



get ready for equality..



The Decolonise IVS Newsletter

Second issue - May 2023

What kind of practices in the International Voluntary Service community continue to reinforce colonial legacies? How can we change these practices? These are some of the questions guiding the progress of the *Decolonise IVS* Project in the past few months.

Welcome to the second issue of the *Decolonise IVS* newsletter! In this issue, we present the recent project activities, the ongoing initiatives, and those that we should look forward to. In this issue we also feature one CCIVS member who is actively engaging in the Decolonise Participatory Action Research and we share relevant resources and communication updates.

We hope that this newsletter inspires you to join us in our efforts towards a more equitable and just IVS community that celebrates diversity and inclusivity. Together we can transform unequal power relations and privileges.



What's in this issue?

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- Participatory Action Training in



Brussels

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- Steering Committee Meeting in Helsinki

Member Feature

- Samuel from the Uganda Pioneers Association (UPA)

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CURRENT EVENTS

The past few months have been intense and productive for the people behind and at the forefront of the *Decolonise IVS* movement. Let's check out a few of them.

Participatory Action Research as a Method for Decolonisation



Last February, a group of young people from various IVS organisations worldwide came together in Brussels, Belgium to tackle a challenging and demanding issue: how to decolonise the international volunteering service.

Over 20 volunteer-researchers from Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Nepal, South Africa, the Philippines, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe joined the weeklong co-learning and collaboration session. Together, they discovered what Participatory Action Research (PAR) is all about: this approach focuses on joint action rather than just theoretical analysis by a group of consultants. It involves as many actors as possible in every step of the process. The participants brought the PAR learnings back to their respective organisations to work together with the different stakeholders on how to decolonise the IVS network.

Filipe Alves, a Portuguese researcher and practitioner in the field of PAR together with **Sara Vaca**, a trainer from Ecuador, who has facilitated non-formal education seminars on decolonisation in Austria, facilitated the training. Throughout the week, the participants gained new knowledge and skills related to PAR such as the dyad interview, the World Café and the Fish Bowl methods, different types of listening techniques, and the art of journaling.

In addition, the participants had some outdoor activities such as the 'Decolonise Walk,' where they were divided into groups and sent out to observe and analyse elements from the colonial past around the city. One of the participants shared, *"I enjoyed getting to know a space by just walking through it and discovering that Brussels as a city has such an interesting history with many stories connected with the topic of colonisation."*

One key takeaway from the Brussels event is that through Participatory Action Research anyone can make a difference, even if they are not a professional researcher. This understanding can help empower individuals to tackle societal issues and bring change, even if it is within their small community and through their little ways.

More than the techniques, the participants learned that the conversations within the group were crucial to deconstruct our own colonial mindset and that these talks made this week-long training so special. The cultural exchange was intensely productive and fulfilling. The mix of cultures was key to the creation of deep connections within the diverse group, connections that are hopefully going to last even when the PAR process reaches its end.

The team is excited to meet again in Ferrera, Italy, in July and move to the next phase of the Decolonise Participatory Action Research, the "Food for Thought" PAR Laboratory. During this event, the results of the local research activities will be brought together and shared with the youth advocacy team. PAR is an ongoing process aiming to transform practices and beliefs while engaging in the reflective research process. Taking stock of what has happened so far and designing the next phases of the Participatory Action Research will be crucial to really engage all stakeholders and ensure the necessary changes in the International Voluntary Service movement.

If you are interested in the World Café, DYAD methods, or other PAR methods, you can learn more about them in the Participatory Action Research Guidebook of the project, available at <https://ccivs.org/decolonise/knowledge-hub/toolkits/>.

Advocacy for Change, Change for Equality



What are the cultural, political, and economic opportunities and barriers that IVS organisations from the "Global South" have in contrast with those from the "Global North", and vice versa? Do we relate and communicate

under fair rules? How do we work with volunteers to address structural inequalities to promote change in our practices?

DecoloniseIVS! is a project that triggers thought-provoking questions such as those above. The aim is to dig deeper into these questions to find answers and resources that allow us to move forward to improve and transform our practices. In order to do this, advocacy is key.

In February, 20 young people from over 15 countries gathered in Paris for a week-long training session on advocacy. The participants explored the concept of decolonisation, reflected on how neo-colonialism is linked with global injustices, and discussed how advocacy could contribute to social justice globally. Through their discussions, four key areas emerged as focal points for our advocacy work: the narratives and practices of volunteer organisations, the distribution of economic resources, the environmental impact of IVS, and the mobility barriers in international volunteering.

Pamela Nyasha Mapedzamombe, a participant and volunteer from the Zimbabwe Workcamps Association (ZWA) in South Africa, shared her thoughts on the project: *"Through advocacy, we can dive into the realities of a new inclusive International Voluntary Service, taking into account the possible similarities and differences between the Global North and South. The joint efforts in analysing the four focuses shall surely bring us towards a better understanding of how to work with each other in the IVS community. From this work, we can create significant and positive change towards ecosystem restoration, building resilient communities, and equality in IVS."*

The youth advocacy team has defined four key areas they want to work on:

- Deconstruct the existing narratives and practices in International Voluntary Service by promoting the self-assessment test for organisations and setting up social media campaigns.
- Understand and challenge the distribution of economic resources among IVS organisations.
- Question and transform the negative impact of IVS practices in relation to the Climate Emergency situation
- Address visa barriers to make IVS more accessible.

By working on these key areas, the team wants to advance the decolonisation of power relations and practices in IVS. With joint efforts and a better understanding of how to work with each other, we can create positive change towards social justice globally.

Moving forward, this group will be working on different actions until March 2024 to develop positioning and policy documents that will influence not only our IVS network but also as decision-makers.

One Year of the Decolonise! Project - Are we on track?



In March 2023, the *Decolonise IVS* project has been running for one year

already. The steering committee of the project in its second meeting in Helsinki, Finland therefore took stock on the progress and the challenges during implementation.

In the meeting, the steering committee discussed the project's activities implemented so far: the online dialogues, the study session, and the trainings on participatory action research and advocacy. Thankful for all the exchanges of thoughts that had taken place, the steering committee envisioned more dialogues around the topic of the project and finalised a global questionnaire for International Volunteer Service Organisations. In addition, the steering committee made plans to strengthen the flow of information between all involved and revised the project timeline. It became clear that the topic of decolonisation is complex and many deep discussions are needed to find a common approach and language. Decolonisation is about taking the time to listen to each other, to question what we take for granted, and to take time to deconstruct our own belief systems.

Besides discussing the project progress, the meeting included an insight into local realities in the country of the meeting, Finland. A guest speaker, **Inari Alanko** from the secretariat of Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People, described some of the discrimination and rights violations the indigenous Sámi people have historically and currently been facing and the work done to advance their rights and wellbeing. Among other things, Alanko presented [the Responsible Visitors' Guide to the World of Sámi Culture and Sámi Homeland in Finland](https://www.samediggi.fi) (samediggi.fi) which is based on the ethical guidelines for Sámi tourism adopted by the Sámi Parliament in Finland in 2018. The steering committee members clearly saw similarities with issues discussed during the *Decolonise IVS* dialogues such as cultural appropriation or climate colonialism. Similarities were also seen with indigenous communities in Latin America and their struggles for land rights and self-determination. These kinds of encounters are eye-opening and essential for our project. We cannot work on decolonisation if we don't question what is happening in the countries we live in.

The next Steering Committee is planned in Austria at the end of 2023. We are curious to see what we will discover there!

MEMBER FEATURE



Meet Samuel Muanyusa Zziw, a volunteer and leader from one of our active network member organisations in Africa. Let's get to know him and his involvement in *Decolonise IVS*.

Could you briefly introduce yourself and your organisation?

I am Samuel from Uganda. I am a professional secondary school teacher with an educational background in History and Geography. I am a social worker, volunteer, mentor, an administrator, and the current Executive Secretary for the Uganda Pioneers Association (UPA).

UPA is an indigenous non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation in Uganda that aims to promote community-based development, intercultural cooperation, mutual understanding, and youth participation through voluntary work. UPA offers young people the opportunity to contribute to community development by involving them in community projects through

workcamps and international volunteer exchanges.

UPA was founded in 1989 by a group of young Ugandans who wanted to make a difference in their communities. Today, UPA is a member-based organisation with eight branches distributed throughout Uganda, reaching local communities and facilitating positive change.

We are in partnership with several voluntary service networks, including the Eastern Africa Voluntary Service Network, Network for Africa Voluntary Organisations, SCI, CCIVS, and Alliance, and have been a certified European Union volunteer hosting organisation since 2017.

Why did you choose to take part in this project?

I participated in the Participatory Action Research Training in Brussels in February. The PAR project concept was introduced to my organisation by CCIVS and we got highly interested because it was on the theme of "Decolonisation of IVS". The project offered the opportunity to understand several concepts such as colonisation, decolonisation and neo-colonialism in the context of voluntary service.

I decided to join the activity because it was a great opportunity to acquire new skills and methodologies to bring about change in my organisation in Uganda. I wanted to learn the best practices in developing voluntary service projects as well as training, engaging, and evaluating international volunteers from the 'Global North' and 'Global South' alike. Through my participation, I was also able to share knowledge and experiences from my cultural perspective.

How does it feel to be a peer researcher and what do you find challenging?

Being part of a team with brilliant minds and conducting research for the benefit of the IVS network is a great opportunity, and I feel special and honored to contribute to IVS through the PAR research. However, it requires extra time and commitment to fully contribute. Also, some tools and trainings require resources that might not be readily available in the organisation to undertake such activities. Another challenge is how it is sometimes difficult to engage with the top management team for their ideas and input.

What kind of PAR research and activities have you or will you want to create in your organisation?

So far, I have shared the feedback from the PAR Training and the project through emails with the Chairperson of the Board. I have also conducted a training with the staff on PAR and held another training on Decolonisation with members from my organisation. I also conducted a pre-departure meeting for five volunteers going to Germany for a one-year voluntary service. We discussed relevant topics such as racism, gender, economic differences, and diversity.

What are your hopes for the future of decolonising IVS?

I hope to continue conducting training and capacity-building activities for the youth in my organisation and the local communities to spread awareness and better understanding of decolonisation, especially in the aspect of volunteering. I also hope to include the decolonisation topic in volunteers' arrival orientations and promote it in the workcamps and mid and long term volunteering projects. Finally, I hope to keep in touch with the PAR team for a continuous exchange of information and improvement of skills.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



What are our member organisations doing? What local actions are they initiating in an effort to decolonise IVS? To answer these questions, let us look at some of the recent *Decolonise IVS* activities done locally in our member organisations from all over the world.

From Finland:
World Café Discussions and Deep Listening



What are the obstacles to international volunteering? How can our organisation contribute to solving them? How can we make the theme of decolonisation more visible? What kind of everyday actions could we take to decolonise unequal power structures?

These questions were discussed in April in a training evening of the Board of Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland. After an introduction to the theme, the board members delved into exploring the questions in small groups with the world café method. They then continued with the deep listening method DYAD, working through questions that directed thinking towards the imagined future of a decolonised Maailmanvaihto.

In the discussions, it was voiced, among other things, that the Maailmanvaihto community should throughout its activities – ranging from interaction at training camps to social media communication –, pay attention to who gets to speak and to how inclusive and equal the wordings and representations in use are. It was also suggested that Maailmanvaihto should explore how well decolonial aspects cross-cut the trainings for volunteers and that Maailmanvaihto could organise more workshops and share more material on decolonisation with its volunteers.

From Nepal:
Local Youth on the Topic of Decolonisation



Volunteers Initiative Nepal (VIN) is actively involved in the *Decolonise IVS* movement, believing that social justice and equality can only be achieved by recognising and respecting cultural differences.

On April 10, 2023, VIN organised an engaging interaction programme in Nepal, bringing together local youth and stakeholders. The primary objective was to introduce the principles of decolonisation to young individuals and inspire their active engagement in promoting social justice and equality.

With a turnout of 56 participants, the programme placed a strong emphasis on the significance of respecting cultural differences and cultivating an environment free from colonial ideologies. It encouraged participants to challenge their preconceived notions and biases, promoting an open-minded approach to discussions.

The event provided a platform for the youth to share their experiences and perspectives while simultaneously learning about the values and traditions of diverse cultures. This facilitated a respectful dialogue on crucial issues, fostering mutual respect and understanding among the attendees.

The collaboration between VIN and *Decolonise IVS* underlines the importance of involving young people in the decolonisation movement and creating spaces for respectful dialogue on critical matters. The programme emphasised the necessity of mutual respect and understanding of cultural differences as essential foundations for achieving authentic social justice and equality.

VIN's activity serves as an example of the ongoing efforts of *Decolonise IVS* to promote social justice and equality worldwide. By partnering with local organisations and engaging young people in these endeavors, the movement contributes to the construction of a more just and equitable future for all.

From South Africa: The Afrocentric Approach to Decolonise International Voluntary Services



In a dynamic event held in Pretoria, Southern Africa Workcamps Cooperation (SAWC) organised an engaging dialogue on *Decolonise IVS*. The focus of the discussion centered around two key topics: border regimes and climate colonialism.

Although colonisation has officially ended in most African countries, its remnants persist in the form of artificial border posts established during

the notorious Berlin Conference of 1884/1885. These border regimes continue to hinder integration, South-South cooperation, and exchange within Africa, as they are still rooted in colonial structures.

During the dialogue, the concept of climate colonisation was defined, and consensus was reached on the need to challenge practices that perpetuate it. As a result, ten key definitions were formulated, and all participating organisations committed to engaging in Participatory Action Research (PAR) to drive positive change.

The event gathered 26 enthusiastic young individuals from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, reflecting a diverse representation across the region.

SAWC envisions to foster a prosperous and peaceful Africa through youth empowerment, volunteerism, and pan-African exchanges. By amplifying global, regional, and national actions, the organisation aims to address the needs of young people, uphold their rights, and harness their potential as catalysts for transformative change.

The dialogue organised by SAWC exemplifies their commitment to decolonising IVS and creating a more just and inclusive future for all while empowering young people as agents of positive change on both regional and global scales.

RESOURCES & COMMUNICATION

We provide a wide range of communication sources to keep project partners, sponsors, advocates, volunteers, and followers informed and updated of the ongoing successes and challenges of the project.



Project Website: <https://ccivs.org/decolonise/>

The Decolonise IVS website is now up and running! We are thrilled to unveil a comprehensive online platform that showcases what we have been doing to pursue the mission of the project. The website serves as a hub for information, providing a user-friendly interface to explore our project and the initiatives under it, learn about our mission, and access valuable resources. Our website aims to foster a deeper understanding of the *Decolonise IVS* movement and inspire visitors to get involved. We will continue to update our website with our latest project activities and resources.

Social Media Promotion

The latest initiatives, resources, and accomplishments of the project are regularly promoted and featured on social media primarily via the social media channels of CCIVS (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter). The project partners are also publishing these posts on their respective social media platforms. You can also get involved and join our discussion online by following and using our official hashtag: #DecoloniseIVS

Resources Sharing

One particularly interesting aspect about our project is the continuous exchange of information, insights, and ideas among the partner organisations. People from the *Decolonise IVS* project regularly share various resources which are believed to be relevant to the mission and values behind the project. We share some of the most interesting information we have found recently!

For Further Reading:

- [*Future Brief: Decolonisation of the development sector*](#)
- [*The Time Is Now to Build a Common Vision and Purpose for Decolonizing Conservation*](#)
- [*Green colonialism': Indigenous world leaders warn over west's climate strategy*](#)
- [*VUB report identifies paternalism and self-interest in development cooperation*](#)
- [*Zhanar Sekerbaeva: Failure to speak about decolonial feminism means to continue being in the state of coloniality*](#)
- [*Nigerian Explorer Discovers Lake in Leicester, UK and Challenges Colonial Narratives*](#)
- [*Give Africa the place it deserves*](#)
- [*Why Is Climate Change a Racial Justice Issue?*](#)
- [*Black feminist researchers from Latin America and the Caribbean explored Black women's activism and organizing across their regions*](#)

For Further Watching:

- **Movie "También la lluvia":** The movie "También la Lluvia" or in English "Even the rain" is a 2010 drama film directed by Icíar Bollaín and written by Paul Laverty. The movie is available in different online movie platforms. The plot shows a Spanish film crew that travels to Bolivia to shoot a movie depicting the Spanish conquest of the New World. The Spanish film crew members find themselves in a moral crisis when they arrive in Bolivia when their key indigenous actor gets increasingly involved in the Cochabambe Water War.
- **Uncovering the Green Transition:** Having a workshop on climate justice or climate colonialism? The Catalan observatory developed a series of webinars on the green transition and its consequences for indigenous people. Check them out for your workshops.
- **Change your channel | Mallengence Bart-Williams:** TED talks are a great resource to explain something in an easy and understandable way. Check out Mallengence Bart- Williams in this TEDxBerlinSalon to understand.
- **Song: Midnight Oil - Beds Are Burning:** Music, poetry, art in general can be a great tool to introduce a topic or to start a discussion. The song "Beds Are Burning" from the Australian band Midnight Oil was a hit in the 80'ies and was one of the first public claims to recognise the land rights of the aboriginals in Australia.
- **Ripe for reckoning? White saviourism in international development:** What are the enduring legacies of colonialism and how do they contribute to the persistence of white saviourism in international development today? This ODI Public Dialogue marks the release of the book 'White Saviorism in International Development: Theories, Practices and Lived Experiences', unpacking the intimate and ongoing relationship between international development and coloniality, and ideas of whiteness and race as raised in the book.

Do you have more resources and do you want to share them with us? Send us a link or email us a copy of your resource: secretariat@ccivs.org

If you are part of an International Voluntary Service (IVS) Organisation and you haven't filled in the *Decolonise IVS* questionnaire yet, do take 20 minutes and help us in collecting the data that are really helpful for mapping the challenges in our organisations.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

The Decolonise IVS team regrets the passing of Kris Berwouts. His sudden death was a great shock to many of us. Only last February, Kris joined a panel discussion on decolonisation in our Participatory Action Research Training in Brussels. Although internationally recognised as an expert on the Great Lakes region in Africa, he would always be available for input and support. He was the first one to confirm his participation when we were thinking of doing a webinar on decolonisation during the pandemic. His voice will stay with us and will inspire us for all the Decolonise! Activities to come!

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