

Project Title: Decolonise! Building Equitative, Diverse and Environmentally Sustainable Long Term International Voluntary Service projects.

Proposal number: 101049622

Proposal acronym: Decolonise-IVS



Figure 1- Focus Group Discussion with Decolonise IVS project participants in Harare, Zimbabwe

Project Evaluation Report August 2024

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CCIVS	Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICYE	International Cultural Youth Exchange
IVS	International Voluntary Service
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SAT	Self-Assessment Tool
SCI	Service Civil International

Acknowledgment

The production of this evaluation report is a culmination of various people and IVS organisations who are members of CCIVS as well as those whose organisations have an interest in international volunteering services and decolonisation of IVS. Their perspectives and experiences enhanced the overall understanding of decolonising IVS. Great appreciation also goes to the coordination team at CCIVS who assisted the evaluator with project documents and assisted in the setup of interview appointments. Much appreciation to the ‘core group’ of the Decolonise IVS project partners who gave guidance and participated in the evaluation design meeting. Their input helped to sharpen both the methodological approach as well as the evaluation tools. All people participating in this evaluation patiently answered numerous questions during the interviews, focus group discussions, storytelling and the survey.

In this report terms and categories are used (e.g. South - North) that are questioned by the organisations which participated in the project. The project partners understand that the path of decolonisation requires new epistemologies that are built over time and through deeper reflection processes than a 2,5-year project allows. Since there is no consensus and the debates are very complex, the partners asked the evaluator to use popularly known terms and categories. This does not imply that within the project there have not been debates and questions about these.

Executive Summary

Eight organisations and two international networks engaged in international voluntary service (IVS)¹ from the Global South and the Global North came together to implement the Decolonise IVS! project over a period of two and a half years from March 2022 to August 2024. In the third quarter of 2024, a final evaluation was initiated as a learning and accountability process so that the findings, lessons learnt, and recommendations can be used for future programming.

The **aim** of the Decolonise IVS! project was to contribute to an IVS movement that is more inclusive, diverse and environmentally sustainable. The partners had the ambition to inspire the IVS movement by seeking to understand more about continuing forms of neo-colonialism in international volunteering and by challenging existing values, current

¹ The project partners were: the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS), the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE), Fundación SES/ ICYE Argentina, Grenzenlos/ ICYE Austria, IBO Italy, Maaillmanvaihto/ ICYE Finland, Service Civil International (SCI) Belgium, Solidarites Jeunesses France, Volunteers Initiative Nepal (VIN), Zimbabwe Workcamps Association (ZWA)

practices and organisational structures. The project was organised in five main work packages:

1. Coordination and Project Management
2. Exploration and definition of key concepts and research parameters
3. Participatory action research
4. Development of tools for analysis and learning
5. Advocacy, dissemination, and impact

Methodological Approach

The reflection process on how to decolonise the work of IVS organisations also influenced the **methodological approach** taken for the project evaluation. The evaluation of the Decolonise IVS! project took on a participatory approach right from the outset. This involved joint meetings between the consultant and the coordination group to agree on the evaluation framework and to analyse the evaluation findings. This meant that the evaluation did not centre on the evaluator, minimising a judgemental or biased approach.

The evaluation methodologies were selected to enable diverse views and stakeholders and enable participants to engage in a reflection and learning process. Besides using focus group discussions, key informant interviews, storytelling the evaluation also enabled broader project response participation mainly through an anonymous online survey for partners and one for youth participants. The approach taken meant that evaluation respondents were not mere information sources but active participants in analysing project outcomes and instrumental in defining how the next phase should look like. Since the project prioritised youth involvement, youth's voices from the Global North and Global South were well represented. The evaluation process also involved reviewing decolonising evaluations literature which informed best practices and pitfalls to avoid.

Key Findings Summary

There were many motivation factors for the partners to participate in this project. Among them the project was implemented at a time when Global South partners were raising concerns of power imbalance in exchange programmes and prejudices prevalent in the IVS sector for a long time. Participants also highlighted the fact that decolonisation needs to be addressed internally in IVS organisations before they could go out and influence social change. This project therefore offered participants a platform to reflect and address existing knowledge, attitudes and practice that perpetuate bias inherent in IVS.

A key finding from the evaluation process concerned the importance of a partner consortium that included organisations from the Global South. Partners highlighted that they were able to create a space where each one of them was able to contribute and be

listened to. While the implementation of the project was made possible through joint planning and decision making, the cooperation was also marked by an increase in workload as partners not only had to work on the activities and deliverables but also had to invest time for the processes around team building, reflection and learning. This led to concerns that costs for this increased workload were not covered under the project costs.

As part of unpacking decolonisation and how it interfaces with IVS, the PAR methodology was introduced to participants with the assistance of an external expert. Its unique nature of experiential learning enabled participants to learn how to critically assess power imbalances and obtain solutions from partner organisations. Partners and youth participants considered PAR to be the right tool to analyse organisational structures and cultures, but time was insufficient to effectively put the tool into practice for more profound organisational transformation.

The evaluation results clearly show that the tools that were developed in the project - especially the online training course for volunteers, the self-assessment tool and the IVS card game (which were included with additional funds raised) - enable organisations to address issues of colonial power structures, climate colonialism, and neo-colonial mindsets. Partners and external experts agreed that these products will contribute significantly to enable IVS organisations to better address issues of power imbalance, promoting better partnerships and transforming their programmes and organisational structures. The interest by other organisations regarding these tools resulted in invitations to several external conferences and events.

The project partners made important progress in integrating decolonial principles into its advocacy efforts by ensuring that youth voices from across different regions and backgrounds youth in the activities. Still, it was challenging to keep the young people motivated and engaged. This was due on the one hand to the fact that advocacy involves many steps with results only visible after a long time but also because political spaces are often restricted and not very youth-friendly.

While the project managed to start deep reflection on colonial practices and structures and build the trust among partners, participants still voiced concerns about the short project implementation time which made it difficult to effect the expected change as colonial issues are ingrained in people, systems and policies over many years. All respondents highlighted the need for more time to implement truly transformational measures to address colonial imbalances and ensure that the IVS movement is truly promoting international volunteering opportunities that are inclusive, diverse and environmentally sustainable.

1. Introduction

1.1. Brief description of the project

The project has brought together five European IVS organisations, three IVS organisations from the Global South and two international coordinating networks – the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) and the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE).

The partners from the Global South are ICYE Argentina - Fundación SES, Volunteer Initiative Nepal and Zimbabwe Workcamp Association. The other full partners are IBO Italia, ICYE Austria – Grenzenlos, ICYE Finland – MaaIlmanvaihto, SCI Projets Internationaux Asbl, and Solidarités Jeunesses. From March 2022 to August 2024, they worked together to implement the Decolonise IVS! project.

The organisations' joint concern over colonial undertones in international volunteer service brought them together to create dialogue and research spaces on how to tackle neo-colonial and racist structures in international volunteering and support IVS organisations to examine and deconstruct neo-colonial power structures, processes, and mindsets.

The project had the following objectives:

1. Set up and efficiently manage a consortium of partners with the necessary diversity and expertise to guarantee a high-quality implementation of the project
2. Create a dialogue and research space for the partners on how to tackle neo-colonial and racist structures in long-term international volunteering
3. Support IVS organisations to examine and deconstruct colonial power structures and climate colonialism within their structures, programmes and partnerships
4. Develop and implement a participatory advocacy plan to address and transform existing inequalities in international volunteering and to make sure the results of the project are widely disseminated.

While the logic of the project and how the different elements were connected is shown in the graphic below, in the project proposal the activities had to be organised along work packages as a requirement by the donor. A different team of partners was responsible to coordinate each work package:

1. Coordination and Project Management
2. Exploration and definition of key concepts and research parameters
3. Participatory action research
4. Development of tools for analysis and learning
5. Advocacy, dissemination, and impact



1.2. Purpose of the evaluation

The partner organisations considered the evaluation of the Decolonise IVS! project as one more element on how to decolonise their work, while reflecting the insights and learnings from the project. It was seen as a moment to reflect on and understand the journey taken and to listen to the voices and experiences of the different stakeholders. The aim was to identify key findings regarding the Decolonise IVS! project on the one hand, and the more overall learnings regarding the decolonisation of IVS with its key stakeholders (youth workers, volunteers, host families and project, host communities) on the other hand. It was considered important for this evaluation to critically analyse the collaboration and the power dynamics between the partners as well as the recommendations regarding the participation and engagement of young people in addressing inequalities and power imbalances in IVS.

It was important for the partners, that the reflections and results from this evaluation will be used for future programming. A special focus therefore was on areas for improvement, gaps, and pivotal insights gained during the project's course regarding both the process and the results

1.3. Evaluation methodology

In preparation of the Decolonise IVS! project, a coordination group² with members from the Global North and South aimed to rethink the evaluation process by addressing colonial legacies. Traditional evaluations are often structured around OECD DAC criteria - relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability - which simplify evaluation synthesis and help identify common weaknesses in projects. However, these criteria have been criticised for their inability to assess transformational change, and for insufficient focus on gender, equity, and human rights issues. The positionality of the evaluator and who defines the evaluative questions significantly affects the outcomes and reinforces existing power dynamics.

Frehiwot³ argues that traditional evaluation methods reflect the post-1945 global political economy, with knowledge production concentrated in Global North countries like North America and Western Europe. These traditional approaches maintain a North-South power imbalance, dominated by Global North knowledge systems at the expense of Global South perspectives. As a result, these methods are ill-equipped to address the development needs of the Global South, as they rely on indicators and frameworks that do not align with local contexts and values. Chilisa⁴ further highlights that Global North monitoring and evaluation (M&E) models and theories dominate in Africa, sidelining indigenous knowledge systems and authentic methods of performance appraisal.

The roots of these traditional evaluation practices can be traced to colonial and historical legacies. Denscombe⁵ notes that colonial rule continues to influence political, legal, and administrative systems, and reinforces the dependence on former colonisers. This legacy promotes Western ideas as more civilised and advanced, marginalising indigenous customs and beliefs.

Evaluations taking a decolonising approach challenge these power structures by shifting the focus from merely assessing success or failure of a project to fostering a deeper, more contextual understanding of the impacts and the learning journey. It rejects the hegemony of Western knowledge and colonial ways of thinking, emphasising instead

² The coordination group members included representatives from Fundación SES Argentina, the ICYE International Office and ZWA as well as the Decolonise IVS project coordinator from CCIVS.

³ Frehiwot, M., 2019, *Decolonizing evaluation in Africa*, eVALUation Matters Third Quarter 2019, African Development Bank Group, Abidjan

⁴ Chilisa, B., Major, T.E., Gaotlhobogwe, M. & Mokgolodi, H., 2016, 'Decolonizing and indigenizing evaluation practice in Africa: Toward African relational evaluation approaches', *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 30(3). <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.30.3.05>

⁵ Denscombe, Martyn (2024). *Decolonial research methodology: an assessment of the challenge to established practice*. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2024.2357558>

participatory, qualitative and learning approaches. As Denscombe⁶ explains, these methods, based on constructivist principles, engage communities through participatory action research and transformational paradigms. Decolonised evaluations promote an ongoing, collaborative process where power is redistributed from historically dominant groups to marginalised communities.

In decolonised evaluations, the community plays a central role. Instead of merely being subjects, the people impacted by the interventions become co-creators of the evaluation process. This involves using data collection methods that prioritise lived experiences, such as focus groups, storytelling, and community dialogues. These methods ensure that the evaluation reflects the community's values and needs, moving beyond standardised metrics like test scores or economic productivity. For example, communities might prioritise social cohesion or cultural revitalization over traditional quantitative indicators.

Decolonised evaluations transcend traditional models by adopting a more holistic view of a project's impact. It seeks to promote self-determination, address historical injustices, and ensure that interventions do not reinforce existing inequalities. The process values building trust and maintaining respectful relationships with stakeholders, requiring evaluators to act as facilitators and co-learners. This dismantles the traditional evaluator-subject dynamic, allowing for a more equitable, collaborative process that centres the voices of marginalised communities.

Ultimately, decolonising evaluations require ongoing reflection, learning, and collaboration. It goes beyond simply listening to communities—it empowers them to define success on their own terms and ensures that evaluation methods are tailored to their specific social, cultural, and environmental contexts. By doing so, it turns evaluations into a tool for promoting social justice and enabling communities to thrive.

In attempting to adopt these evaluation criteria and distinguish itself from the traditional approach, the evaluation of the Decolonise IVS! project took on a participatory approach right from the outset. This included among others pre-evaluation meetings by the coordination committee. This 'core group' reviewed the evaluation methodology, questions and evaluation tools that had been suggested by the consultant. Significantly, the focus of the project centred on wanting to understand the results from the project and how the different interventions under the five work packages contributed to this change.

Recognising the sensitivity around discussing a topic such as decolonisation, the evaluation allowed ample room for discussions to allow the articulation of feelings and experiences by participants. The participants engaging in the evaluation were project

⁶ Denscombe, Martyn (2024). *Decolonial research methodology: an assessment of the challenge to established practice*. In *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2024.2357558>

partners and young people who participated in the project from both the Global North and the Global South. To strengthen the learning process, the evaluation additionally reached out to five external experts⁷ with backgrounds in research, training and advocacy. Their organisations have a long history of involvement in the international voluntary sector, which enabled the evaluation process to benefit from a broader perspective on the decolonisation of IVS.

Table 1: Project Evaluation Respondents

Methodology	Number of Participants	Male	Female	From the Global South	From the Global North
Key informant interviews	10	2	8	4	6
Focus Group Discussions	26	12	14	15	11
Partner Survey	9	-	-	-	-
Participant Survey	25	-	-	-	-
Story telling	1	1	-	1	-

The above table represents a mixture of respondents, including young people participating in the project activities, facilitators and trainers, campaign and communication staff, those who developed tools, those who participated in workshops as well as management staff who compiled reports to the funding partners. A unique feature of this evaluation were the regular updates and dialogues with the coordination committee. This allowed for efficient execution of the evaluation. Appointments were jointly planned in consultation with project partners considering different time zones, language barriers and connection issues. In an initial planning meeting,⁸ participants agreed that the focus should primarily be on the learnings and recommendations, highlighting what it means to implement a project from a decolonised approach.

⁷ These included representatives of the Global Change Centre, the Asociación Costarricense de Interculturalidad (ACI) and the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum) as well as two external consultants.

⁸ Minutes from the call with the coordination committee to design the project evaluation, 13 June 2024

Since this was an evaluation conducted online and given that partners and participants are located across different continents where the project was implemented, a hybrid data collection approach was adopted. Participants for the data collection were mainly young people from both the Global North and Global South who engaged in the activities across the five work packages. This evaluation report makes use of some recorded quotations from participants to emphasise specific experiences they gained from the project implementation as well as expressing an overview of how to decolonise international volunteering. One face to face Focus Group Discussion was held in Zimbabwe with participants from the Decolonise IVS! project. One Global South participant who is a member of the project shared his experience through storytelling. Nine representatives from the partner organisations responded to an anonymous online survey. Responses were grouped and analysed according to each of the seven questions in the survey.

1.4. Ian's Story

I'm Ian Tawanda Mugowa from Zimbabwe, a long-term volunteer under Zimbabwe Workcamps Association. My first time to be involved in the Decolonise IVS project was in December 2023, but the decolonisation topic has been one of my favourites right from the start of my tertiary academic journey. I graduated with an Honours degree in Archaeology museums and heritage studies from Great Zimbabwe University and after that I was involved in a history research project for Port Kuno Museum from UK exploring the topic, colonisation and technology. I produced an article titled 'Telegraph in Zimbabwe, a tool of imperialism'. In February 2024, I participated in the Decolonise IVS project through the Advocacy lab training, which was held in Belgium, Brussels. This was my first time participating in person in an IVS training and it was really interesting for me because the topic is one of my favourites. My second participation was after the advocacy lab. I also had the chance to participate in the visual story telling training in Vienna that was in May 2024, and this was a great experience for me. Here we had to create visuals which are very instrumental in the decolonisation of systems and mindsets. I also wrote a short article on the framework of decolonization of IVS which is an inspiration from the training.

Through the Decolonise IVS project, I had the opportunity to work with so many people from different geographical locations and from different cultural backgrounds as well. I confronted the historical and present inequalities faced by the Global South participants in IVS projects. During my participation in the project, I had to move from Zimbabwe to Europe and my experience on travelling wasn't really that good because they require a lot of documentation from me to get a visa. This was a lesson, and it was very instrumental issue which triggered me to want to be more involved in the Decolonise IVS project. It really impacted me. Another experience that profoundly impacted me through this project was to adjust my personal perspectives on decolonisation. I learned to listen and

push for an active voice of the youths in the project. I also began to question my own biases and assumptions and to see the world from a different perspective. It helped in shaping my world's view. I now see the world through a decolonial lens, recognising the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism thereby informing my actions. I strive to use my privilege to amplify the marginalised voices and support decolonization efforts. The project also deepened my empathy. I developed a deeper understanding of the complexity of cooperation and the importance of listening to and centring the youth voice and marginalised voice from the Global South. Through participating in this project, it has led to my personal growth and increased my commitment to social justice.

2. Findings

Below findings are individual and institutional reflections as experienced by project partners and youth participants during the two and a half years of this project. They cover the project activities – as implemented under the five work packages - as well as taking into account perspectives of external key informants especially those who are working on issues of intercultural cooperation, international volunteering service, decolonisation, participatory research and capacity building. The participation of Global South and Global North participants enriched the findings in this section.

2.1. Overall feedback on Decolonise IVS!

From the different discussions and interviews the evaluator held, it was clear that there is increased awareness among IVS members that disparities and power imbalances exist and that these need to be addressed: *'To me it is a question of global historical justice that should be carried out within various levels, including the institutional and financial arrangements between Global North and South. Since IVS is the area I am working on, I feel committed to engage in decolonisation and historical injustice reparations.'* (Participant survey respondent). Many respondents highlighted the importance and timeliness of the project, especially for countries in the Global South as they already had to deal with the imbalances in the exchanges and the colonial mindsets and prejudices of volunteers coming from the countries in the Global North for a long time. The urge to decolonise IVS also comes from the fact that *"volunteering organisations, as well as a lot of our volunteers, still carry unconscious biases / stereotypes that convey a hierarchical vision of cultures and a paternalistic approach of volunteering."* (External expert). Therefore, it is seen as key that decolonisation starts from a conscious review of the way IVS organisations approach volunteering while also taking the next step to influence at different levels and in different forums: *"I believe that as an IVS organisation to remain relevant and to contribute to social change we need to address neo-colonialism and the impact it still has on our own biases/ behaviour, organisational structures, culture and work processes."* (External expert)

Participants were interested in being part of this project as they saw an opportunity to address knowledge, attitudes and practices, especially ones that perpetuate unconscious biases, stereotypes or norms that convey a hierarchical vision of cultures and a paternalistic approach to volunteering. But participants also saw the limitations of the project. Despite the decolonisation push under this project, colonisation has been in place over many centuries and undoing systems and values inherent in it can be uncomfortable and a challenge. In the decolonisation dialogues in general, there is still resistance to change with one key expert remarking that *“not enough ‘genuine’ interest for decolonization is happening in Global North organisations. There is a hesitation to let go of power. Therefore, the candid dialogues under CCIVS are most welcome and timely.”* (External expert). Many respondents also highlighted the short time that was available for the project and that it is nearly impossible to transform deeply ingrained attitude and behaviour patterns in a 2,5 year project as it needs a lot more time to change mindsets, values and organisational cultures: *“The process of decolonization is a long and difficult one, requiring accurate information, empathy and diplomacy to ensure transformation of all sectors of society.”* (Partner survey respondent) and *“Even though all partners were very open to discuss the topic, there was not sufficient space to truly question ourselves and the way we work together as all partners were so focused on implementing the activities and achieving the deliverables.”* (Partner survey respondent).

2.2. Work Package 1: Delivering a high-quality project - coordination, management, communication

“When you talk about decolonisation, it's not only about listening to the Global South participants, it is not only about definitions, it is about if you want to change. You have to change the cultures, address language issues, transform institutions and funding structures.” (Member of partner organisation in the Global South)

The work package addressed the need to form a broad coalition of IVS organisations - including voices from the Global South - to efficiently work together to decolonise IVS. Its main objective was to set up and efficiently manage a consortium of partners with the necessary diversity and expertise to guarantee a high-quality implementation of the project. This included on the one hand building a trustful and strong cooperation between all the actors involved, while on the other hand setting up coordination, management, budget control and monitoring/ evaluation mechanisms for a timely and quality implementation of the project. A strong dissemination and communication plan was in place to make sure that the key messages and findings of the project were disseminated to the wider IVS community and to policy makers.

2.2.1. Indicators

All major deliverables are uploaded on time. Mid-term and final reports (narrative and financial) are handed in complete and on time by the project coordinator CCIVS.	All deliverables and reports were uploaded complete and in time.
A mid-term and final evaluation will assess how the internal communication, project coordination as well as project implementation has been perceived by the full and associated partners.	Quality Control and monitoring plan (QCMP) used to evaluate progress along with evaluations in physical meetings. Final evaluation by external evaluator
The final dissemination report will show clearly how a wide dissemination has taken place and in which fields major results have been achieved.	Done in the form of a newsletter to all the participants of the dissemination events. The project was also disseminated in various external conferences and events.
Cooperation between project partners is measured through before, mid-term and post-project questionnaires mapping knowledge about and cooperation between European project partners.	In the monthly steering committee meeting, all the current activities and collaboration among the partners were evaluated.

2.2.2. Key activities

Key activities for this work package were the monthly **online steering committee meetings** which were considered key for strengthening partner collaboration, for implementing the activities and for reflecting on various issues around the topic of decolonisation. The three **in person meetings** were important for building the team and ensuring trustful and strong cooperation, developing and monitoring the work plan and discussing the different upcoming tasks and responsibilities.

The **Think Tank** with experts on racism, gender equality and diversity was supposed to support the project partners with an external view on the project, but due to low participation in the calls this was not as effective as hoped. Still, one of the external experts as well as members of the CCIVS Youth Committee who joined after the first meeting engaged very much and were key in giving critical input to the development of the project.

The **communication and dissemination work** was central to the project and became a lot stronger after a new person joined CCIVS and took over the social media campaigns and the implementation of the communication and dissemination plan that had been developed. The project partners managed to disseminate and share results with external stakeholders much more than expected and were also able to communicate effectively on social media about the project.

2.2.3. Key findings

The Decolonise IVS! project not only wanted to address decolonisation in IVS but also to build the capacity of the organisations to work transnationally and build respectful partnerships as well as reflecting on existing power dynamics, biases and inequality among IVS organisations. In analysing Work Package 1, the analysis will not only focus on the overall assessment of how the project was implemented, but also on how the partners managed decision making processes, reflected on racism, power dynamics, privilege and how these approaches influenced the implementation of the project.

Project implementation

Overall, participants in the survey and the interviews shared that they were very happy with the coordination and project management. *“I think it was truly collaborative work.”* (Partner survey respondent). It was highlighted by most of the respondents that the project was implemented in consultation with the partners from both the Global North and the Global South and allowed for honest exchanges and feedback. At the same time, the feedback made it very clear that the project could not have achieved its results without the participation of partners from the Global South. Partners learnt to value the importance of giving time for reflection and feedback from the different members: *“All the project's products have undergone several rounds of feedback from project partners and external stakeholders. We have ensured that a consultative and participatory process took place at every stage of the project, through team meetings and the creation of working groups on the various work packages, which also included the young project volunteers.”* (Partner survey respondent)

Feedback from various participants both in the survey and from key informant interviews highlighted that the project was very ambitious with too little time allocated to each of the work packages, resulting in a high workload for most of the partners. The costs for the additional work were not covered by the project, placing a burden on participating organisations. According to one of the external experts, the participation in the project tended to be transactional, meeting deadlines, producing project deliverables with less time available for transformational results. This was also caused by the high number of deliverables the partners felt had to be promised in the project application to get it approved. All this resulted in a much higher workload for the partners when implementing

the activities and also different levels of engagement and commitment: *“Staff changes and different levels of awareness made it difficult to be on the same page all the time. Those who were closely involved clearly had a stronger voice and didn't always take the time to make sure all could go through the same process. The lead organisations also responsible for the funding did steer the project. Because of financial issues we usually had only one person from the non-European organisations in the trainings. This had an impact on the project.”* (Partner survey respondent).

The project concept and set-up was criticised as having a too European perspective which - despite efforts to address the distribution of financial resources between partners from the Global North and the Global South - made it impossible to balance the structure and financial aspects of the project between the Global North and South – e.g. moving away from a concept around efficiency and results-based project implementation. The funding restrictions additionally had an impact on who the partners could invite and who not: *“It was definitely a challenge that we could only invite a limited number of participants from the global south to some events. This was because of the higher costs of travel, but also because our European funding dictated that a certain number of European participants must be present. This made it practically very difficult to avoid euro-centric discussions.”* (Partner survey respondent).

The structure of the work packages was considered difficult as there was a certain tendency to work in silos even though the activities were all connected. Some partners, after having completed their coordination task, would not connect strategically with other work packages. Only later in the project, the partners combined the work packages more: *“The concept of the work packages was a very difficult structure for us because obviously the issues were connected. For example, advocacy was connected with communication but also with the tools development and the PAR. [...] It was something that mostly appeared at the end of the project. The idea of working together - and not in this kind of separate work packages - was something that perhaps at the beginning made a little mess in how to integrate or share perspectives in the way of working.”* (Member of partner organisation in the Global South).

Addressing power, racism and privilege in volunteering organisations

At the centre of decolonisation is the reflection on power, racism and privilege. What the project achieved was involving people with diverse backgrounds, both young people and youth workers who were able to discuss issues around decolonisation. According to the feedback from the partner survey, a lot of effort was made to provide safe spaces where the partners were able to discuss topics around decolonisation: *“In my opinion, the project activities really made it possible for voices from the 'Global South' to have a place to express themselves, and to go away from the typical occidental-centric point of views.”* (Partner survey respondent) The project also invested in team building and being

considerate with those partners which had more problems or barriers to participate actively at certain moments due to failing internet connection, high workload in their organisations during certain times, staff turnover or little experience of the organisation in the development of deliverables.

“While implementing the project in our community, we started thinking how we can strengthen the involvement of all the sectors and have participants from all different groups, minority ethnic groups, caste and others. It allowed a wider reach of people and many people from different backgrounds to participate. [...] In Nepal we can find the caste system and different small states and different minority and majority groups. Looking at those groups is totally different now that we are trying to involve them. Of course we were doing this before, but we started thinking widely and broadly on this matter, so it has changed a lot.” (Member of partner organisation in the Global South)

To support the reflection process, it was highlighted that the tools developed in the project were extremely useful: *“I think that our activities like the self-assessment tool push the people who take it to reflect on their power and privileges. [...] I think the activities have put the topics of power, racism, and privilege into the conversation so that we can take more space with reflection and difficult conversations at our board meetings, general assemblies, etc. We will have to continue to fight to keep them on the agenda though after the project is over.”* (Partner survey respondent) Through the participatory tools, participants were also able to bring in their own experiences, to compare reality and practice and then came up with solutions. The level of self-consciousness was increased through the training workshops and dialogues. Still, due to the time restraint, respondents were also aware of the restraints: *“We have touched upon these issues and said they are important but I feel we didn't manage to really go deep and describe in detail how these issues are at stake in our own organisations.”* (Partner survey respondent)

“I think that at the beginning of the project I felt that perhaps I need to study more and read more about decolonization theories and know more about historical conflicts. [...] So, I felt ‘I'm very ignorant of the topic’, but then I understood, and I think that was something interesting that happened in the project that nobody had the experience or the knowledge. So, the experience and the knowledge were built together and that was something interesting because I got calmer with the idea that, ok, nobody had more knowledge to say what is to be decolonised. But yes, it's necessary to have the humility to try to review yourself and try to listen more than to speak or

to define your position.” (Member of partner organisations in the Global South)

Regarding the collaboration between partners and the sharing of power and decision-making spaces, respondents highlighted that different partners were coordinating different work packages as a team which allowed for more ownership and diversity: *“The sharing of power was also made possible by a certain independence of the project partners in the implementation of the various tasks, which favoured plurality and diversity of opinions.”* (Partner survey respondent) Additionally, the project enabled power and decision-making to be shared, notably by ensuring that all the partners were represented in the steering committee and had a voice when e.g. resources were discussed or how to engage young people: *“The regular online and physical meetings allowed us to share power. The active participation of the partners in the Global South was key for addressing power dynamics and different approaches to project management and implementation.”* (Partner survey respondent). Criticised by respondents across the survey and interviews were the funders’ restrictions, that only allowed for three IVS partners from the Global South while seven organisations were based in Europe which made this representation in the project unbalanced. Still, partners made an effort to seek solutions to compensate for inequalities. It was also mentioned that some partners were less present, *“either because they didn't seem able to prioritise this project so they were always rushing off to some other work or because they had such high staff turnover that the new person was always catching up”* (Partner survey respondent) which limited their contribution to the project.

Fears and concerns

While four of the respondents from the survey did not mention any fears or concerns, the other responses were at different levels. One concern was around who should lead the process. This is seen as key. The driving force should be from the Global South, and this should be recognised in the level of participation of Global South participants in key decision-making forums. The responses also highlight that decolonising IVS is a very uncomfortable topic and that it is key to address this discomfort and try to talk about it more through more open discussions: *“My ongoing worries are around what is my role as a white person from a hegemonic culture. I don't think that the decolonisation process should have me at the steering wheel, so I worried about taking too much space. However, I don't want to step back too far and give up responsibility. There is a middle area that I need to inhabit and it is uncomfortable because I am constantly uncertain if I am doing it 'right'.”* (Partner survey respondent)

One respondent also voiced a concern about the role of international volunteering in a decolonial world: *“I strongly believe that international volunteering is not 'necessary' per se, but that we need to continue those practices and not put an end to this way of building*

bridges between cultures. We also need to keep proposing a way of offering volunteering that moves away from the lucrative and capitalistic thinking.” (Partner survey respondent)

Some respondents were concerned about the continuation of the reflections and the discussions. It was clearly felt that more time is needed to address resistance to change and to propose new ways to collaborate together to re-construct institutional structures, cultures and individual bias: *“What I ask myself is whether these will be long lasting beyond the project? Are there already igniting change processes? or will they be filed after the project ends?”* (Partner survey respondent)

2.2.4. Recommendations

- To decolonise collaborations among partners in future projects, it is vital to create safe spaces where everyone feels that their contribution is important and that it is taken seriously by the others. Assertive listening and open feedback on how partners feel in the consortium is necessary to address power imbalances.
- The approach of work packages and focus on a high number of deliverables is not recommended for process oriented projects as it impedes the interconnectedness and takes away time for the processes of building knowledge, learning together and critical reflection: Instead of producing outputs, it is recommended to focus more on the implementation of the results and allow time to share stories, to reflect together, to listen to how colonialism is affecting each other’s lives, to create concrete narratives of change.
- If a project addresses such a complex issue like decolonisation, more dissemination events should be included to ensure wider understanding and sharing as well as building more strategic alliances with other organisations working on the same topic to create systemic change.

2.3. Work Package 2: Setting the ground - building a common understanding

“The discussion surrounding the key definitions, while exhausting at many times, still gave me so much insight on the complexity around these topics. Furthermore it showed how even a room of like-minded people struggled a lot on finding a common ground.”
(Participant of the study session)

Work package 2 was meant to set the ground and build a common understanding. The aim was for the partners to identify key issues regarding (neo) colonial practices and structures in LT-IVS and agree on a set number of definitions related to decolonial thinking, organisational functioning and medium and long term international voluntary services. For this, research parameters had to be defined and a preliminary action-research plan developed.

2.3.1. Indicators

<p>The action-research plan, based on the commonly agreed key concepts and research parameters, has been developed.</p>	<p>Concepts were identified in online and offline dialogues. Research parameters were shared with participants as a powerpoint presentation.</p>
<p>8 one-minute videos for different concepts have been produced.</p>	<p>The participants of the study session developed the scripts for the videos and collaborated in the making of the videos. The WP coordinator, Grenzenlos, organised the final editing of the videos and several partners collaborated in the translation.</p>

2.3.2. Key activities

The key concepts

In the first Steering Committee meeting the team made a draft list of concepts that would guide the online dialogues. The following concepts were seen as key concepts: decolonisation, climate colonialism, equity, neo-colonialism, volunteering and voluntary service, cultural appropriation, intercultural- transcultural diversity, intersectionality, global justice, white privilege.

Online (and offline) dialogue space

It was planned to have eight **online dialogues** but finally five of them took place, four in English and one in Spanish, bringing together about 35 organisations and 100 participants. After the five online dialogues, there was the feeling that with the online dialogues it would be difficult to come any further so the work package leaders decided to start with the inputs from the online dialogues and to focus on the study session. It was considered important to have more online and offline dialogues later in the process as new questions would arise. Additionally, three **in person dialogues** were held between October 2022 and April 2023. In total 138 participants took part in the dialogues from 50 different countries.

Study session

The five-day **study session** took place in Austria and brought together 18 participants from the consortium partners. While having input from experts on the decolonisation topic and the PAR research methodology, the participants also did a decolonial tour in Vienna and worked on “their own definitions” of the key concepts and the scripts of the one-minute videos. A pre-study session questionnaire was answered by all participants

with the idea to start some in-house conversations on the decolonisation topic so that not only the participants of the study session but also their sending organisations engaged in the reflection process.

Bringing together all information from the dialogues

The work package leaders made a summary of the outcomes from all the discussions which were presented to the Think Tank and the Steering Committee meeting of March 2023 in Finland.

2.3.3. Key findings

The key concepts and their definitions

While respondents mostly agreed on the importance of these initial concepts, they also considered it difficult to find final definitions. They noted that along the process new concepts would come up and needed to be included. It was felt that instead of having one final 'definition' it was more important to continue the discussion and instead develop a 'decolonial vocabulary': *"It is only through discussion and exchanges between people from different backgrounds and realities that we can truly understand what decolonisation means and how it concretely is lived in different contexts, cultures, etc."* (Partner survey respondent) This need to keep an open discussion on the terms can also be seen in the final survey in which participants of the different activities were asked to name three keywords that define decolonisation for them and some of the following terms were shared: *Justice, change, equity, future, restructuring, power dynamics, critical reflection, learning, voices, reciprocity, re-thinking, structural change, self-challenging, empowerment, representation, participation, struggle, togetherness, identity, liberation, solidarity, truth to power, privilege.* The videos were made but none of the partners really used these videos since it was felt they didn't really capture all the discussions and questions that appear when starting to work on this topic.



From the evaluation questionnaire spread among participants who took part in the different activities, respondents gave three key words that they associate with “decolonisation”.

Finding a “common ground”

The logic of the project was to first clarify different concepts linked to decolonisation in order to apply a common vocabulary and to better understand the realities on the ground before starting the research. Instead of first analysing the situation in the IVS organisations and developing our “own vocabulary” we started with looking into existing concepts before doing our research. This approach impacted the implementation of the project. Not only was it important to take the different backgrounds and the diversity of the organisations into account, but some organisations and participants were also more willing to challenge themselves and rethink their own biases than others. Additionally, not all project partners started with the same “understanding” of decolonisation. For some it was a topic that was already integrated in their vision and mission and for others it was a quite new perspective. Partners shared in the survey and the interviews that they had the interest to engage and learn but organisations started from a very different perspective.

Although “learning from each other” was one of the aims of the project, the big gap between organisations with knowledge and a certain understanding of the decolonisation perspective made the start very difficult. Because of the diversity of the partners, it was a challenge to get everyone on board, but it also reflected the difference and diversity in the IVS movement. The project recognised these differences in cultures and organisational structures and made an effort to include the different partners as best as possible. This was important as the learning and deconstruction journeys are different for everyone. Partners also shared that volunteers often started from their individual volunteering experiences while board members and staff often look more at the structural inequality and see a lot of systemic challenges. When working on the PAR approach, it became clear

that both approaches are important to take into account when addressing decolonisation in IVS.

Even though all partner organisations participated in the dialogues and the study session, there was not enough time to digest all the information or pass it on to other members in the organisation so that the link with the next steps was ensured: *“We have touched upon these issues and said they are important but I feel we didn't manage to really go deep and describe in detail how these issues are at stake in our own organisations.”* (Partner survey respondent) The preparation of the PAR training was already going on while the outcomes of the dialogues and the study session were not yet shared. While it was important to have different people from the organisation participating in different activities, this also sometimes led to a loss of information.

So, the overall objective to identify some key issues for the PAR was somehow not that present. Also, according to the input from the PAR expert and the PAR methodology he presented, the research questions should come from the community you work with or in this case the involved organisations. So, there was an attitude not to impose “research questions” as they should have come from the ones going through the PAR process. So, while in the original application PAR was seen as a semi-structured process, after having learned more about PAR, this approach changed and the idea of the research questions was to develop them as part of the PAR process and not in the study session.

2.3.4. Recommendations

- Decolonisation is not a linear process which makes it necessary to revise each other’s understanding of this complex issue regularly by creating more dialogue and discussion spaces around crucial issues such as distribution of economic resources between partners, decision making structures in the networks and our work with volunteers and local communities.
- Decolonisation cannot be done by one person in the organisation. It is important to establish mechanisms and methodologies to broaden the circle of those involved and define methodologies and steps on how to engage different staff at different moments in the process to be able to create a common organisational understanding and motivate staff to contribute to the change process.
- Working with different stakeholders with different ways of looking at the process makes it necessary to complement each other. For that it is necessary to identify capacities and experiences of participants and organisations while also opening up more space for dialogue.

2.4. Work Package 3: Participatory Action Research

In Work Package 3, the focus was on implementing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) to understand the colonial legacies in IVS. This particular methodology has “an approach to research that prioritises the value of experiential knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems, and for envisioning and implementing alternatives”.⁹ PAR was a ‘toolbox’ for the project to identify existing (neo) colonial structures in the organisations and collect baseline information to then be able to develop the tools and guidelines that can decolonise IVS. Together with a network of trained young action-researchers the partners wanted to formulate principles and practices that tackle or deconstruct existing inequalities on local and international level and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

2.4.1. Indicators

Description of the complete action-research process, methods and outcomes included in the final report.	A PAR handbook was created explaining all the methodologies and steps to follow for using PAR; afterwards a document with main conclusions was created.
Participating organisations rate the usefulness of the action-research methodology in the final evaluation meeting and discuss how this process has empowered them to deconstruct existing power structures.	Since this was the first time organisations were using the PAR methodology, it took quite some time to get used to it. They appreciated the PAR methodology but didn’t have enough time to really examine the existing power relations.

2.4.2. Key activities

PAR training (Brussels, January 2023)

With the support of an expert, a one-week **PAR training** was organised to introduce the PAR research methodology. A lot of emphasis was put on the different tools that can be used and the overall cycle of a PAR research. After the training, the participants - which were then called barefoot researchers - went back to their organisations and started implementing the PAR process. Through monthly meetings, they shared their experiences and got support from their peers.

Working with barefoot researchers or people from within the organisation who take up this role of steering the process and observing what is happening in the organisation while

⁹ Cornish, F., Breton, N., Moreno-Tabarez, U. et al. Participatory action research. Nat Rev Methods Primers 3, 34 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43586-023-00214-1>

going through this process, is one of the important elements of PAR research. It is not an outsider who comes in but someone from within.

PAR “Food for Thought” laboratory (July 2023, Italy)

After having implemented the PAR research on a local level, the barefoot researchers or representatives from the organisations met in Italy for the **PAR Laboratory** to bring together the first results. It became clear that the period (February- June) was too short to really observe big changes or bring forward clear conclusions. The laboratory was a necessary space to exchange experiences and to re-define the second part of the PAR process. Furthermore, a buddy system was established in order to pair organisations and have a mutual support system. The preliminary findings of the PAR process and the global questionnaire were discussed and also shared with the advocacy group. On the one hand the advocacy group needed this input for the development of the policy papers but on the other hand the questions raised by the advocacy group also needed more input from the PAR research. The interaction and collaboration between barefoot researchers and the advocacy group was necessary in order to streamline the whole process. Once back home, organisations continued the PAR research and by December submitted their PAR report so that an overall report of the PAR process could be produced.

2.4.3. Key findings

At the stage of writing the application, PAR was proposed by the coordinating organisations as a research methodology that would fit with the whole concept of “decolonisation”. Even though it is different to traditional research approaches and to what organisations are used to, it was considered *“really rewarding for all the people involved and it is much more participative and less elitist than the way we are used to doing research. In a decolonial perspective, I believe it should be considered as a new way of doing research.”* (Participant of the PAR training)

After experimenting with the tool, partners were convinced that PAR has a lot of potential in addressing decolonisation in the IVS organisations and some organisations already expressed the willingness and interest to use it more in future projects: *“[After participating in the PAR training], I have been directly implementing the learnings in my organisation and I have also tried to support other stakeholders to learn those methodology in the research part. We discussed with our team where there are 25 staff and members. I also shared those ideas with the local stakeholders and with our international volunteers. So maybe I reached out to about 50-60 people. Many of the people benefited and started implementing, like head teachers and others, municipality people as they were also participants in the training.”* (Member of partner organisation in the Global South)

Critical feedback regarding the PAR training was that a one week workshop was not enough to fully understand and implement the research and to tackle the topic of decolonisation. Although the training was of high quality and the work package leaders did a huge effort in supporting all the organisations during the implementation of the PAR, most barefoot researchers found they were still too ‘inexperienced’ to start this process and set up a well designed process in their organisation. One member of a partner organisation in the Global North reflected that *“it was also difficult to keep people motivated in PAR as there were many meetings and complex tools to learn and apply. Sometimes participants would be asked to go and practice in their organisations and then report back in the following meeting. This did not often happen, thereby slowing down progress or demotivating other participants.”* (Member of partner organisations in the Global North)

As research is seen as a task for academic researchers with quantitative material to support the findings, it was difficult to shift the mindset and for partners to believe in the power of this bottom-up PAR approach. The barefoot researchers still experimented with the different tools and had very interesting discussions but didn’t really feel they were contributing to the overall aim of deconstructing unequal power-relations: *“Decolonisation as well as changing individual biases and organisational power dynamics take time. Even though all partners were very open to discuss the topic, there was not sufficient space to truly question ourselves and the way we work together as all partners were so focused on implementing the activities and achieving the deliverables.”* (Participant of the PAR training)

As the project went along, the use of PAR became clearer. Respondents shared that doing a PAR process would have been a project in itself and if the focus had been on that “process” and not that much on the deliverables, then there might have been a totally different dynamic. Those organisations who did the effort to really engage with the PAR, mention that this process has changed something in their organisation as it helped them to talk about decolonisation and power relations in a more inclusive way, because one of the main aims of PAR is to listen to the voices that are normally not that present in the debate.

Although all were convinced that the PAR methodology was the right tool for addressing this topic in the IVS movement, participants also felt that maybe more data would be needed in order to support some of the findings. A task force was therefore established to develop a Global Questionnaire which was spread widely (among all members of all participating networks) to gather more essential data.

One partner explained that the participatory action research was key in their organisation to address changes and share power which led to more activities taking place: *“As a part of trying out the participatory research in our NGO, our board members had a development evening dedicated to decolonising IVS, our incoming volunteers participated in workshops on it, our NGO hosted a focus group discussion on IVS narratives for people involved or interested in communication work, our staff members had a self-assessment meeting, a co-worker did journaling, and our NGO hosted a workshop on responsible volunteering (as part of which decolonising IVS was addressed) in a festival together with other IVS organisations. Findings from these activities were brought to the board and staff of our NGO.”* (Partner survey respondent)

2.4.4. Recommendations

- As the participatory action research approach is a new way of doing research, it is key to make sure that - apart from selecting the right people to be trained and who will take a lead in this process - the staff and board of the organisation are well prepared too. This means sufficient training has to be foreseen as well as the space to experiment and to develop the process in a free and flexible way with no time pressure.
- While existing tools and the handbook developed in the project can be used to support the PAR research, it is recommended to also set up a learning community or community of practice to share experiences with other IVS organisations.
- Additionally, organisations should be aware that setting up a PAR process costs time and energy. Before engaging in the process this needs to be clear and if included in a project, the necessary resources have to be foreseen as well as guidance and support for the barefoot researchers.

“I feel that a future project should continue this process and should go deeper. And I think one of the topics where you should go deeper is where we started our conversation around power, power dynamics, power issues and really connect these two topics, power and colonialism, power and decolonisation, and be very real and frontal. I would definitely continue to use PAR because as a scientific method, I feel that is one of the best. Like one of the methods which is more aligned with the type of vision that we aim for as an anti-colonialist practice. Because science can also be very colonialist and very patriarchal. So, if you want to bring about change, you can use PAR as a non patriarchal, non abusive, non oppressive and non capitalist system. [...] So I would basically design a project where we would use the PAR methodology not only to start conversations and bring awareness, but also to create conditions for empowerment, not only of individuals but also of communities and collectives and ultimately of institutions. Which also are disempowered in many ways.” (PAR facilitator)

2.5. Work Package 4: From Knowledge to Practice - Organisational Transformation

Under the overall objective to support IVS organisations to examine and deconstruct colonial power structures and climate colonialism within their structures, programmes and partnerships, work package 4 mainly focused on designing the required tools and on revising existing guidelines. These included developing a pilot version of an online training module (Massive Open Online Course - MOOC) for long term volunteers on inclusive and intersectional volunteering, an online Self-Assessment Tool to encourage organisational learning and transformation, as well as revising the Long-Term Volunteering and Sustainability Guidelines from a decolonise perspective.

2.5.1. Indicators

Project partners have created a pilot version of the online certified training module (MOOC) for long term volunteers on inclusive and intersectional volunteering.	The MOOC is ready and has been tested by volunteers from the different partner organisations.
The project partners have developed an online Self-Assessment Tool to encourage organisational learning and transformation.	The Self- Assessment Tool has been developed and piloted by the partners.
Organisations use the Self -Assessment Tool to improve the equity, diversity, inclusion and sustainability in their long-term volunteering programmes, their organisations and the networks they belong to.	Partners have started to use the Self-Assessment Tool to address decolonisation in their structures. It was also shared with IVS organisations outside of the project consortium.
The project partners have provided IVS organisations with the tools and guidelines for organisational transformation to decolonise their structures and procedures.	Both CCIVS LTV Guidelines and the Sustainability Guidelines have been revised from a decolonial perspective.

2.5.2. Key activities

To develop the tools, one laboratory was organised in which ten participants from the partner organisations discussed the aims, structure and content of the SAT and the MOOC. The **MOOC** that was developed afterwards is targeting volunteers in their pre-departure training and aims to raise their awareness on neo-colonialism and individual bias. The module is divided into six modules which include topics on international volunteering service, decolonisation and intersectionality. The aim of the module is to motivate a reflection process by the volunteers on the colonial legacies and how to deconstruct these. This is now available online for a self-learning session (<https://hop.salto-youth.net/courses/DecolonizeIVS>).

The **Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)** invites organisations to reflect on historical, geopolitical and relational power dynamics among the different IVS stakeholders. It serves both as a self-assessment within an organisation as well as giving structure to bilateral conversations with partner organisations.

Additionally, the CCIVS **Guidelines on Long-term Volunteering and on Environmental Sustainability** were revised and designed from a decolonial approach. The changes made to these also influenced the revision of the overall IVS Guidelines which will be approved by the global IVS networks this and next year.

The different tools were presented in **two online workshops** for IVS networks and organisations in June and July 2024. Additionally, partners organised the **Tool Fair** in

Bulgaria in August 2024 with additional funding and presented the SAT in a session during an event Forum organised in May 2024.

With funding from the Council of Europe a Decolonise **IVS card game** was developed on top of the activities in this work package.

2.5.3. Key findings

The work on the tools was very time-intensive and required a lot of effort from the partners but it also showed clearer results and structured a lot of the discussions. One partner from the Global South highlighted that the MOOC and the Self- Assessment tools are designed to bring power back to the communities. According to another external participant, the tools are *“responding to the needed education and needed self-questioning of volunteers and all community members.”* (External expert). This was shared also by a participant from the final survey who highlighted that their key takeaway from the project was that *“decolonisation should be incorporated more into pre-departure trainings.”* At the same time it was also felt difficult to develop a MOOC without sufficient *“members of the targeted audience to be present at all stages of the project.”* (Participant of the Tool Lab).

In general, the feedback from the Tool’s Lab was very positive and the collective learning process was highlighted as a key moment in the Tool’s Lab: *“Actually asking ourselves the historical questions that we were in the process of developing in the self-assessment tools, e.g. what did you learn about colonialism in school, as a starting point for deepening our relationships as a team.”* (Participant of the Tool Lab).

2.5.4. Recommendations

- The right tools (like the SAT, the MOOC) and techniques (like PAR) are essential for structuring individual and organisational reflections on decolonisation - especially if participants or organisations don’t have the experience to reflect on the colonial legacy in their practices.
- To develop tools that can challenge self- and organisational reflection, it is key to work with partners that have pedagogical and technical skills as well as with partners who come from countries that colonised others and those who were colonised.
- To initiate a process of transformation, IVS organisations in the Global North should also include peer discussions with partners in the Global South to learn from their lived experiences.

2.6. Work Package 5: Influencing the change - advocacy, dissemination and impact

“We have influencers for everything, but not for volunteering.” (Advocacy participant)

The objective of this Work Package was to raise awareness among stakeholders, including policymakers, and external institutions, and to advocate for equitable, diverse, and environmentally sustainable volunteering models.

The main reason for incorporating an advocacy component in the project was to start placing IVS on the political agenda at the international level, highlighting the central issues that are barriers or difficulties for its development. To implement the work package, a key element was to empower diverse youth by involving them in advocacy efforts, fostering a learning environment where they can stand up for their rights. This work package focused on building the capacity of the youth, developing an advocacy strategy and raising awareness through several social media campaigns. The project activities in this work package additionally opened up networking opportunities for the youth, presenting their work at conferences and events.

2.6.1. Indicators

<p>A group of young advocates with a supportive mentoring system has been established to take on the advocacy work outlined in the project’s advocacy plan. Final report will include a long term advocacy plan and list of young advocates.</p>	<p>The group of young advocates have implemented the advocacy plan and the working group is continuing to work on the advocacy tasks.</p>
<p>Final report including dissemination efforts and main conclusions from the external evaluation report regarding outreach to other key stakeholders.</p>	<p>The evaluation report and the learnings will be disseminated among partners and key stakeholders.</p>

2.6.2. Key activities

In order to begin the advocacy work, it was necessary to identify which aspects the young people and the partners wanted to influence. Rethinking IVS practices under decolonial frameworks implied highlighting the main factors that perpetuate colonial links between countries and cultures. To this end, the training process was key because it was not only a space for discussion but also an opportunity to prioritise the issues to be addressed. The main result from the first **Advocacy Training** (Paris, 2023) with the first group of young people was the development of an **Advocacy Work Plan** that focused on four central themes: visa barriers, resource distribution (prioritising some of the EU programmes), climate justice and the practices and narratives of IVS organisations.

The challenge after this training was to maintain the interest and work with the young participants. Many of them joined other project activities, others became part of the project teams or the organisation. The task of assigning roles, offering proposals tailored to the profiles and encouraging the space for participation entailed many group and individual meetings.

The Advocacy Work Plan included the development of **2 Policy Papers** (one related to the distribution of resources and the other to the barriers to the mobility of young volunteers), **1 Position Paper** linked to the narratives and practices of IVS organisations in order not to reproduce colonialist logics and **4 Social Media & Communication Campaigns** to accompany and reinforce messages on the 4 themes identified in the plan: *“We wanted to explain that coloniality still persists in the structures, in all the regions, even in the South and we especially wanted to use the voices of thousands of young people to explain what the reality is. What are the concrete impacts behind those neocolonial, neocolonial ties that persist in institutions? Because I think with this topic you have to come up with very concrete arguments and not make any suppositions that could be interpreted as offensive by the stakeholders. Yeah, we're pretty happy with the results.”* (Advocacy participant)

After the initial training, it soon became clear that it was important to link the advocacy work with the results from the PAR process and the two groups of young participants were brought together to work on the campaigns and the policy papers. This work included various project meetings, specialist consultations and events. In particular, the policy papers were reviewed by a number of organisations based in the Global South (ASTOVOT Togo, Zimbabwe Workcamps Association, ICYE Bolivia), academics from universities (Associate Third Sector Research Centre of the University of Birmingham), or other networks (European Youth Forum, Global Change Center).

The policy papers are still considered by the partners as a work in process as they are seen as key documents to trigger discussions and reflections. As an advocacy participant shared: *“Policy papers were developed, I think they do really help to define what the core issues are, but still, it's a big topic. I mean decolonization is hard to fit into a specific context.”*

Towards the end, an **Advocacy Laboratory** (Brussels, 2024) was held to evaluate the progress and develop a long-term advocacy strategy to ensure sustainability. More than 20 young people participated (part of them were involved from the beginning of the project). During the Lab, a **Networking event** was organised where the participants welcomed about 30 people from like-minded organisations (YFU, YMCA, JAVVA, Compagnons Batisseurs, DBA, SCI), other groups that share common issues (Young Greens, Politics4Her, Racial Justice Task Force), the board of CCIVS as well as institutions related to IVS (EACEA, NA Belgium, Bureau International Jeunesse, ESN).

In addition to the communication campaigns, the **dissemination actions** were done during the last 6 months of the project and they consisted of an **online knowledge & resources platform** with tools and materials available to other organisations; **two webinars** (spanish and english) to show the results and productions of the project; **one Virtual Open Conference** during the CCIVS General Assembly in Greece; a side event organised by the young people during the **Level Up event** in the European Youth Week as well as **mailing actions** to several members of the European Parliament and CULT Committee.

2.6.3. Key findings

Participation and Power

The advocacy component (WP5) was led by two partners, SES Foundation, an Argentinian partner, and the ICYE International Office based in Europe. This allowed for a balance of views on how to develop the WP actions. Yet, being a project mainly implemented in Europe, it was governed by mainly European schedules, times and ways of doing things. Additionally, structural inequalities within the IVS movement, such as the disproportionate influence of more privileged participants, further complicated efforts toward inclusivity. As one advocacy participant noted, *"inequality within IVS is layered,"* pointing to the fact that volunteers from certain regions or backgrounds that enjoy advantages are overrepresented in the IVS movement, which impacted the diversity of perspectives in the advocacy strategy. However, it is important to mention that, beyond the fact that mainly European-based young people have participated, preference has been given to those with a migration background inside and outside of Europe and to participants coming from middle or low income countries, according to EU indicators.

The project made important progress in integrating decolonial principles into its advocacy efforts by engaging a diverse range of partners, including those from the Global South, and amplifying the voices of young people. One advocacy participant noted, *"the input from our partners in the Global South [...] helped us to critically challenge ideas and ways of working."* Young participants, from various regions, actively contributed to policy papers and campaign messaging, playing key roles in shaping the project's actions. A member of a partner organisation in the Global North mentioned, *"those young people [...] now have representation on the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee, which gives them real decision-making power within the organisation."* By focusing on inclusive advocacy, the project ensured that youth voices from across different regions and backgrounds were central to its approach.

Knowledge Production

A diversity of knowledge and opinions was reflected in the production of the advocacy materials, thanks to interviews and focus groups that included participants from various backgrounds. Additionally, the project prioritised engaging academic authors from the Global South, acknowledging their expertise and the value they bring to creating relevant advocacy papers. Incorporating these voices helped align the materials more closely with the needs of the project.

Respondents highlighted that the project emphasised the importance of accessibility in its advocacy materials. To reach a broader audience, documents were translated into English, French, and Spanish, facilitating engagement for stakeholders with varying language proficiencies. This commitment to linguistic diversity aimed to facilitate the engagement of local communities and foster greater participation in the advocacy process.

Partners explained that literature and bibliography on decolonisation could be found, but an ‘adaptation’ and ‘connection’ with the IVS field had to be worked on by the WP team. On the other hand, the dominance of Eurocentric academic literature on IVS created a disconnect, as these texts often present a limited view of volunteering. The lack of available bibliography specifically addressing the decolonization of IVS made it difficult to develop fully informed advocacy knowledge.

Training & methodologies

The design of participation and training methodologies that focus on young people are always a challenge. The experience gained within the Advocacy WP indicated the importance of balancing training methodologies that propose more discussions and exchanges: *“I loved that we could discuss these issues in a broader perspective”* or *“I wish we had more time in really planning the campaign and sharing experiences”*, said an advocacy participant.

Activities that involved ‘getting moving’ were the most highly valued, as shared by one of the advocacy participants: *“My favourite part was the sharing of personal experiences to feed our advocacy work but also during the lab, during the fishbowl [activity] and during informal moments.”*

A minority group of participants from the advocacy training evaluation identified that conceptual and theoretical activities were necessary and valuable: *“One of the most beautiful parts was being able to listen to and question experts and then discuss them as a group is really fundamental”*, stated an advocacy participant.

The participants had especially asked for activities focused on ‘doing’. This implied working in a very short time (5 days each physical meeting) with sessions that allow the

protagonist action of young people, but taking into account that the approach to issues related to inequalities, injustices, biases, are not easy to unravel in such a short time and with groups that meet each other for the first time.

Each physical meeting held an enormous diversity of participants with more than 15 countries represented. The participants had different backgrounds and experiences. This was considered a richness on the one hand, but a difficulty to deepen the levels of conversation and to consolidate or strengthen learning on the other: *“I felt a bit of lack of open space to discuss topics related to decolonising IVS and also I believe there was sometimes a bit of lack of real self-criticism”*, explained an advocacy participant.

The proposed advocacy meetings were more like a ‘trigger’ for action and reflection. In order to advance discussions and not remain on the surface of the issues, it was necessary that participants developed a geopolitical view of social justice/injustice and to be able to relate it to their own lives, and their communities. Respondents shared that very often in advocacy work the political dimension is attributed to the institutional systems of politics, forgetting the role of the young and political actors. As one of the advocacy participants stated, *“before the training I didn't have very much knowledge about e.g. neocolonialism or all the problems in IVS so sometimes I didn't understand everything. However I'd say that during the five days I gained much knowledge by listening to others”*. Another one added: *“my most favourite part was seeing different points of views about being “volunteer” in the neocolonial world. I felt that I am not alone, and people who are living kilometres away from me experience the same difficulties”*.

Partners shared that there was a large drop in participation after the face-to-face meetings and less youth advocates attended the subsequent online meetings. Engagement and motivation was not the same and the partners had to generate different strategies such as private communications with participants and peer-to-peer task follow-up.

Outreach and internalisation

The work related to the project's advocacy training enabled many stakeholders to rethink their mission and to visualise a political and changing role within IVS. As an example, CCIVS and ICYE incorporated advocacy-oriented initiatives into their agendas and action plans to be worked on with the Youth Committees of both networks: *“I think the same people who have been involved in the Decolonise project from different continents are now also represented in the Youth Committee, which means there's actual decision-making power within the organisation for those young people”*, developed an advocacy participant.

More work still needs to be done on the role of IVS in national and global policy agendas. Partners shared that it is necessary to discuss its impact on the development of individual and social rights, the mobilisation of human and financial resources it provides to

economies, and the citizenship formation it proposes. But these debates must take place in the context of interculturality and inequalities between countries and network members. *“And these countries [that were colonised] are no longer what they were all those years ago, but the mindset of the international volunteer programmes is sometimes still very much couched within that aid paradigm of fixing things or doing good for people who don't know how to do good for themselves”* noticed an external expert.

On the other hand, the broadening of conversations needed within the IVS to consolidate agendas that better prepare IVS organisations for advocacy must necessarily take place with actors from the Global South, which means from those countries that were marked by a colonial past. According to a partner survey respondent: *“So what was key was the input from our partners in the Global South - they really helped us to challenge ideas and ways of working. Without these perspectives from outside of Europe, the project would not have been possible at all.”*

Many participants and project members felt that most of the work was done in preparation for the real advocacy work. This meant: sensitising and raising awareness of the IVS potential for changing and the difficulties or barriers that exist; identifying the capacities of member organisations, allies and partners within the IVS environment, and promoting discussions on key issues in order to develop common agendas.

As a result of this process, the first contact with policy stakeholders -mainly Europeans- was initiated. This has not yet had much impact but partners shared that the journey is well underway. *“I think the decolonized IVS project has done incredible work. And it's not the kind of thing that's going to get noticed. I don't think it'll get the recognition that it deserves from the UN agencies and the donors and the other big players because it's not playing the game. It's taken an entirely different route. And it's working. You know, when I look at the toolkit and other things, I'm very, very encouraged. Because this is a long road we're on and I don't think there are any shortcuts”*, developed an external expert.

The dissemination strategy was key to getting many IVS stakeholders on board. The activities, the circulation of information and the invitation to be an active part of the production of materials went a long way. *“I could say that we had a lot of proofreading and we had a lot of sharing of the materials between all of our members. So it has been proofread by people from every part of the world. So if something was overseen, it was kind of a collective overseen”*, precised a partner survey respondent.

2.6.4. Recommendations

- **Participation and Power**

Securing funding to enable broader participation of Global South partners is essential and can create alternative ways to engage young people in their communities. Financial support at the community level allows for deeper involvement and ensures that local actors are better resourced. In addition, by implementing strategies such

as local training and activities, resources can be distributed locally, anchoring global advocacy efforts more effectively. This approach not only raises awareness of key issues but also helps gather precise information on the barriers, priorities, and needs that shape advocacy plans. It further supports stakeholder mapping, ensuring young participants remain engaged throughout the process and promoting a more equitable distribution of power between local and global levels.

- **Knowledge Production**

To strengthen advocacy strategies for decolonizing IVS, promoting more research on the subject is essential. Such research can provide deeper insights into the systemic challenges, ensuring that advocacy is grounded in local realities and tailored to address specific needs. Moreover, expanding linguistic inclusivity by translating materials into multiple languages—especially those spoken in the Global South—will engage a broader and more diverse audience. This can help shift the narrative away from Eurocentrism and ensure that more communities are represented in global discussions. Crucially, these efforts require sufficient resources. Investing in research and translation services will enhance the impact and reach of advocacy initiatives, making them more inclusive and effective in promoting decolonisation.

- **Training & Methodologies**

Respondents highlighted that successful advocacy requires accessible didactic materials that address complex issues such as cultural domination, loss of sovereignty, and natural extractivism. Future projects should rethink participant engagement mechanisms, ensuring a clear understanding of each participant’s profile, role, background, and motivation. Special attention should be given in the early stages to identify participants and ensure that everyone feels empowered to learn and contribute equally. Moreover, building young advocates’ capacity for spokespersonship is key to overcoming the adult-centric norms often found in political institutions.

- **Outreach and Internalisation**

The project succeeded in raising awareness and involving some IVS actors at the international level. However, to ensure a true bottom-up and top-down process, it is important to allocate resources and build capacity at national and regional levels. Establishing links with key actors through triangular cooperation—such as the EU, UN delegations, and regional institutions like CEPAL or CAF—can ensure advocacy efforts are not solely directed at the EU. Mapping key actors and developing a work plan that aligns with local and regional agendas can create meaningful conversations and embed advocacy actions across governance levels.

3. Conclusion

To a large extent, the project delivered on its intended goal and objectives. The achievements are credited to CCIVS and ICYE's management cooperation, the commitment of the eight partner organisations and the active participation of youths.

The project stimulated timely discussion on decolonising IVS in the Global North and South and the project's deliverables especially under Work Package 4, *'From knowledge to practice-organisational transformation'* are enabling organisational transformation to address colonial practices that impede on decolonising IVS. The process of prompting joint reflections, challenging the current colonial undertones in IVS, improving on language and definitions has been achieved, thus making a huge step in the way of decolonising IVS. *"I think there are many valuable ideas that have been put forward in our discussions. The project activities have left many people reflecting and making our biases more conscious, which might bring up interesting changes to be seen"*, said a participant survey respondent. The project worked under pressure to meet deliverable targets and this in a way reduced the amount of time set aside for processes. The development and adoption of the PAR tools was lengthy but at the end there existed tools which have the potential to greatly influence the decolonisation process of the IVS sector.

The project has achieved to put the topic of decolonisation on the agenda of the IVS movement which the great interest by external stakeholders has shown. Ideally CCIVS needs to harness this interest by thinking how strategically its work can be linked to other institutions either as a cooperating partner or a provider of tools that enable other organisations to do similar projects. There is also a need to use the tools developed in the project to engage other IVS organisations in decolonising their organisational structures and work processes.

The development of policy papers is a huge contribution toward decolonising IVS. As explained by an advocacy participant, *"the team did a great job on the policy papers. They do really help to define what the core issues are, but still it's a big topic, decolonisation is hard to fit into one specific agenda."* The tools developed during the project have improved the understanding of the partner organisations in breaking down neo-colonial structures, systems and processes. They are the evidence of an attempt to address inequality issues. Furthermore the translation of some of the project products into French or Spanish enabled participants to closely follow the decolonisation dialogues.

Despite the fact that much of the engagement has been with people in the IVS sector, the social media campaigns reached out to people from other networks enabling discussions and dialogues. The focus in this phase has been dominated by development of either tools or other products with limited time for in depth application.

“The Decolonise IVS project has profoundly shifted my thinking about International Voluntary Service (IVS). It highlighted the importance of addressing power imbalances between the Global North and Global South within volunteer projects. I now recognize the need for IVS to prioritise equitable partnerships and move away from a charity driven model to one rooted in mutual learning and solidarity. The project also reinforced the idea that true impact comes from empowering local communities, ensuring their voices are central in defining the outcomes and benefits of international voluntary service work.” (Advocacy participant)

Before the project commencement, perspectives on decolonisation of IVS have been contentious. A key outcome from this project is that the perspectives on decolonisation of international volunteering services are gradually converging among project participants. The project from the onset recognised this dilemma noting that it is difficult to address issues of IVS decolonisation separately from the wider context in which it operates.

The project enabled participants to question inequalities that exist at various levels in IVS. For example, a key element discussed were the levels of privilege that the volunteers from the Global North bring when volunteering in countries in the Global South compared to volunteers from the Global South volunteering in countries in the Global North.

The project has been applauded by participants for holding spaces for decolonising IVS conversations to happen. The physical and online dialogues enabled diverse participants to start talking about decolonisation. Significantly some of these participants are now taking this dialogue to other international forums. These dialogues had a ‘*way of dealing with diversity without silencing it, without erasing it, without saying ok, but not too much*’ (External expert)

“Decolonisation is a multifaceted process that requires clear ideas and strategies, but also power and money in order to push forward at the institutional level. The road is long and requires a long-term strategy armed with enough financial possibilities and a committed alliance of organisations and people. IVS organisations have great workers and specially women that are capable of making meaningful collective efforts to push for change and global justice, so we need to continue building bridges and alliances to broaden our reach, get more financial support and do this while taking care of ourselves and of each other.” (Partner survey respondent)

Annex

Focus Group Evaluation Questions

Regarding Work Package 1

Guiding questions

1. How is the relationship in the consortium working towards the project outcomes?
2. How did partners experience the partnership between partners from the Global South and the Global North? How did you experience the power dynamics among partners?
3. What challenges did you experience and where did you see resistance to change?
4. How can partnerships be strengthened within the IVS sector?
5. How can engagement in the consortium be strengthened?
6. Your experience of coordination, management, budget control, monitoring and evaluation - what made it successful, what made it difficult to be successful? What are the tangible results derived under this objective?

Regarding Work Package 2

Guiding questions

1. Is there an improvement of knowledge about decolonisation among member organisations?
2. Did the research inform the further work of the project?
3. How has the research/dialogues better informed the IVS decolonisation agenda? Were external stakeholders influenced?
4. To what extent is there awareness and understanding of decolonisation among IVS partners?
5. Are action research products already contributing towards influencing any decolonial structures and practices?

Regarding Work Package 3

Guiding questions

1. What are the key learnings from advocacy training and the development of the policy papers?
2. What role could advocacy play to decolonise structures and systems?
3. Is the advocacy plan designed, developed and communicated in a way to transform neo colonial structures and policies?
4. What efforts are needed to bring the policy papers to the attention of relevant policy makers?
5. How have you disseminated the project and what was the reaction to the project?
6. Can you explain whether there has been a positive impact of this project in general on your organisation (if yes, how did this look like – intended/ unintended impact)?

Regarding Work Package 4

Guiding questions

1. How useful are the tools in better understanding and deconstructing colonial power? How they contribute to transformational change in the IVS organisations?
2. What effort should be made to make the improve the tools?
3. To what extent are the tools/training useful/applicable or helpful to address the neo-colonial IVS structures and policies? Where would you see resistance in your organisation/network to address neo-colonial structures?
4. Explain the level of your involvement in the tools/training design, content and participation in testing?
5. What new perspectives have been brought into your work as a result of these trainings and tools? What are you doing differently?
6. How could the tools development/training have been done differently?

Regarding Work Package 5

Guiding questions

1. Is there an improvement of knowledge about decolonisation among member organisations?
2. Did the research inform the further work of the project?
3. How has the research better informed the IVS decolonisation agenda? Were external stakeholders influenced?
4. To what extent is there awareness and understanding of decolonisation among IVS partners?
5. Are action research products already contributing towards influencing any decolonial structures and practices?

Questions for external experts (Key informant interviews)

1. A brief background of what their organisation is working on
2. What else is happening in the IVS decolonising space outside CCVIS? Who is doing what and where? Who else is working on decolonisation?
3. Your organisation's relationship to CCVIS project or work
4. Where is the discussion going at the moment? Gaps, opportunities, challenges and recommendations

Questions to collect personal project experiences from selected participants (Story telling)

1. Tell me how you first became involved with this project and what your involvement in the project was:
2. From your point of view, describe a story that best describes the most significant change that has resulted from your involvement in this project:
3. Why was this story significant for you?

4. Have you participated in other IVS initiatives/projects in the past, and how is this one different from those?

Participant Survey Questions

1. What is your overall motivation for wanting to decolonize international volunteering?
2. Do you have any reservations, fears and/or resistance about decolonizing international volunteering?
3. How have the project activities addressed the issues of power, racism and privilege in volunteering organisations?
4. What challenges did you experience in project implementation and where did you experience power dynamics that had an impact on the decolonise project?
5. How effective have the project's design and implementation mechanisms encouraged open feedback from partner organisations?
6. Do you think the project made it possible to share power and decision making? Please give some examples.
7. What do you think are the 3 main lessons learnt from the project?

Résumé Exécutif

Huit organisations et deux réseaux internationaux engagés dans le service volontaire international (SVI) du Sud et du Nord global se sont réunis pour mettre en œuvre le projet *Decolonise IVS!* sur une période de deux ans et demi, de mars 2022 à août 2024. Au troisième trimestre 2024, une évaluation finale a été initiée comme un processus d'apprentissage et de responsabilité afin que les conclusions, les leçons apprises et les recommandations puissent être utilisées pour les futurs programmes. L'objectif du projet *Decolonise IVS!* était de contribuer à un mouvement SVI plus inclusif, diversifié et écologiquement durable. Les partenaires ambitionnaient d'inspirer le mouvement en cherchant à comprendre les formes persistantes de néo-colonialisme dans le volontariat international et en remettant en question les valeurs existantes, les pratiques actuelles et les structures organisationnelles. Le projet s'est organisé autour de cinq grands volets :

1. Coordination et gestion de projet
2. Exploration et définition des concepts clés et des paramètres de recherche
3. Recherche-action participative
4. Développement d'outils d'analyse et d'apprentissage
5. Plaidoyer, diffusion et impact

Approche Méthodologique

Le processus de réflexion sur la décolonisation du travail des organisations SVI a également influencé l'approche méthodologique adoptée pour l'évaluation du projet. L'évaluation a suivi une approche participative dès le début, impliquant des réunions conjointes entre le consultant et le groupe de coordination pour convenir du cadre d'évaluation et analyser les résultats. Cela a permis de ne pas centrer l'évaluation sur l'évaluateur, minimisant ainsi un regard critique ou biaisé.

Les méthodologies ont été sélectionnées pour intégrer divers points de vue et permettre aux parties prenantes de participer à un processus de réflexion et d'apprentissage. Outre les discussions en groupe, des entretiens avec des informateurs clés et des récits, l'évaluation a également permis une participation plus large via une enquête en ligne anonyme pour les partenaires et une autre pour les jeunes participants. Cette approche a fait des répondants des participants actifs dans l'analyse des résultats du projet, et non de simples sources d'information. Étant donné que le projet accordait la priorité à l'implication des jeunes, leurs voix provenant du Nord et du Sud global ont été bien représentées. Le processus d'évaluation a également consisté à examiner la littérature sur les évaluations décoloniales pour éclairer les meilleures pratiques et éviter les pièges.

Résumé des Conclusions Clés

Les facteurs de motivation pour les partenaires à participer à ce projet étaient nombreux. Parmi eux, le projet a été mis en œuvre à un moment où les partenaires du Sud global soulevaient des préoccupations sur le déséquilibre de pouvoir dans les programmes d'échange et les préjugés présents depuis longtemps dans le secteur du SVI. Les participants ont également souligné que la décolonisation devait d'abord être abordée en interne dans les organisations SVI avant qu'elles ne puissent influencer le changement social. Ce projet a donc offert aux participants une plateforme pour réfléchir et aborder les connaissances, les attitudes et les pratiques existantes qui perpétuent les biais inhérents au SVI.

Une conclusion clé de l'évaluation concernait l'importance d'un consortium de partenaires incluant des organisations du Sud global. Les partenaires ont souligné qu'ils ont pu créer un espace où chacun a pu contribuer et être écouté. Bien que la mise en œuvre du projet ait été rendue possible grâce à une planification et une prise de décision conjointes, la coopération a également entraîné une augmentation de la charge de travail, car les partenaires devaient non seulement travailler sur les activités et livrables, mais aussi investir du temps dans les processus de consolidation d'équipe, de réflexion et d'apprentissage. Cela a suscité des inquiétudes quant au fait que les coûts de cette charge de travail accrue n'étaient pas couverts par le financement du projet.

Dans le cadre de l'analyse de la décolonisation et de son interface avec le SVI, la méthodologie de la recherche-action participative (PAR) a été introduite avec l'aide d'un expert externe. Sa nature unique d'apprentissage expérientiel a permis aux participants d'apprendre à évaluer de manière critique les déséquilibres de pouvoir et à obtenir des solutions des organisations partenaires. Les partenaires et les jeunes participants ont considéré que la PAR était l'outil approprié pour analyser les structures et cultures organisationnelles, mais le temps n'a pas suffi pour mettre efficacement l'outil en pratique afin d'obtenir une transformation organisationnelle plus profonde.

Les résultats de l'évaluation montrent clairement que les outils développés dans le projet - notamment le cours de formation en ligne pour les volontaires, l'outil d'auto-évaluation et le jeu de cartes SVI (financé par des fonds supplémentaires) - permettent aux organisations de s'attaquer aux questions des structures de pouvoir coloniales, du colonialisme climatique et des mentalités néo-coloniales. Les partenaires et les experts externes ont convenu que ces produits contribueront de manière significative à permettre aux organisations SVI de mieux aborder les questions de déséquilibre de pouvoir, de promouvoir de meilleurs partenariats et de transformer leurs programmes et structures organisationnelles. L'intérêt d'autres organisations pour ces outils a conduit à des invitations à plusieurs conférences et événements externes.

Les partenaires du projet ont réalisé des progrès importants dans l'intégration des principes décoloniaux dans leurs efforts de plaidoyer, en veillant à ce que des voix de

jeunes de différentes régions et origines soient présentes dans les activités. Cependant, il a été difficile de maintenir la motivation et l'engagement des jeunes, en partie parce que le plaidoyer implique de nombreuses étapes avec des résultats visibles à long terme, mais aussi parce que les espaces politiques sont souvent restreints et peu accueillants pour les jeunes.

Bien que le projet ait réussi à amorcer une réflexion profonde sur les pratiques et structures coloniales et à instaurer la confiance entre les partenaires, les participants ont néanmoins exprimé des préoccupations concernant la durée relativement courte de la mise en œuvre du projet, ce qui a rendu difficile d'obtenir le changement escompté, car les questions coloniales sont ancrées dans les systèmes et politiques depuis de nombreuses années. Tous les répondants ont souligné la nécessité de disposer de plus de temps pour mettre en œuvre des mesures véritablement transformatrices afin de corriger les déséquilibres coloniaux et de s'assurer que le mouvement SVI promeut des opportunités de volontariat international véritablement inclusives, diversifiées et durables sur le plan environnemental.

Resumen Ejecutivo

Ocho organizaciones y dos redes internacionales involucradas en el servicio voluntario internacional (SVI) del Sur y del Norte global se unieron para implementar el proyecto *Decolonise IVS!* durante un período de dos años y medio, desde marzo de 2022 hasta agosto de 2024. En el tercer trimestre de 2024, se inició una evaluación final como un proceso de aprendizaje y rendición de cuentas para que los hallazgos, las lecciones aprendidas y las recomendaciones puedan ser utilizados en futuros programas.

El objetivo del proyecto *Decolonise IVS!* fue contribuir a un movimiento SVI más inclusivo, diverso y sostenible desde el punto de vista ambiental. Los socios tenían la ambición de inspirar al movimiento SVI buscando comprender más sobre las formas continuas de neocolonialismo en el voluntariado internacional y desafiando los valores existentes, las prácticas actuales y las estructuras organizativas. El proyecto se organizó en torno a cinco grandes paquetes de trabajo:

1. Coordinación y gestión del proyecto
2. Exploración y definición de conceptos clave y parámetros de investigación
3. Investigación acción participativa
4. Desarrollo de herramientas de análisis y aprendizaje
5. Incidencia, difusión e impacto

Enfoque Metodológico

El proceso de reflexión sobre cómo descolonizar el trabajo de las organizaciones SVI también influyó en el enfoque metodológico adoptado para la evaluación del proyecto. La evaluación del proyecto *Decolonise IVS!* siguió un enfoque participativo desde el principio, con reuniones conjuntas entre el consultor y el grupo de coordinación para acordar el marco de evaluación y analizar los resultados. Esto significó que la evaluación no se centró en el evaluador, minimizando un enfoque crítico o sesgado.

Se seleccionaron metodologías que permitieran integrar diversas opiniones de las partes interesadas y que facilitaran la participación en un proceso de reflexión y aprendizaje. Además de utilizar discusiones en grupos focales, entrevistas con informantes clave y narrativas, la evaluación permitió una participación más amplia del proyecto a través de encuestas en línea anónimas dirigidas a los socios y a los jóvenes participantes. Este enfoque convirtió a los encuestados en participantes activos en el análisis de los resultados del proyecto, y no en simples fuentes de información. Dado que el proyecto priorizó la participación juvenil, las voces de los jóvenes del Norte y del Sur global estuvieron bien representadas. El proceso de evaluación también incluyó una revisión de la literatura sobre evaluaciones descolonizadoras para identificar mejores prácticas y evitar posibles errores.

Resumen de los Resultados Clave

Hubo muchos factores de motivación para que los socios participaran en este proyecto. Entre ellos, el proyecto se implementó en un momento en que los socios del Sur global expresaban preocupaciones sobre el desequilibrio de poder en los programas de intercambio y los prejuicios prevalentes en el sector SVI durante mucho tiempo. Los participantes también señalaron que la descolonización debe abordarse internamente en las organizaciones SVI antes de que puedan influir en el cambio social. Este proyecto, por lo tanto, ofreció a los participantes una plataforma para reflexionar y abordar los conocimientos, actitudes y prácticas que perpetúan los sesgos inherentes al SVI.

Un hallazgo clave del proceso de evaluación fue la importancia de un consorcio de socios que incluyera organizaciones del Sur global. Los socios destacaron que pudieron crear un espacio donde cada uno de ellos pudo contribuir y ser escuchado. Aunque la implementación del proyecto fue posible gracias a la planificación y la toma de decisiones conjuntas, la cooperación también supuso un aumento de la carga de trabajo, ya que los socios no solo tuvieron que trabajar en las actividades y entregables, sino también invertir tiempo en los procesos de construcción de equipo, reflexión y aprendizaje. Esto generó preocupaciones sobre el hecho de que los costos de esta mayor carga de trabajo no estaban cubiertos por los fondos del proyecto.

Como parte del análisis de la descolonización y su intersección con el SVI, se introdujo la metodología de Investigación Acción Participativa (PAR, por sus siglas en inglés) con la asistencia de un experto externo. Su naturaleza única de aprendizaje experiencial permitió a los participantes aprender a evaluar críticamente los desequilibrios de poder y obtener soluciones de las organizaciones socias. Los socios y los jóvenes participantes consideraron que la PAR era la herramienta adecuada para analizar las estructuras y culturas organizacionales, pero el tiempo fue insuficiente para poner la herramienta en práctica de manera efectiva y lograr una transformación organizativa más profunda.

Los resultados de la evaluación muestran claramente que las herramientas desarrolladas en el proyecto –especialmente el curso de formación en línea para voluntarios, la herramienta de autoevaluación y el juego de cartas SVI (incluidos gracias a fondos adicionales recaudados)– permiten a las organizaciones abordar cuestiones relacionadas con las estructuras de poder coloniales, el colonialismo climático y las mentalidades neocoloniales. Los socios y expertos externos coincidieron en que estos productos contribuirán significativamente a que las organizaciones SVI aborden mejor los problemas de desequilibrio de poder, promuevan mejores asociaciones y transformen sus programas y estructuras organizativas. El interés de otras organizaciones en estas herramientas resultó en invitaciones a varias conferencias y eventos externos.

Los socios del proyecto lograron importantes avances en la integración de principios descoloniales en sus esfuerzos de incidencia al asegurar que las voces juveniles de

diferentes regiones y antecedentes estuvieran presentes en las actividades. Aun así, fue un desafío mantener la motivación y el compromiso de los jóvenes, en parte debido a que la incidencia política implica muchos pasos con resultados visibles a largo plazo, pero también porque los espacios políticos suelen ser restrictivos y poco acogedores para los jóvenes.

Aunque el proyecto logró iniciar una profunda reflexión sobre las prácticas y estructuras coloniales y construir la confianza entre los socios, los participantes expresaron preocupaciones sobre el tiempo relativamente corto de implementación del proyecto, lo que dificultó lograr el cambio esperado, dado que los problemas coloniales están arraigados en personas, sistemas y políticas desde hace muchos años. Todos los encuestados destacaron la necesidad de más tiempo para implementar medidas verdaderamente transformadoras que aborden los desequilibrios coloniales y aseguren que el movimiento SVI promueva oportunidades de voluntariado internacional que sean verdaderamente inclusivas, diversas y sostenibles desde el punto de vista ambiental.



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