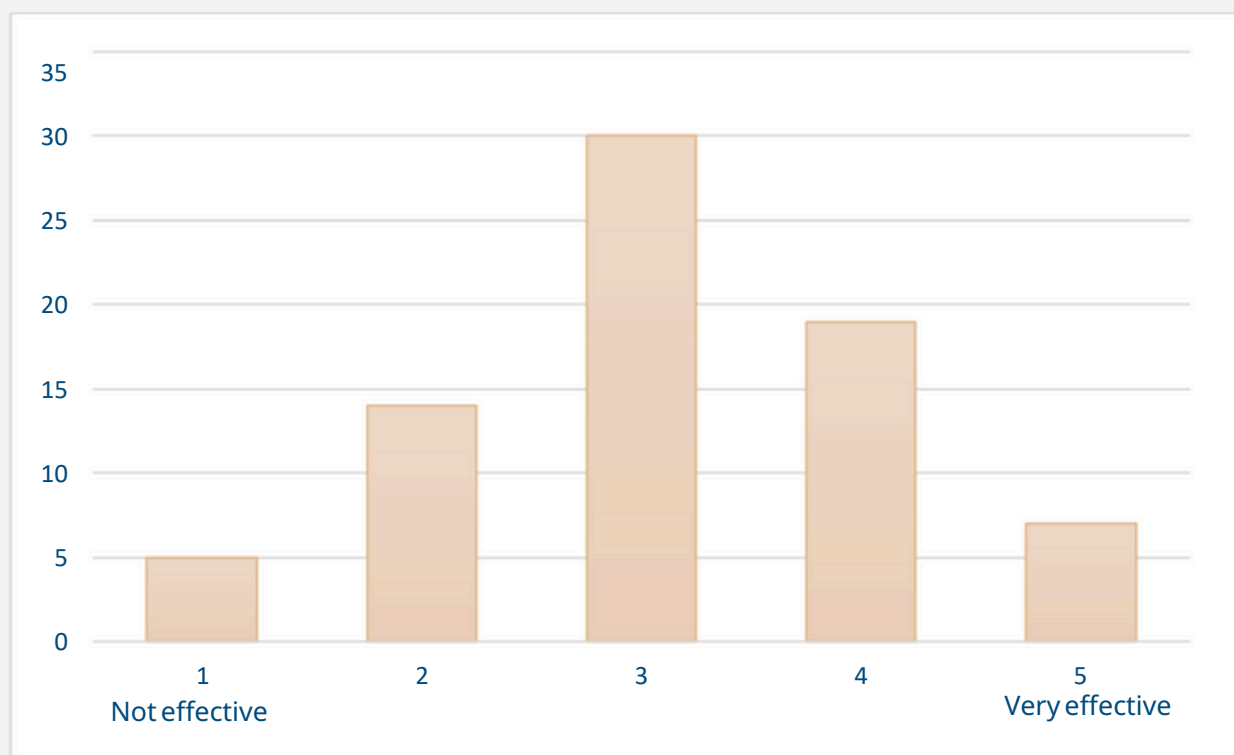


SECTION 8:

DIGITAL TOOLS & AI

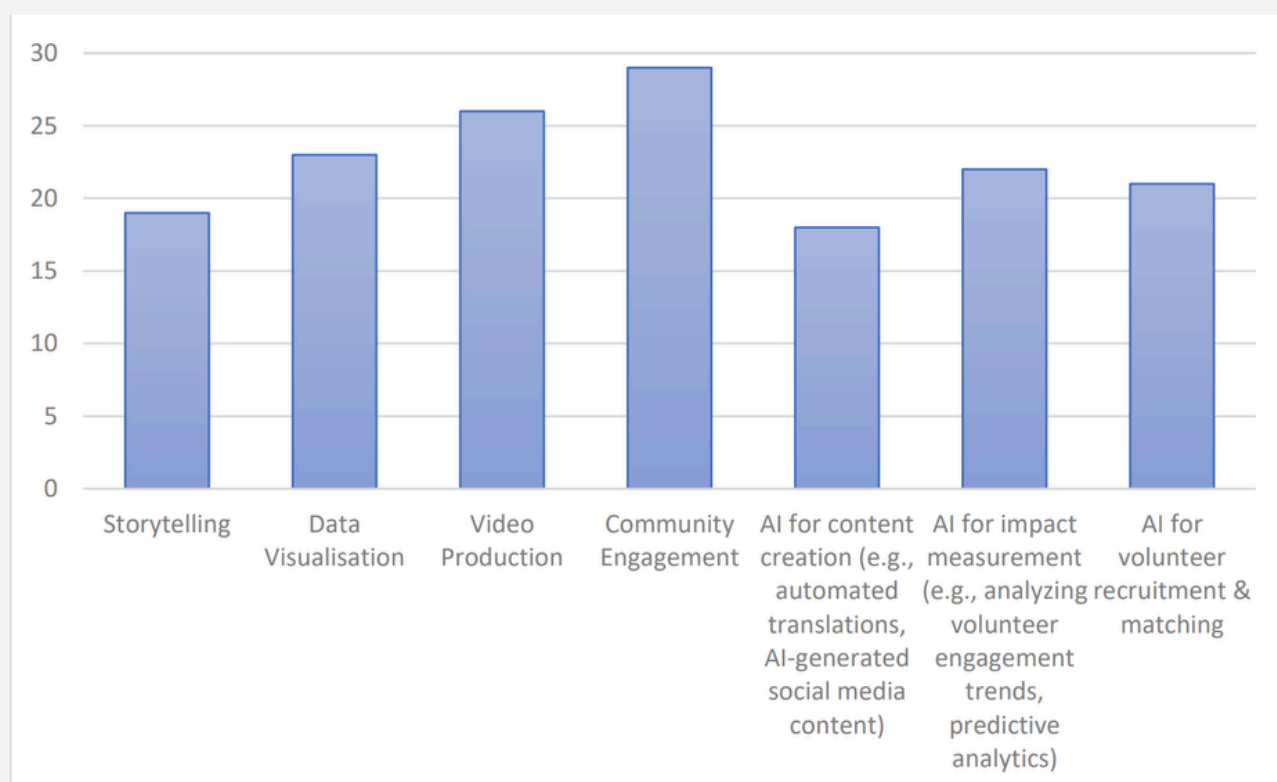
IN IVS

How effective are your organizations digital tools in supporting IVS advocacy and tracking impact?



(Likert scale: 1 = Not aware at all, 5 = Extremely aware)

What type of support would help your organization improve digital engagement and advocacy?



How can digital tools, including AI, be used to better connect IVS projects with policy- making and research?

*47% of the answers were negative.

Here's a summary of key points:

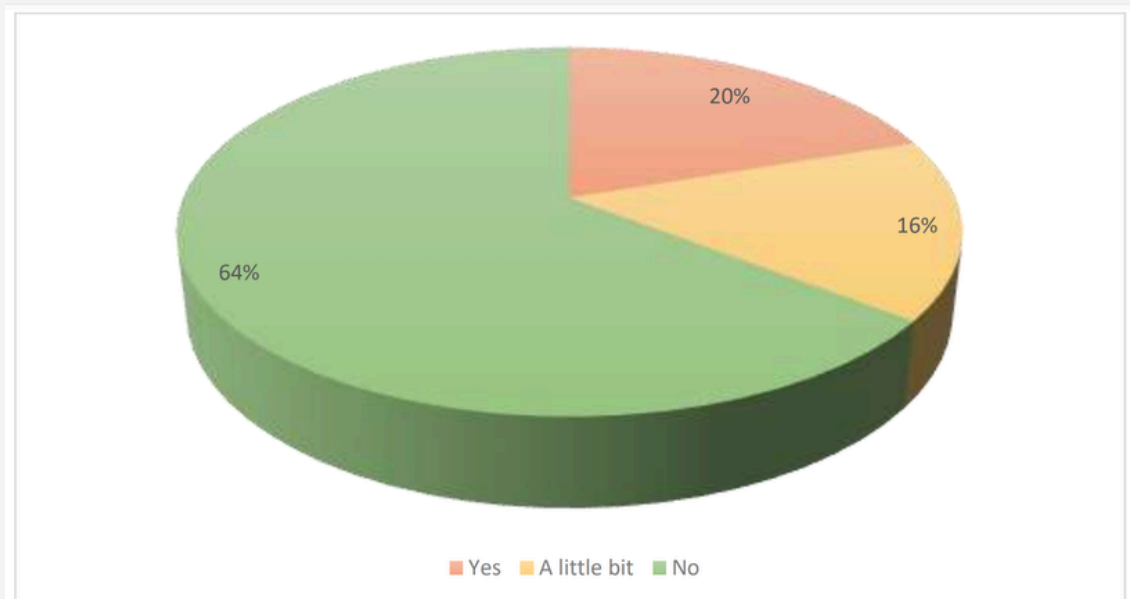
- 1.** AI can process large volumes of data, preserving local contexts while enabling Macro-level research. It helps track volunteer impact, identify trends, and provide real-time insights for evidence-based policy-making. AI tools can assist in processing both qualitative and quantitative data to inform decisions and improve efficiency.
- 2.** AI can break down language barriers, facilitating communication between international actors. Digital platforms also allow for better collaboration, enabling cross-border partnerships among IVS projects, researchers, policymakers, and NGOs.
- 3.** AI-based tools can help generate policy recommendations based on data from IVS projects, identifying the most relevant policymakers to take action. Digital platforms can connect IVS projects with policymakers, offering virtual consultations, petitions, and policy briefs to influence decision-making.
- 4.** AI-driven platforms can provide personalized training for volunteers, project leaders, and policymakers, offering easy access to digital learning resources. This promotes greater engagement and skill development within IVS communities.
- 5.** AI can enhance monitoring and evaluation by offering real-time feedback on project outcomes, helping measure social impact and making it easier to adjust policies or strategies as needed. AI can also simulate the potential impact of policy changes to guide decision-making.
- 6.** Virtual simulations can help policymakers better understand IVS project dynamics, while AI can amplify advocacy efforts through targeted social media campaigns and content creation, raising awareness of IVS impacts and promoting social change.
- 7.** AI and digital tools can streamline management processes, automate repetitive tasks, and enhance overall project efficiency, allowing IVS organizations to focus more on core activities. These tools can also assist with resource allocation, project tracking, and the visual representation of data. By leveraging AI to collect and share data, IVS projects can gain greater visibility and make their advocacy more impactful. Multilingual tools can ensure that research and outreach efforts are accessible to a global audience.

8. By leveraging AI to collect and share data, IVS projects can gain greater visibility and make their advocacy more impactful. Multilingual tools can ensure that research and outreach efforts are accessible to a global audience.
9. While digital tools offer numerous benefits, there are concerns about their environmental impact, data privacy, and ethical use. Some stakeholders express uncertainty about AI's role in advocacy and the need for digital literacy training, particularly for grassroots organizations.

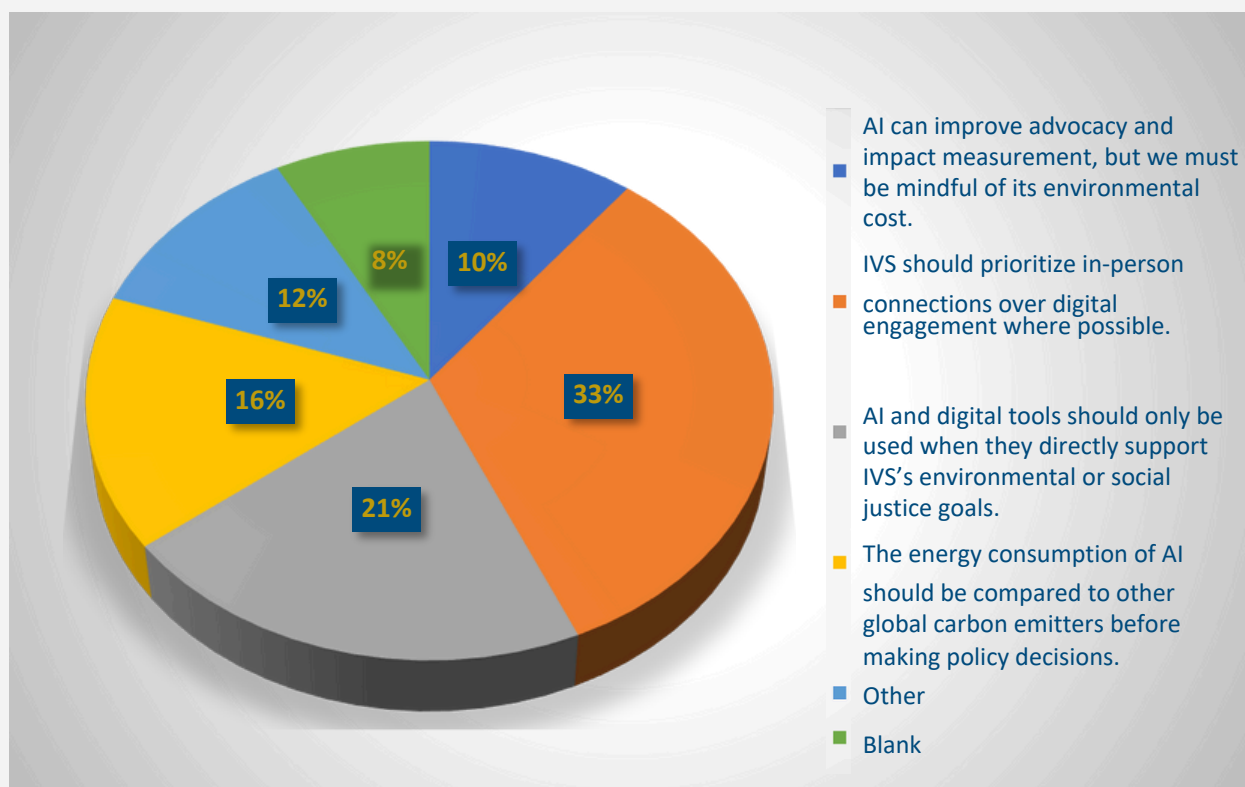
In summary, AI and digital tools have the potential to strengthen IVS projects by improving data management, enhancing communication, and fostering better policy alignment.

However, careful consideration of ethical standards and environmental impacts is essential.

Is your organization currently exploring AI tools for advocacy, project management, or volunteer engagement?



AI and digital tools require massive amounts of energy. How do you view their role in IVS?



How does your organization consider the environmental impact of AI and digital tools in IVS?

1. Environmental awareness:

Many organizations are aware of the environmental impact of AI and digital tools, particularly regarding energy consumption, carbon footprint, and e-waste. There is a growing concern about the energy-intensive nature of cloud computing and data centers, often relying on non-renewable energy sources.

The Botswana Work-camps Association (BWA) and GSM are particularly focused on

adopting Eco-friendly technology, aiming to minimize their environmental impact by using energy-efficient platforms and promoting sustainable practices.

Sustainability and climate justice are priorities, with several organizations advocating for Eco-friendly tech solutions and adopting a low-tech approach when possible. Some organizations even balance digital tools with in-person activities to reduce reliance on high-energy technologies.

2. AI and Cloud Computing Energy Consumption:

The training of large AI models and maintaining data centers require substantial

electricity, which often contributes to carbon emissions and environmental degradation.

E-waste from digital devices is another significant concern. As digital tools become more prevalent in IVS, the disposal of electronic devices contributes to environmental harm, especially if not recycled properly.

3. Adoption of Eco-Friendly Practices:

Some organizations prioritize energy-efficient hardware and encourage the use of renewable energy in data centers.

A few organizations are actively exploring how to make their digital tools more sustainable

and resource-efficient, even advocating for digital solutions that complement grassroots engagement rather than replace it.

Hybrid engagement (combining digital and in-person activities) is a common strategy to balance the environmental cost of AI and digital tools with the necessity of maintaining effective outreach.

4. Challenges:

Many organizations are still in the learning phase, exploring how to balance technological use with sustainability. Some, like KVDA and SURCOD, are beginning to understand the environmental costs but struggle with the need for digital transformation and practical solutions.

Lack of awareness is still present in some organizations, with a few stating they do not use AI tools yet or only use them minimally due to their environmental concerns.

5. Sustainable Tech Solutions:

Training and education programs on the sustainability of AI and digital tools are seen as vital, particularly for youth and volunteers involved in IVS.

SURCOD's "Computer for Youth" initiative aims to educate Malawian youth about digital literacy while also incorporating Eco-conscious tech practices, such as energy optimization and waste reduction.

IN CONCLUSION

- **65% of organizations are aware of the environmental impact of AI and digital tools, with energy consumption and e-waste being the primary concerns.**
- **50% of organizations are actively seeking Eco-friendly tech solutions, including energy- efficient platforms and promoting sustainable practices.**
- **30% of organizations are not yet using AI or are minimally utilizing it due to concerns about its environmental footprint, with some not using it at all.**
- **There is a clear recognition within the IVS sector of the need for sustainable digital tools. While some organizations are already prioritizing eco-friendly solutions, many others are still in the process of understanding the full environmental impact and exploring ways to balance digital transformation with environmental responsibility.**
- **The sector seems committed to reducing energy consumption and e-waste, though practical solutions and more research into eco-friendly practices are still needed.**

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

- The **4** continents and **42** countries represented in the survey provide a global perspective and a wide range of opinions, shaped by diverse local realities. Each region has its own needs, and even within regions, individual countries may face unique challenges.
- The opinions and information shared through the survey reflect the beliefs and experiences of the respondents, most of whom identified as staff members. The perspectives of organizations in the Global South differ significantly from those in the Global North.
- Organizations in the Global South typically create and develop projects where volunteers engage directly in learning or hands-on activities. However, they face difficulties in participating in larger-scale international volunteering service (IVS) initiatives.
- In contrast, Global North organizations often cite funding constraints and the complexity of donor requirements as their main challenges in implementing IVS projects.
- Yet, access to funding remains a shared concern across both regions. This is why most organizations indicated that their primary capacity-building needs are related to funding and impact measurement.
- The specific needs of each organization depend on their core activities—some focus on training, others on hands-on projects, and some on advocacy-related work.
- While evaluation is not currently a main focus, most organizations acknowledge its importance for institutional recognition and ongoing project support.
- Youth involvement in IVS is also influenced by national contexts. The most common barriers include a lack of financial support and insufficient recognition of IVS organizations at local national, and international levels.
- Raising awareness about IVS opportunities remains a priority.
- Participants agree that non-formal education is an effective tool, though not always the most suitable method depending on the topic.

Most Voted Topics Across Categories:

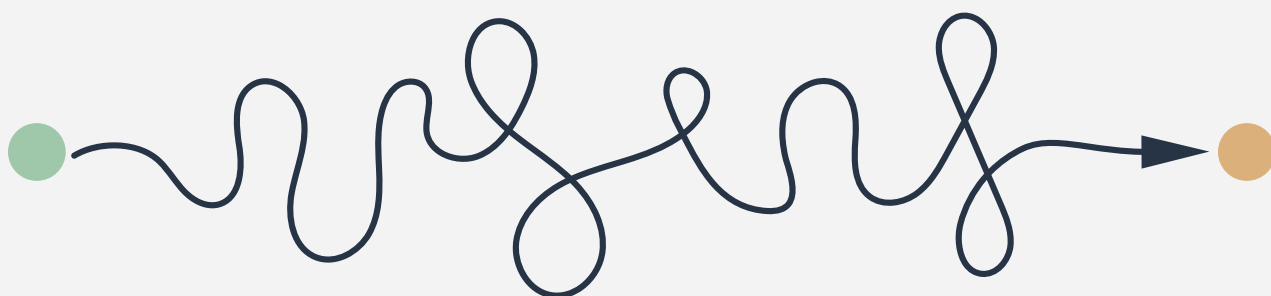
1. Climate action and adaptation strategies
2. Anti-racism, decolonization, and equity in IVS
3. Community organizing and grassroots mobilization
4. Digital advocacy and online campaigning
5. Intercultural dialogue and global citizenship education
6. Alternative education and non-formal learning
7. Basic life skills
8. Youth empowerment and entrepreneurship
9. Policy-making, political knowledge, rights, and critical thinking

- When it comes to environmental and climate justice, the most pressing issues vary by region but remain largely similar worldwide. The role of IVS organizations in addressing these challenges is as diverse as the network itself. Some focus on awareness and youth advocacy, while others work directly with communities, promote sustainable practices, engage in reforestation, influence policy, or encourage cultural exchange to share solutions.
- However, these efforts are hindered by colonial legacies in funding and decision-making, and a general lack of resources.
- Survey responses also showed that global systems contributing to environmental degradation are almost universally recognized. Regardless of location, current unsustainable practices are impacting the environment on multiple levels.
- While the environmental impact of transportation for IVS contradicts its mission of environmental protection, the network acknowledges the importance of measuring and compensating for this impact through positive local actions. Many organizations strive to offset these effects by promoting environmentally beneficial projects at the community level.
- Due to their locations, most IVS organizations are not well-informed about EU or UN policies. They are more aware of national-level developments.
- Furthermore, few are familiar with the 5 IVS Advocacy Asks (this is likely as they were only sent out as a draft format via email for feedback prior to this questionnaire) and most are unable to influence EU policy making because they are not based in Europe.
- There is a strong consensus that official recognition of IVS at all levels is essential—not only to increase funding but also to improve visibility and attract volunteers. In many cultures, the concepts of self-development and growth are key motivators for participating in volunteering activities.
- Most organizations are already engaging in advocacy aligned with their needs and relationships with local policymakers. Therefore, the main advocacy-related needs identified are:
 1. Strengthening relationships with policymakers
 2. Training in effective advocacy strategies
- Common advocacy strategies include:
 1. Building coalitions with other IVS organizations
 2. Public awareness campaigns
 3. Media outreach

- To advance IVS policies, organizations see the need to build relationships with a wide range of institutions—from the EU and national governments to funding bodies and human rights organizations. No specific preference was expressed for any one institution.
- Long-term funding is the most significant challenge, and is also identified as the key to improving financial sustainability.
- For many non-European organizations, accessing EU grants is not feasible.
- For European organizations, the challenges vary depending on the country, the size of the organization, and their ability to navigate complex grant applications and bureaucratic processes.
- The most beneficial cross-sector partnerships are those with advocacy groups and policymakers.
- Engaging grassroots organizations and local communities in IVS projects requires attention to several critical factors:
 1. Horizontal, equitable relationships
 2. Fair and accessible funding
 3. Projects rooted in community needs and local realities
 4. Inclusion of these values in all aspects of volunteering
- Digital tools are considered effective in certain contexts, particularly for community engagement and video production. However, most organizations are not currently using AI due to lack of knowledge, resources, or alignment with their operational priorities.
- Organizations with more field-based work tend to show less interest in this technology. European organizations are more likely to use AI formally, mainly to reduce office workloads.
- There is general agreement that AI should be used only when in-person meetings are not feasible, and when its use directly supports environmental goals. Consideration of AI's environmental impact is ongoing, with a focus on assessing its positive and negative effects at both social and ecological levels.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognition of IVS at multiple levels is seen as a top priority by all organizations.
- IVS organizations are diverse in their approaches: some focus on direct community engagement, others on awareness campaigns, environmental action, social inclusion, or policy advocacy. Most operate at a local level and struggle with limited human and financial resources.
- Long-term funding remains a major concern, which could be addressed by increasing recognition and mapping key stakeholders to diversify funding opportunities.
- Organizations emphasize the need to measure the positive impact of IVS and weigh it against any negative environmental or social impacts, particularly in relation to transportation and digital technologies like AI.
- Regional realities and differences: the Global South the projects focus on learning by doing and community engagement, their challenges are limited access to large-scale international initiatives.
- While in the Global North the organizations focus on more access to international platforms, their challenges are funding limitations as well and complex access to stakeholders. They all have in common the difficulty to long term funding and project visibility and sustainability.
- Other important needs are training in different topics and support with materials and facilitation tools; and stronger policy engagement pathways. However different IVS platforms have a lot of material that may be organized, reviewed and shared with the members.
- It is important to consider the cultural differences and realities to promote IVS locally as it may affect the way people recognize and join IVS.





**MUSIC AND VOLUNTEERING
FOR A DECOLONIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA**



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