

75 years of



promoting peace
and social justice

ICYE

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ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice



75 YEARS
ICYE
1949-2024

75 Year Anniversary Publication --- Preface

“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”

- Maya Angelou



In 2024, ICYE is celebrating its 75th anniversary - three quarters of a century of fostering peace, intercultural dialogue and global solidarity through youth exchange. What an inspiring and collaborative journey of cultural exchange and understanding that ICYE has and is taking! So many people have shaped the Federation till now and are still committed to taking ICYE forward. We are grateful for that and dedicate this publication to you: ICYE staff and coworkers, members of our Board of Managers, exchangees, volunteers and alumni, host communities, host families and host projects, mentors, trainers, and other ICYE supporters.

To celebrate 75 years of ICYE, in this publication former and current colleagues, members of our Youth Engagement Committee and alumni from different decades share their contributions and reflections on the meaning and impact of international volunteering and what it means to be part of ICYE. Thank you for sharing!

Dr Anja Stuckert
Secretary General ICYE Federation (since 2020)

75 years is an impressive time for an organisation to exist. ICYE has had to address many challenges that changing socio-economic and political contexts posed. Especially the last years have been difficult – not only with the impact of the Corona pandemic but also with decreasing volunteer numbers due to the economic and environmental crisis. These challenges make it essential to reflect on our founding values and the lessons of the past as we look to the future.

From its start as a reconciliation programme between the USA and Germany, ICYE has promoted peace, solidarity and social justice through intercultural understanding and the willingness to contribute to community development and social change. Volunteers throughout the years have shared with us again and again how their participation in the ICYE programme has impacted and often changed the course of their lives, how it instilled in them a deep connection to people from other cultures and contributed to their personal growth.

The impact of the ICYE volunteering programme both on the volunteers and the communities is what gives meaning to our work. The passion and the commitment of our staff and co-workers to enable such enriching and meaningful opportunities have been unchanging throughout the years. While we are facing challenging times ahead, it is this power of our collective action that moves us forward. Launching the Youth Engagement Committee in 2024 with 15 young people from across our member organisations has been an important step to strengthen meaningful youth engagement in the Federation. Together with the current

discussions on decolonisation, climate justice, peace and diversity we will be able to embrace the change needed to stay relevant while maintaining our identity and our values. By holding on to our past, by working collaboratively and by thinking out of the box we will translate ideas into transformative action and build a stronger, more inclusive global IVS movement that will continue to encourage young people all over the world to engage in social change.

As we celebrate this milestone of 75 years, we are reminded that the true strength of ICYE lies in its diverse and interconnected community. From the volunteers who embark on transformative journeys, to the host communities that open their doors and hearts, every story shared reflects the values of mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration. This anniversary is not only a moment to reflect on ICYE's remarkable history but also an opportunity to envision its future. Together, we aim to continue creating impactful experiences, nurturing global citizens, and championing the cause of peace and solidarity in a world that needs it more than ever.

The voices in this publication inspire us to move forward with renewed determination to build a more connected and equitable world.



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1949-2024

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Building a just world: The legacy of volunteerism



In a small, sunlit room in Seoul, Korea, a group of young faces gathered around a table, their expressions a mix of curiosity and anticipation. It was the winter of 1966, and I was embarking on a journey that would forever change my perspective on life and the world. This was the beginning of my gap year abroad with the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) program, an experience that not only shaped my future but also underscored the immense importance of volunteerism.

Dr. Ed Gragert

Volunteer from the US to South Korea (1966–67)
Executive Director, ICYE-US (1979–90)

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

The ICYE program, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, has a rich history of fostering global understanding and cooperation. Established in the aftermath of World War II, ICYE aimed to heal the wounds of conflict by promoting cultural exchange and volunteerism among youth from the US and Germany, countries that only a few years earlier had been at war. Over the decades, ICYE evolved into a global movement, with volunteers from all corners of the Earth working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations.

My journey to Korea was part of this grand tapestry. Back then, Korea was a country rebuilding itself from the ravages of war, and the spirit of resilience was palpable. In addition to attending a Korean high school, as a community volunteer my role was to assist in local schools, teaching English and helping with children orphaned by the Korean war. It was a humbling experience to see how education could be a beacon of hope and a tool for empowerment.

One of the most memorable moments was when we organized a community event to plant trees in a barren field near the school's sports field. The local children, their hands small and eager, joined us in digging holes and placing saplings into the ground. It was a simple act, yet it symbolized so much more. We were not just planting trees; we were sowing seeds of friendship, understanding, and a shared commitment to a better future.

This experience in Korea 60 years ago taught me the true essence of volunteerism. It is not just about giving; it is about learning, receiving, growing, and connecting. It is about recognizing our shared humanity and working together to address global challenges. This ethos is at the heart of ICYE's mission and aligns perfectly with the SDGs, which aim to eradicate poverty, promote education, ensure gender equality, and protect the environment, among other goals.

As ICYE celebrates its 75th anniversary, it is heartening to see how the spirit of volunteerism has spread across the globe. Today, volunteers from diverse backgrounds come together to collaborate with communities, whether it is through building schools in rural Africa, providing healthcare in South America, or promoting environmental conservation in Asia. Each volunteer, in their own way, contributes to a global mosaic of compassion and action.

Reflecting on my gap year abroad, I realize how much it has influenced my life. It instilled in me a deep appreciation for different cultures and a lifelong commitment to service. It also taught me that change begins with small, meaningful actions. Whether it is teaching a child, planting a tree, or simply listening to someone's story, each act of kindness creates ripples of positive impact.

Volunteerism is as important in 2024 as it has been over the past 75 years. According to the UN's 2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report, entitled "Building Equal and Inclusive Societies," despite the devastating social-economic impacts of the Covid pandemic, global interest in volunteering has not waned.

As we look to the future, the importance of volunteerism cannot be overstated. In a world facing unprecedented challenges, from climate change to social inequality, the need for global cooperation and empathy is greater than ever. Programs like ICYE serve as a reminder that we all have a role to play in building a more just and sustainable world.

Over the past six decades, I have had the privilege of mobilizing volunteers globally to work toward global understanding and

peace, first by working with ICYE-US and ICYE internationally. Each year, we said goodbye to hundreds of young people who were venturing into a new world and each year we welcomed back the same but changed individuals who had experienced first-hand a different reality. They would never be the same. Based on this personal transformation and desire to see the ICYE experience continue, in 2023, ICYE-US returnees created a scholarship fund to make it possible for additional young people to have an ICYE experience. The request for financial donations was met with not only funds, but also with story after story of how ICYE continues to impact their lives, many years after their year.

In my own life in the 1990s, I was able to take advantage of new technologies to link volunteers virtually among 130 countries through the International Education and



Resource Network (iEARN) to enhance education and build a sense of global humanity. It was ICYE on steroids as millions of young people, some as young as five years old were able to interact with the world—regardless of their socio-economic position, age, geographic location or ability to travel. Educators worldwide saw the benefit of global interaction in the education of their students and volunteered countless hours in making global learning and interaction possible.

Finally, I joined the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), working to ensure that all young people worldwide have an equitable access to a quality education. This work involved mobilizing volunteers in hundreds of countries to advocate with their governments on behalf of universal education access in accordance with SDG#4 and SDG#5.

In 2024, volunteerism continues to be a major component of my daily activities, working to organize community members in my rural area to join political movements to elect individuals committed to economic, racial and environmental justice. Indeed, in my opinion, we can only realize the SDG if we are able to mobilize volunteers to achieve goals that governments can only dream of.

If we multiply my experience and continued volunteerism by the tens of thousands of ICYE Returnees and host family members who continue to live their ICYE experience years after their



ICYE year, we can be sure that the world will be a better, just and more inclusive place. Indeed, it is my observation and experience that the achievement of the SDGs and other goals will only be achieved when governments realize the power and potential of volunteerism and support these efforts by global youth to personally affect change.

In closing, my experience in Korea was the first chapter in my own ongoing story of volunteerism. It is a story that continues to be written by the thousands of young people who have been impacted by ICYE—either as an exchangee or host family member—or by individuals who, through their selfless actions, are making the world a better place. As we celebrate 75 years of ICYE, let us honor this legacy and commit to fostering a culture of volunteerism for generations to come.

Thirty years with ICYE



Thirty years have passed since my journey with ICYE began. The world and ICYE looked very different in 1994. At that time, ICYE only had one long-term program, either for school exchange or volunteering, with all countries starting their programs simultaneously. Only a few National Committees (NCs) ran other programs alongside the ICYE long-term program. Most NCs at that time were originally established as part of ICYE. Over the years, the trend has shifted towards greater flexibility and diversity. In 2006, ICYE introduced a short-term program. Now, NCs run several programs, also in collaboration with partners from different networks. New members with backgrounds in other networks have also joined. This development has brought new perspectives, but what has it meant for ICYE's identity?

Anni Koskela
Secretary General, ICYE Finland (since 1994)

A Huge Expansion in Communication

Thirty years ago, communication was primarily through letters and fax. Phone calls were expensive and reserved for urgent cases, especially to non-European countries. It might be hard to imagine now, but we even resolved disputes by exchanging faxes. Around 1995, I first heard about email. At that time, it sounded very unrealistic, but within a few years, we were spending most of our days writing emails. We anticipated that email would reduce our workload, but we were very wrong. We couldn't foresee the ever-growing need for communication, the variety of channels, and the competitive market, where communication plays a critical role in survival. Young people interested in the program now want more and more precise information about the projects and the organizations. Thirty years ago, it was entirely different. Participants had to be much more flexible with their expectations.

EVS changed the Exchange Field

During the late 1990s, there were significant changes in the youth exchange field and within ICYE. EU started to support international volunteering. In 1995-96 the European Voluntary Service (EVS) started as a pilot project run between European youth exchange networks. At that time, we had a strong ICYE European office led by Sergio Andrei. To my knowledge, Sergio was the person who initiated EVS, as he had good connections with the European Commission. In the

beginning, EVS was a copy of the ICYE program. The training cycle and even the training contents were the same. Many European NCs were involved in launching EVS at the national level. In Finland, we acted as consultants for our National Agency. As a consequence of the start of EVS, many European NCs stopped their school exchange programs. Simultaneously, ICYE USA, which had received a large number of school exchange participants, closed down, causing the school exchange program to shrink drastically. This was a significant shock to some NCs, like ICYE Finland, where half of our participants were school exchangees before EVS started. Our ICYE quota decreased from 33 to 11 in just two years. Slowly, we managed to rebuild the ICYE program. The next big shock was the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still affecting us and many other NCs as well.

The 'C' in the Name

In 1994, there was ongoing discussion about the 'C' in ICYE's name at both the national and international levels. By 2001, the time was ripe at the international level to change the 'C' from Christian to Cultural. Several NCs had already changed their names earlier, and it was felt that 'Cultural' would be a more inclusive name for most NCs. There wasn't much debate about whether the name should be changed, but there was some discussion about the new name. ICYE UK and ICYE Finland suggested the new name be Inter-Cultural Youth Exchange. However, since the word "International" was important to most NCs in the Global South, our suggestion did not gain much support.

Excitement of the GAs

The General Assemblies (GAs) were always exciting events; it was always wonderful to meet colleagues from different countries, a great opportunity to evaluate cooperation with partners face-to-face, and participate in the development of the Federation.

Most of the GAs were also very demanding, with lots of meetings and long days.

Discussions at the GAs were sometimes heated, and there was even occasional conflict between differing views. However, I feel that the culture of discussion has improved. Recently, discussions have been more constructive and understanding, and less confrontational.

My first experience was in 1995 in New York. The best memories are of things other than the GA topics: how excited the Latinos got when it snowed, the visits to the Empire State Building and the United Nations building, where we had a meeting with a UNESCO representative. From the GA discussions, I only remember a heated debate about moving the International Office from Berlin to either Poland or Nigeria to save costs. For a first-timer, that discussion was confusing.

I won't go through all the GAs I've participated in, but the one held in 1997 in Reykjavik, Iceland, was particularly memorable for me. My NC nominated me as a candidate for a member position of the Board of Managers (BoM). To my and my NC's surprise, I returned as the newly elected Chairperson of the BoM. The elections were possibly the most extraordinary in ICYE's history. Strong campaigning took place throughout the

GA. There were candidate withdrawals during the elections, and a chairperson who held the position for less than an hour. By midnight, the situation was chaotic. I was pushed to run for the position of chairperson. I wasn't really ready for it, but since there seemed to be no other alternative, I agreed and was elected, along with Ramon Magi from Italy, Adeolu Onamade from Nigeria, and Claudia Castro Valle from Honduras. As a new BoM, we didn't know we would soon face a difficult decision. We had to restructure the International Office. We decided to entrust Salvatore Romagna with the management responsibility of the office. Looking back, I see that this decision was the right one and beneficial for the Federation. Salvatore was very professional and did an excellent job.

There have been wonderful GAs at Lake Titicaca, Bonn, Mombasa, Cartagena, Houdain (France), Taipei, Tauranga, Puntarenas, Kampala, Goa, Næstved (Denmark), Hoi An, Berlin, and Accra. Warmest thanks to all the hosting NCs for the great memories.

Eye-Opening Project Visits

I'm glad about the tradition of organizing project visits. In 1996, we had the opportunity to visit some projects, including a human rights organization and a centre for street children in La Paz, Bolivia. It was eye-opening to see the reality in which our volunteers work. The tradition of organizing project visits in connection with the GA was started by ACI Costa Rica in 2011. Besides child and elderly care projects, we visited some environmental projects in Costa Rica. It was very easy to recruit a volunteer for a sea turtle project the next year after I had seen the project and the living conditions with my own eyes. In Uganda and India, I was particularly happy to visit the projects where our volunteers were working at that time, and in Vietnam, the projects where our volunteers had previously worked. It became easier to share experiences and understand some of the challenges they had faced.

An Impactful Program

The most rewarding moments in my work have been witnessing the learning outcomes of the returnees. These are the moments when I can clearly see and feel the impact of the program. That motivates me to continue working for ICYE. I strongly believe in ICYE's long-term program as a powerful tool for personal growth and intercultural learning. Since the volunteers often work and live with locals, they are challenged daily by the new culture to broaden their perspectives and examine their own thoughts, perceptions, and habits. This experience strengthens self-awareness, and almost every participant shows increased self-confidence and courage. Some even discover direction for their future. One particularly touching moment was when a young person who had been insecure during the pre-departure training came to the returnees' meeting open, positive, and confident, sharing that the experience had been a turning point for her.

This learning process doesn't happen on its own; I find that the ICYE structure is ideal for supporting it through training, reflection opportunities, and support at different stages. Our strength also lies in the fact that returnees can become active co-workers and engage in global education work.

Wishing the ICYE Federation a great future.

People who have made ICYE ICYE



Nguyen Thanh Mai
Regional Coordinator, ICYE Asia Pacific
General Program Coordinator, VPV (2010–2020)

This year, 2024, celebrates the 75th anniversary of ICYE, and I am truly thankful to have been part of this remarkable journey for the last 15 years. Since my initial involvement, I have encountered countless inspiring individuals—colleagues, volunteers, and staff from diverse host projects. This milestone is significant for the Federation, and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all who have played a role in shaping ICYE, promoting its fundamental values and spirit, and fostering mutual understanding and peace.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

ICYE's journey to the Southeast

Starting with just exchanges between Germany and the USA, ICYE has transformed itself several times through the last 75 years and gradually engaged people from different continents and regions in the world. With a close connection to the people and cultures of the Asia Pacific, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight ICYE's journey in this region, with a particular focus on the inspiring developments in Southeast Asia.

ICYE's presence in the Asia Pacific region traces back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, beginning with groundbreaking efforts in Japan and New Zealand. ICYE expanded its reach to India and Korea during the 1980s, followed by Taiwan in the 1990s and Nepal in the early 2000s. As we entered the 21st century, ICYE made important progress in Southeast Asia, engaging organizations such as Volunteers for Peace Vietnam (VPV), Dejavato Indonesia, and We Spark Action - now Global Initiative Exchange and Development (GIED) in the Philippines.

These three organizations were invited to visit ICYE International Office in 2008 and joined the ICYE General Assembly (GA) in New Zealand in 2009 as a candidate member. Both VPV and Dejavato became an associate member in 2009 while We Spark Action remained a partner until they changed to GIED in 2015 and became an associate member in 2017 in Denmark. Recently, the Volunteer Spirit Association (VSA) in Thailand joined the ICYE family, bringing the total to ten member organizations in the Asia Pacific region. The visionaries behind these organizations and initiatives have inspired countless individuals to embrace international volunteering and foster meaningful change for themselves and in their communities.



Quiet contributions

It is important to recognize the individuals who have been instrumental in establishing ICYE in Asia Pacific, significantly broadening its reach and impact. Numerous people have played a part in this endeavor including Tomoko Ukaji (Japan), Rina Matayoshi (Japan), Heath Ingham (New Zealand), Robinson Doss (India), Ravinder Singh (India), Jin Sam Kim (South Korea), Sung-Tzu Lin (Taiwan), Chen-Hsiu Kuo (Taiwan), Santoshi Chalise Adhikari (Nepal), among others. While I am grateful for the collective efforts of all, I would like to take this opportunity to shine a light on a few of these remarkable individuals, with whom I have formed close connections and whose passion and dedication have inspired my ongoing engagement with ICYE.

Nguyen Doan Cuong / ICYE Vietnam – a genuinely kind heart beneath the strict appearance

In October 2009, I embarked on a journey with VPV/ICYE Vietnam, participating in the initial phase of recruitment for a new program coordinator. The process was unlike anything I had encountered before, consisting of three rigorous rounds: a writing task that involved an English and Vietnamese translation, an English-speaking assessment with international volunteers, and finally, an interview with the executive director of VPV. After successfully completing the first two rounds, I arrived late for my interview, only to find the

director occupied with another candidate. A program coordinator informed me of the director's strictness regarding punctuality but encouraged me to wait. So, I settled in for what turned out to be a lengthy wait, and after several hours, my patience was rewarded when the director agreed to meet with me, marking the beginning of my connection with ICYE.

Cuong, the executive director, became more than just a colleague; he was a friend and a brother throughout my journey. Even though later Cuong relocated to the southern part of Vietnam while I continued my work in the northern office, our bond remained strong. He consistently offered support and encouragement through my professional journey with ICYE and my personal endeavors. Beneath his seemingly tough appearance and serious attitude lies a compassionate and warm-hearted individual. His unique approach to leadership is always driven by a deep commitment to effecting change through volunteer work. If it weren't for Cuong, I wouldn't be here celebrating the 75th anniversary of ICYE.



Don Tuan Phuong / ICYE Vietnam – a passionate and inspiring pioneer in international volunteering in Vietnam

I vividly recall Phuong sharing his motivation for establishing VPV/ICYE Vietnam: “Many Vietnamese people lack the opportunity to explore the world, so I aim to bring the world to them right here in Vietnam.” Since 2005, he has tirelessly pursued this mission, evolving from a solo endeavor into a vibrant organization supported by hundreds of passionate colleagues and volunteers. In the early days, Phuong encountered numerous obstacles. While local volunteer initiatives were flourishing and well-structured, the idea of international volunteering was still relatively unfamiliar to many in Vietnam. Emerging from a long history of resistance wars with foreign powers, many Vietnamese people, including government officials, were not accustomed to the presence of international volunteers and the unique contributions they could offer. Phuong emerged as one of the trailblazers, introducing the concept of international volunteering to the country. After two decades of unwavering commitment from VPV, under Phuong’s leadership and that of a few other similar organizations, international volunteering has gained recognition and respect in Vietnam, with local projects now welcoming and valuing the contributions of foreign volunteers. Although securing visas for international volunteers remains a hurdle, the profound influence of the volunteer programs launched by Phuong and others like him on both local communities and the volunteers is truly significant.



As the founder and president of VPV, Phuong embodies a warm, approachable demeanor. His genuine nature, coupled with his clear vision, has inspired not only me but the entire team. Phuong’s ability to connect with others on a personal level fosters an environment of collaboration and enthusiasm, encouraging everyone to contribute their best efforts toward the shared mission. His leadership style, characterized by simplicity and sincerity, has created a strong sense of community within the organization. The collective efforts of the team inspired by Phuong’s passion and dedication have not only changed the landscape of international volunteering in Vietnam but have also helped enriching the lives of countless individuals, both local and international, fostering a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation – one of the core values of ICYE.

I'm grateful to VPV – my home organization – the root and the base of my engagement with ICYE. It was Cuong who first welcomed me into this community, and Phuong who sparked my ongoing commitment to ICYE. My journey with ICYE is inextricably linked to my experiences at VPV, as well as the inspiration of Cuong and Phuong. The journey of ICYE towards Southeast Asia has been possible largely due to the efforts of committed individuals such as Phuong and Cuong.



**Ketut Purwantoro / ICYE Indonesia
– an embodiment of humility and
quiet dedication**

I met Ketut for the first time in Indonesia when I got the chance to represent VPV/ ICYE Vietnam to join the ICYE regional training on long-term volunteering programs hosted by Dejavato/ ICYE Indonesia in Semarang, Indonesia in 2010. Indonesia was my first step to the world, and Ketut was the first foreign person that I encountered outside of Vietnam.

As I stepped out of the Semarang airport, I was greeted by a smiling face holding a sign with my name and a small bouquet of wildflowers. That warm welcome was from Ketut, the founder and director of Dejavato, who not only took care of my luggage but also made me feel special right from the start. I never expected such a personal welcome (with wildflowers!) from the director of the organization. His lovely and thoughtful gesture left a lasting impression on me, and even though we didn't meet often afterward, I felt a strong connection with him and the Dejavato team. Besides his engagement with Dejavato, Ketut also teaches at two local universities and continues promoting volunteering and its values through teaching. Ketut's commitment, humility, and kindness have inspired me, and surely many young staff members and continue to influence his university students in their volunteering journeys. He never seeks recognition for his efforts, quietly making a difference, and it's people like him who truly embody the spirit of ICYE. Thank you, Ketut!



Rhenelyn Queen P. Dadulo (Queenie) / ICYE Philippines - an unwavering spirit of resilience and perseverance

I first met Queenie in 2012 during a training program for long-term volunteering in Southeast Asia, where her blend of professionalism and warmth left a lasting impression on me. Our paths crossed again in 2017 at the ICYE Asia Pacific regional meeting in Vietnam, where her passion and commitment for contributing to positive social changes continued to impress and inspire me. During this time, I learned about the challenges faced by her organization, We Spark Action, which ultimately had to dissolve. Despite this setback, Queenie's determination shone through as she established a new organization, Global Initiative Exchange and Development (GIED), which successfully became an associate member of ICYE in 2017 and a full member in 2022. Queenie is not only dedicated to GIED but also actively involved in various local

and international volunteer initiatives. At present, she is also channeling her efforts into her role as a board member of the ICYE Federation.

Queenie's journey with ICYE and her commitment to volunteering has been quite a challenging adventure. Alongside the professional hurdles she has been through, her personal life has seen its fair share of ups and downs. Balancing the responsibilities of raising two children on her own while managing an organization dedicated to promoting international volunteering for positive change in a region frequently affected by typhoons is certainly a tough job. Yet, her resilience and determination shine through, inspiring not just me but many others in the ICYE community, especially in the Asia Pacific region. Queenie's unwavering spirit embodies the essence of ICYE. I appreciate her enduring passion and lasting commitment to the cause, which touches the hearts of many and helps keep the values of ICYE alive and flourishing.

Towards 75 years and beyond

ICYE has navigated a complex path over the last 75 years, encountering numerous obstacles along the way. Yet, through every challenge, ICYE remains resilient, consistently fostering positive experiences for everyone involved and playing its role in driving meaningful social change. The achievements of ICYE reflect the unwavering dedication and efforts of many individuals, including Cuong, Phuong, Ketut, Queenie, and countless others all over the world. It is crucial to acknowledge and celebrate the often-unseen contributions that have shaped this journey, recognizing the hard work of everyone involved, both in the spotlight and behind the scenes, both in the past and in the present.

As ICYE celebrates its 75th anniversary, it continues to confront various challenges, particularly in defining its identity and ensuring organizational sustainability. We can draw strength from the inspiring spirit of those who have come before us, allowing their legacy to guide us through these obstacles. By coming together and uniting our efforts, we can continue to bring about meaningful social change through volunteering and other initiatives, reaffirming our commitment to making a positive impact in the world.

On its onward journey, ICYE may undergo structural changes and potentially adopt a new name to better align with evolving social needs and circumstances. Some of us may remain on this journey; others may take different paths. Regardless of any changes that might come, the core values and spirit cultivated over the past 75 years, embodied by individuals like Cuong, Phuong, Ketut, Queenie, and many others, including you and me, will persist and guide the Federation into the future.

With these inspiring words from Queenie, let us continue this meaningful and enriching journey. And so, the story of ICYE goes on...

“When we are clear with our sincere intentions however tumultuous the journey is, we learn to dance with the rain. We also allow life to make its natural flow, and like the wind, we wait for its calming and then dance again. New days always come after nighttime. WE shall overcome.”

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7. Foundation of the Association

After a Communion Service in the Cathedral of Skálholt celebrated by Herra Sigurbjörn Einarsson, Bishop of Iceland, the delegates of National Committees represented at the Assembly, the elected Members of the Board and the President of the Assembly all declared in the presence of the Bishop of Iceland:

1. that they had met in this place from September 20-25, 1977
2. that they had decided to constitute as "Federation of National Committees in the International Christian Youth Exchange" and that they had adopted the constitution mentioned in these minutes,
3. that the goals of the Federation had been adopted as outlined in the preamble to the constitution and in paragraph four of the constitution
4. and that the Officers and President of the Assembly had been elected as minuted.

Then the names of the elected persons and the goals of the Federation were read, and all delegates and officers signed a document which was witnessed and signed by the Bishop.

During the General Assembly from September 20-25, 1977
in Skálholt/ Iceland, members voted for ICYE to become a Federation

19. On New Name of the ICYE Federation

The President of the GA reminded all delegates that the XXI ICYE General Assembly, held in Bonn, Germany in November 1999, had mandated the present GA to adopt a new name of the Federation. Mary Boama underlined that the name of the Federation had to reflect the identity of the majority of its National Committees, and recalled that already since the early '90s a considerable number of the NCs viewed and understood the C of ICYE as Cultural and not Christian. Nowadays - regardless of the NC's own name - virtually all NCs reputed the C as Cultural more all-inclusive than the Christian heritage of the Federation.

The President then called for a straw vote to determine which one of the following proposed names would receive the qualified majority needed for the constitutional amendment linked to the change of name. After that a number of delegates explained what the connotations of the different names were and accordingly spoke in favour or against the options presented, after a show of hands, the straw vote results were as follows:

Option 1:	International Cultural Youth Exchange	19 Votes
Option 2:	Inter-Cultural Youth Exchange	<u>6</u> Votes
Option 3:	International Cultural and Youth Exchange	<u>1</u> Vote

A warm applause welcomed this significant and historical decision!

During the General Assembly that took place from 6.-11.
November 1999 in Bonn/ Germany, members voted for ICYE to change its name

The beginning of a long friendship



Irma Ertman
Exchange Student from Finland to the US (1967–68)

My name is Irma Ertman (née Horstia), and I am from Helsinki. I was an exchange student in Iowa, USA, through ICYE during 1967–1968. Currently, I serve as the Finnish Ambassador to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Back when I was an exchange student, the majority of exchange students went to the USA, and only a few to European countries. There were no other country options available at that time.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

All exchange students lived with host families and attended school. Our group had about half a dozen participants, of which two went to Europe. The exchange year typically lasted a full year – for those of us in the USA, it was actually almost 13 months, since we left in early July 1967 and returned in late July of the following year.

At that time, the main organizers of student exchanges were AFS and YFU. ICYE was a much smaller organization in comparison, but if I recall correctly, it was also the only one through which you could apply to countries other than the USA. I was an active church youth member, and others from this group had previously participated in ICYE exchanges. I heard about the program from Juha Koivurinta, who belongs to the first generation of Finnish ICYE exchange students. This encouraged me to apply for the program myself, even though I didn't really have much of an idea of what life in America would be like. After all, there were no modern media like we have today! Getting to know the host family happened solely through letters: we exchanged a few letters and photos before the trip. Similarly, during the exchange year, communication with home was done in the same way. A few of us received a phone call from home as a Christmas present – a chance to talk with family, which was a huge deal back then!

The motivation to become an exchange student was undoubtedly curiosity – the desire to see a different culture and way of life, and the desire to learn English properly. There likely wasn't anything more determined behind it. Traveling in general

wasn't common at that time, let alone spending a year as an exchange student, so I was definitely an exception among my friends. In hindsight, it was also quite a financial commitment for my family, especially since my brother left the following year as an ICYE exchange student. I have often thanked my parents for their broad-mindedness and modern thinking in this matter.

Traveling back then was much more complicated than it is now. On a beautiful July morning, our group flew from Helsinki to Copenhagen, where we had time to explore the city in the summer heat. In the evening, we continued by night train to Bonn, which was the gathering place for European exchange students, and where we spent at least one night at the Venusberg Youth Hostel. There was likely some sort of orientation program there as well. In Cologne, a plane full of exchange students was loaded towards Philadelphia, from where we continued by bus to Collegeville, Pennsylvania. There was a three-day orientation on a university campus, where exchange students from all continents were gathered. We were plagued by a terrible heatwave (+30°C), which was overwhelming for us Nordics, and we probably took five showers a day! (The next summer, on the return trip, the heat didn't feel nearly as bad anymore...) It was amazing to meet so many young people from all over the world for the first time in my life! I remember how, during the "festival of nations" held during the orientation, I heard for the first time the then relatively new Misa Criolla, which is still played today. We Finns probably performed

the Finnish favorite dance letkajenkka that evening! The arrival and return gatherings were the only times all the exchange students met together during the year. In addition, there were two regional Midwest meetings during the year, if I recall correctly. After the orientation, my journey continued towards Iowa. My host family came to pick me up by car, and the trip home took another three days. I remember being utterly exhausted when we finally arrived.

The exchange year passed with the home, school and church. Some initial awkwardness was probably caused by the fact that already in the 1960s, Finnish youth were more independent than their American peers and were used to moving freely in their surroundings. I found some of my schoolmates to be astonishingly childish, but I got used to everything. There is always an adjustment phase in everything, but by Christmas, I had mastered English. I attended many different clubs and events to talk about Finland, and Americans were always curious to hear about things. This also provided skills and confidence for future public speaking, which I am satisfied with. Dietary habits didn't differ significantly from those in Finland, except that chicken was already eaten much more frequently in the USA. Additionally, for a Finn used to four types of ice cream (vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, tiger), the ice cream parlors with dozens of flavors were, of course, an incredible thing. New to me were also corn on the cob and pumpkin pie – I still eat them with great pleasure!

The return trip in the summer of 1968 offered all exchange students the

opportunity to stay for a few days with families in the Washington, D.C. area and to get to know the nation's capital. Additionally, we visited New York City for a day, where we toured the UN headquarters, among other things. I could not have imagined then, sitting in the grand hall of the General Assembly, that one day I would be speaking from the podium in the same hall! Before Washington, I visited my brother, who had arrived a few weeks earlier as an exchange student in Baltimore, Maryland.

Upon returning to Finland in late summer 1968, I was drawn into the activities of ICYE Finland. If I recall correctly, the person responsible was Matti Sippo, then secretary of the ICYE committee. My first task was to act as a "city guide" for the orientation program of exchange students who arrived in Finland in early August. At that time, ICYE Finland operated as a committee of the Central Association for Parish Work of the Finnish Church (SKSK), chaired by the then-principal of the Parish Institute, Reverend Simo Palosuo. Under his guidance, ICYE moved under the wing of the Parish Institute, and we formed a sort of board, to which I was also invited. Board meetings and orientations for exchange students, as well as weekend gatherings, could thus be easily organized in Järvenpää. This also formed a group of ICYE activists, mostly consisting of exchange students from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. We formed interview groups to select new exchange students, led weekend trips for foreign exchange students in Finland, and generally always had fun!

Later, ICYE separated from the Parish Institute and became a registered association in the early 1970s. The association had three founding members: Juha Koivurinta, myself, and the third was probably Matti Sippo. An organization for former ICYE exchange students, ICYNDEX, was also founded, which, as mentioned earlier, was active at least throughout our university years. ICYE's office was initially located on Vuorikatu, where we ICYNDEX members spent evenings drafting, among other things, the first "guide for those going abroad." Then the office was moved to Liisankatu, where the organization's secretary duties were handled part-time by myself, as well as A-J Heilala, Pekka Vuoristo, and Leena Haavisto.

The Beginning of ICYE in Finland

By Juho Kotakallio

On March 12, 1957, in the U.S. Embassy in Kaivopuisto, Finland, embassy official Ray E. White Jr. decided to ask if John H. Eberly's organization, the International Christian Youth Exchange, could extend its program to Finland. The possibility of including Finland in the exchange program, as suggested by White, was warmly welcomed. Upon receiving the letter from Finland, Eberly immediately responded the same day, indicating that 10-15 Finnish youths, aged 16-18, could join the exchange program as early as July of that year. However, in 1957, no Finnish exchange students actually travelled under the ICYE's organization, as Eberly's proposed timeline had been too optimistic. As a result, the program's actual launch was delayed by a year. The first exchange student to arrive in Finland through the program was Miss Jerilee Newby, who was placed in Helsinki at the Munkkiniemi Secondary School. The Finnish exchange students recruited for ICYE's program, Kaija-Liisa Käyhty and Markku Pohjola, departed on August 6, 1958, by ship through the ports of Le Havre and Southampton, heading to the United States. These young people, who had grown up in post-war Finland, were headed for new adventures.

Lifelong commitment to volunteering



Cor Encabo

Volunteer from the Philippines to Macau (2019),
Germany (2022-23), Hongkong (2023), Taiwan (2024)
Board Member, ICYE Philippines/ GIED
Member of the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee

Volunteerism is deeply embedded in Filipino culture. Many Filipino terms are associated with volunteerism, community-orientation, and collective responsibility, such as 'Bayanihan', 'Kusang Loob', 'Pahinungod'. For example, 'Bayanihan' refers to a pre-colonial tradition wherein many Filipinos (20 or more) help lift a 'bahay kubo' (nipa hut) using bamboo poles and move it to a new location. This pre-colonial tradition greatly showcases the solidarity and shared sense of responsibility among Filipino people toward one another without expecting any compensation for their assistance and support.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

Throughout the years, the spirit of 'Bayanihan' has evolved and continues to thrive in various forms of support, such as in emotional, mental, and social aspects. Therefore, it is not unusual to find volunteers (especially young ones) in every social unit in a Philippine community, as the spirit of 'Bayanihan' and 'Pahinungod' is innately embedded in a Filipino's sense of purpose and identity.²

I used to volunteer a lot when I was young. Sometimes, I did it out of passion; sometimes, I did it out of duty as a Catholic; and sometimes, volunteering became a criterion for a leadership award in school. However, as I grew older, my enthusiasm for volunteering subsided. I allocated more time to what I thought was practical for my future, and (accompanied by unfortunate personal experiences and disappointing social norms and realities) volunteering had no room in the future I imagined for myself.

When I started teaching at a university in Cebu, Philippines, a former student approached me. She was working in an NGO focused on International Voluntary Service (IVS) and was looking for people to join a short-term international workcamp. At that time, I was curious for two reasons: (1) I had never heard of an international workcamp before, and (2) it was the first time (in a long while) that I'd been invited to volunteer. So I flew to Macau in June that year for the workcamp. It has been 5 years and 5 months since then.

Throughout my journey as a youth volunteer, I have experienced realities similar and different from the Philippines, encountered individuals with similar and different beliefs from mine, and collaborated with communities that have similar and different motivations for conducting volunteering activities. All in all, I've realized that volunteering (regardless of similarities and differences) is and should be a lifelong commitment to contribute to meaningful causes and cultivate a sense of purpose, especially in an increasingly fragmented world – a reality that is also true in the Philippines, a nation where volunteerism is supposedly rooted in its innate values and identity.

Moreover, since involving myself with IVS I've now realized the significance of volunteerism in the future that I imagined for myself. Now that I've built connections with fellow volunteers and communities all over the world and have gotten involved with numerous volunteer and civic engagement advocacy activities and campaigns, I can see the relevance and impact of volunteering in achieving the Sustainable Goals, promoting human development, addressing prejudices, empowering communities, and making people around the world take an active role in shaping a just and caring society (especially the Youth) - one small but collective effort at a time.

Looking ahead, the landscape of volunteerism in the Asia-Pacific has been faring well in terms of national recognition. Clamours for volunteer support have redirected some Asia-Pacific governments to integrate volunteerism as part of their National Development Strategies and Legislation. Aside from the Philippines, similar volunteer frameworks and laws also exist in other Asia-Pacific countries like China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Viet Nam. With more efforts in lobbying, more campaigns, and more bilateral and multilateral collaborations and partnerships on a global scale, I am positive that the future of volunteering in Asia will be characterized by increased engagement and inclusivity - especially with the youth – through digitalization,

social media, and even AI. Moreover, the usage and adaptation of modern technological programs and software pave the way for new and creative ways of conducting volunteer opportunities, easier means of connecting volunteers and organizations, more streamlined communications, and easier access to training and capacity-building resources.

Furthermore, with the creation of a more inclusive global volunteer village, critical conversations and dialogues about social issues pivot the future of volunteering toward initiatives and advocacies for equality, justice, and systemic changes - such as the decolonisation project that ICYE initiated to address practices and perceptions in (IVS) shaped by colonialism. As one of the Asia-Pacific Youth Engagement Committee (YEC)



Members of the First YEC (2024-2025)

representatives of ICYE, I have had the opportunity to learn more about ICYE's decolonising efforts in promoting equity in volunteering, conducting advocacy campaigns, developing policy papers aimed at decolonising access to volunteering opportunities (like funding and visa mechanisms), as well as empowering marginalized voices and advocating for representation.

I am optimistic about the future of volunteerism, and I look forward to collaborating with fellow volunteers and youth leaders in bringing volunteering opportunities to the next level. As we celebrate ICYE's 75th anniversary this year, we stand in a pivotal moment where we not only commemorate the extensive history and achievements of ICYE but also welcome and pioneer an era of innovative volunteering strategies in response to the ever-changing dynamics of a global society and the cyber age. Moreover, as part of the Youth Engagement Committee, I look forward to the challenge of integrating the youths' perspective into ICYE's volunteering initiatives and goals – letting them participate in democratic processes and other activities in ICYE and empowering them to be active agents of change. Indeed, traversing this path is a lifelong commitment to creating a vibrant ecosystem where diverse people create global communities that foster collaboration, empathy, and solidarity; a sense of global bayanihan.



Alyssa/ Philippines



Ayomipo/ Nigeria



Camila/ Brazil



Corina/ Philippines



Heidi/ Mozambique



Marcela/ Costa Rica



Lucie/ Switzerland



Melanie/ Mozambique



Mette/ Denmark



Nicole/ Ecuador



Nour el hoda/ Morocco



Omar/ Mexico



Sophie/ Germany



Stephan/ Austria

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Intercultural volunteering: Its potential from a Southern perspective



75 years after the founding of ICYE, I would like to emphasise the sense of interculturality that is implicit in the volunteering we propose. When we speak of interculturality in volunteering, we transmit a capacity, a vocation to recognise and deal with conflicts. This aspect, which may seem uncomfortable in the imaginary of solidarity, is, on the contrary, a potential.

In national and global scenarios where peace processes are discarded by States, and democracies are questioned, intercultural volunteering is shining a light on the path. Why?

Mariela Ortiz Suarez

Member of the ICYE Board of Managers (2022–2025)
Programme and Volunteering Coordinator,
ICYE Argentina/ SES

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

Globalisation paired with capitalism, which strongly began in the 1960s and reached a peak in the 1980s and 1990s, marked the worldwide pulse of economic, social, cultural and political processes. Paired with technological development, they promised opportunities and access to a better life. A global democracy. But like most top-down processes (initiated by the countries with power, the transnational companies and the global capital), only those who can afford to engage had access. In countries with a colonial past, dictatorships and young democracies, such as Argentina, globalisation was accompanied by a neoliberal process from which - despite some intervals of progressive governments - the country has still not recovered in terms of development indicators.

Volunteering from the South has to navigate these waters. That's why we cannot separate the materialistic (infrastructure, services) and symbolic (culture, education) conditions of our communities and our programmes from a local, national and global reality. Engaging in voluntary practices from an intercultural perspective allows us to develop lenses that other learning environments such as schools or universities can hardly offer. Thinking about the practice of volunteering from an intercultural perspective implies recognising conflict in terms of transforming and challenging

meanings. It means, to identify the differences and particularities of cultures and people, not even them out but to understand, accept and overcome them. Interculturality does not erase differences, nor does it unite them. It highlights them because recognising them is what allows us to understand them. It is when we understand this different 'other' that social, supportive, fraternal, empathetic, collaborative and cooperative relationships begin to be formed.

In times of fragmented societies, with explicit and seemingly legitimised violence and violent and viral communication, activating intercultural volunteering is a crack in the system that makes us believe that other forms of human constructions are possible in this world of hegemonic globalisation.

It is also an invitation to talk about politics without fear, to recover the sense of politics as a way of organising citizen participation and discussion in the field of divergence. We cannot think about international volunteering without placing the conflicts to which interculturality invites us at the centre.

Tensions of practice in the field of intercultural volunteering

Although intercultural volunteering is presented as a school of life (which can be carried out throughout life), nowadays when thinking about young people and their participation in intercultural volunteering programmes, we find some challenges. The duration of the programmes chosen by volunteers is becoming shorter and shorter, which represents a rapid immersion in another culture with the risk of falling into a 'consumer attitude' towards another culture rather than experiencing it.

At the same time, and as part of the hegemonic processes of the culture of globalisation reinforced by the media and social media, there is a tendency to reduce cultures and their representations. Thus, Argentina is football, Brazil is carnival and Costa Rica is beaches and turtles. Reinforcing these representations through volunteering deprives us of the opportunity to call on young people to embrace other knowledge based on the history and politics of our countries. We can paint a different picture by e.g. telling them how in Argentina, in 1978, during the dictatorship, the World Cup covered up the disappearances of people and put football at the service of terror.

Finally, and perhaps the most challenging is how volunteer organisations develop the capacity to invite young people to participate in our proposals without losing the meaning of what we do. From our side as IVS organisations, we must also engage in continuous learning, learn to read the new generations and look for more creative ways of embracing the complexity and conflictivity when encountering the 'different other'. The world is not the same as it was 75 years ago; today's challenges demand that we put our potential to the test. We have a long way to go, but there are many of us and we are united by our differences.

**75 years of
breaking
down
prejudices
through
intercultural
learning and
voluntary
service**

The path of volunteering



William Gordon Acquah

Volunteer from Ghana to Switzerland (2003–04)
Director, ICYE Ghana (since 2007)

Volunteering offers a multitude of benefits that extend beyond the immediate impact on the communities served. One of the most profound advantages is personal growth. Volunteers often find themselves in unfamiliar environments, which challenges them to step out of their comfort zones. As they navigate new situations, they develop increased self-confidence and a better understanding of their strengths.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

Through volunteering, many people gain a deeper appreciation for life and learn to see the world from different perspectives, fostering empathy and understanding. Moreover, volunteering helps individuals discover their potential. Many volunteers are ambitious and eager to make a difference, but they may not fully realize the extent of their abilities until they are put to the test. The challenges can be daunting but overcoming them often reveals hidden talents and skills. This journey of self-discovery can be incredibly fulfilling, as volunteers learn to harness their capabilities and apply them in meaningful ways.

For instance, I was a former volunteer in Switzerland from 2003 to 2004, which was a pivotal experience for me. After that, I became the national representative of the program in Ghana. This journey not only shaped my understanding of different cultures but also allowed me to contribute to meaningful change back home.

However, the path of volunteering is not without its challenges. Some volunteers may approach their work with an authoritative mindset, believing they have all the answers and wanting to change everything about their working environments. This often creates tension, especially if there is a lack of trust between the volunteers and the hosting

committee. This further affects the local communities they aim to assist. It is crucial for volunteers to recognize that they are volunteers in these communities and to approach their work with humility and a willingness to learn from the local context. Additionally, the ambitious nature of many volunteers can sometimes lead to frustration. They may have grand ideas and goals but find that the realities of working in different environments can be messy and complicated. Some situations may be described as “dirty,” both literally and figuratively, as volunteers encounter unexpected obstacles and challenges. Understanding that change takes time, and that patience is key can help mitigate some of these frustrations. As a former volunteer I would like to reiterate that volunteers don't have patience.

In summary, volunteering is a powerful avenue for personal growth, self-actualization, and the discovery of one's potential. While challenges such as an authoritative approach, ambition, and a lack of trust can arise, they are part of the learning experience. By embracing these challenges and remaining open to growth, volunteers can not only make a significant impact on the communities they serve but also enrich their own lives in profound ways.

My journey with ICYE



Kerubo Nyaribo
Director, ICYE Kenya (since 1994)

My journey with ICYE began in the 1980s when my father got involved and started the program in Kenya. We hosted volunteers, and one who stands out is Aase from Sweden. She had a beautiful spirit and spoke Kiswahili better than I did! However, in 1989, the program had to close temporarily due to internal disagreements, but it was revived in 1994 with me leading the charge. We rebranded as *International Cultural Youth Exchange*, keeping the ICYE acronym, and began anew.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

In the early years, we operated from a small space in my shop since we didn't have a proper office. Our first volunteer went to Norway in 1995, and we hosted three volunteers. Over the years, the program grew, and it's been incredibly rewarding to work with young people from diverse backgrounds. It's been fulfilling to see how volunteers grow and change during their time with us. I remember one volunteer who was difficult during orientation, but after spending time with his host family, learning English and Kiswahili, and engaging in his project, he became a completely different person.

I've also had some fun moments—volunteers often gave hilarious accounts of their experiences! One group of three volunteers we called the “three musketeers” would show up looking scruffy, but they were so full of energy and enthusiasm, I couldn't help but let them be. They brought so much joy to the program.

However, not everything has been easy. Our darkest moment came when we lost a volunteer in a hit-and-run accident. It was a shock, especially since he was one of the most lively and outgoing volunteers. The outpouring of support from volunteers and host families during that time showed me just how much of a family ICYE truly is. We still keep in touch with his family.

Through ICYE, I've learned that while we may have differences, we're ultimately the same. It's a lesson I sometimes feel I didn't fully manage to convey to all the volunteers or colleagues I met, and that's one of my regrets. I do feel sad when I see a volunteer leave without having embraced the full experience, but I've come to accept that life isn't perfect.

Despite the challenges, I'm proud of the impact ICYE has had on both volunteers and the communities we've worked with. While we're not a development agency, we've made a significant difference, particularly in rural areas where people now have better opportunities for a higher quality of life. Looking back, I wish I had pushed for ICYE Kenya to diversify sooner, but after the struggles we faced during COVID, we've had to adapt and find new ways to keep the program running. As I step away from ICYE, I'm happy to leave an organization with a promising future.

Experience the World!

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The less travelled road



Robinson Doss

Volunteer from India to Denmark (1984–85)
Chairperson, ICDE (since 2006)
Member of the ICYE Board of Managers (2011–2017)

“
**Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I - I took the one less
travelled by, and that has made all
the difference.**”

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

There can't be a better quote that would be more appropriate than the above, for the decision I took to participate as an exchangee, facing two major challenges – breaking the traditional educational system and to take up volunteerism. Secondly, to head to an unknown country, compared to the USA, Germany, United Kingdom, France or Japan, which a young Indian, always aspires.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

Yet, this less travelled road to Denmark (Dansk ICYE) made all the difference and an experience that was life changing. The ICYE programme by itself was unique, giving opportunities to meet young people from the world around and to realize the value of humanity and global citizenship, although we were all from different countries, traditions, cultures, religions and lifestyle.

To have been an ICYE exchangee is a rare opportunity and nothing in this world can substitute it.

It is impossible for me to point to one experience and say it was my overarching turning point from an international youth volunteer to what I am today. There have been too many factors, people, events, challenges, and thoughts involved—all creating a series of small leaps for conscious development, instead of one epic shift.



With heartfelt gratitude to Dansk ICYE who were the source of inspiration for my continued work with the development of International Youth programs, I could be an effective leader in ICYE India and to climb the ladder to be in the International Board of Managers of the Federation of ICYE for six wonderful years.

I must confess that many of the experiences, exposure and learning in ICYE helped me to be a successful in my career while working with multinational companies and till date.

To the end, I feel proud to have been an ICYE Exchangee and as to my commitment, my fellow members in ICYE / ICDE India encouraged and supported me to start a “Multi Activity Project” of our own and offer volunteering opportunities to young people from around the world.



The beauty of diversity



Mariel Pinel Ramirez

Volunteer from Costa Rica to France (2005–06)
Executive Director, ICYE Costa Rica/ ACI (since 2020)
Member of the ICYE Board of Managers (2019–2023)

On the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of ICYE Federation, Mai Nguyen interviewed Mariel Pinel Ramirez about her story and experience with ICYE.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

How did you start with ICYE? What has kept you stay with ICYE all those years? What have been your struggles through the times (e.g. COVID pandemic...) and how have you overcome the challenges?

I began my ICYE journey in 2005 at the age of 24, driven by a strong desire for an intense international experience and a keen interest in learning a third language. After my volunteer exchange in France, I returned to Costa Rica and started collaborating with ACI (ICYE Costa Rica), initially as a group leader. In this role, I accompanied students from Quebec, Canada, who came to Costa Rica for educational trips and community service. This was a fantastic opportunity to use my new French skills and to facilitate an intercultural experience based on the knowledge I gained during my international volunteering. Although leading groups of students and teachers was initially a little scary, I really enjoyed it, and I grew significantly in the field.

Later, I transitioned to the role of Incoming Long-Term Program Coordinator, a position I held for nearly four years. During this period, I gained invaluable experience and benefited greatly from international training opportunities, especially through the “Weltwaerts” Programs, for which I am very grateful.

After spending several years away from daily operations but remaining active on the ACI board of managers, I returned in 2020 as the new Director, unaware that

COVID-19 would soon become a global challenge.

I believe that our passion for the work we do and the strong bonds within what I affectionately call the “ICYE Family” have been crucial in overcoming these challenges. I have always been deeply inspired by our Federation and genuinely love what we do.

Which is the concept, ideology or value that you associate with ICYE? Cultural diversity and broadening horizons. What can you say about the people you have got to know via ICYE?

I have met many wonderful people through ICYE over the years. From the people I worked with on my project in France to long-lasting friendships and close colleagues within the Federation. More recently, Sophie, a volunteer from Germany at the ACI office and I developed a very nice friendship that I am confident will last forever.

Could you please share about a moment with ICYE in the past that made you laugh or cry?

The day I ended my volunteer exchange in Saint Malo, France, my project organized a farewell party that made me cry a lot. It was a mix of feelings - so many emotions together after a very impactful year abroad as a volunteer, overcoming challenges, living unforgettable adventures, and learning so many new things.

On the other hand, there are countless times when I have laughed until I couldn't breathe with ICYE colleagues, volunteers and coworkers. The beauty of diversity is something I often enjoy intensely.

How do you feel looking back to the history of ICYE and what is your hope for ICYE in the time to come?

I feel very proud of the young volunteers I have witnessed growing through our exchanges. My hope for ICYE is a more robust and sustainable program that continues to make a meaningful impact on lives and promotes global peace.

Thank you so much for sharing your ICYE experience and story.



**75 years of
fostering
peace,
solidarity,
diversity and
inclusion**

Volunteering is the future



Camila Manique

Volunteer from Brazil to Slovakia (2020-21)
Member of the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee

To me, volunteering is an exciting journey of self-discovery. It's a unique opportunity to dive deep into who you are, to understand your core values, and to uncover talents and skills you might not have known were within you. It's a chance to look inside, discovering personality traits and learning how you handle emotions, face challenges, and collaborate with others. As you volunteer, you begin to see what truly motivates you and what you genuinely care about. Through this journey, you grow in ways you may never have imagined.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

Volunteering also pushes us beyond our comfort zones, opening the door to new perspectives. Being in unfamiliar places and connecting with diverse cultures broadens our worldview, helping us approach problems differently and become more open-minded. It's also an incredible way to leave a lasting impact on communities. Whether big or small, the difference we make through volunteering brings us closer to our dreams of a better world.

Along the way, we gain lifelong friends, seeing firsthand how interconnected we all are. Volunteering shows us that the world, in many ways, is like a small town. It teaches us to think globally and act locally, revealing that meaningful change often starts within our own circles. This experience allows us to appreciate our histories and origins while embracing those of others, enriching our perspectives and deepening our sense of gratitude.

Looking to the future, we will surely need people who are driven by the spirit of volunteering. Our world is changing fast, with technology, automation, virtual reality, and AI already shaping our daily lives. At the same time, global challenges such as climate change, inequality, cybersecurity, migration crises, and energy transitions demand our attention. In response, there is a growing need for collaboration, solidarity, peaceful conflict resolution, environmental protection, inclusive development, and equitable policies.

The solution? People willing to help, to connect with one another, to act with purpose, to strengthen intercultural bonds, and to embrace differences with open minds and open hearts. The future isn't some distant place; it's right around the corner. It's not somewhere we aim to reach but rather a world we aspire to create, step-by-step, through individual and collective actions. To volunteer is to be a part of this vision, because volunteering is, indeed, our future.

Letter to a friend



Dear Raúl,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on your incredible journey and the remarkable impact you have had on so many lives. You see, I was asked if I could write something for the ICYE's 75th yearbook. To help me decide what I could write about, I was presented with a long list of possible topics and formats. For various reasons, I thought of you at that moment. Thinking about it a second time, I still believe you are a good choice.

Stephan Langenberg
Director, ICYE Germany/ ICJA

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

As a person, you embody so much of an ideal of ICYE. You embody curiosity, kindness, peacefulness, humour and caring, you were instrumental in building a non-European ICYE committee from the ground up, at the same time you were not the director but had one of those roles that are not so visible - and recognized. That makes you a good person for me to write this letter and to be represented in the ICYE 75th Anniversary Yearbook.

For those who don't know you: You are now 83 years young, born in the picturesque region of Tolima in Colombia. When you were still a baby, your parents had to flee with you from a civil war in your region and seek refuge in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. After school, you initially wanted to become a priest, but after two years you decided that wasn't the right path for you and went on to study philosophy instead.

Through some connections, you met someone who invited you to travel to the Dominican Republic to teach French at a school (no idea how you got that language) - which you did for many years until you returned to Colombia in 1981. At that time, a university friend of yours, Ricardo Ordoñez, met a couple of Swiss teenagers while travelling abroad. They were taking part in a program called ICYE. Ricardo and some of his friends thought it was important to give young Colombians the opportunity to go abroad to get to know other ways of thinking, living and speaking. They founded a youth exchange organization, applied for membership of the ICYE and became members of the ICYE Federation in 1983. If I remember correctly, you joined ICYE

Colombia as a staff member in 1983 and helped wherever help was needed. You copied documents, took care of visas, picked up participants from the airport, made sure that everything that was needed was at the seminar venue, represented your organization at the ICYE General Assemblies and at some point, were the legal representative of ICYE Colombia. But you were never the director. That was always Omeira Olano, whom you admired and with whom you worked very closely together for almost 40 years.

I always looked up to the way you at ICYE Colombia used the program for your broader (I'm not sure if you would agree to use that word here) - political - ideas. The young people who took advantage of your program had their own intentions to go abroad (just like today), but you also saw them as ambassadors of Colombia and prepared them accordingly. At that time, Colombia was mainly known in the world for coffee, drugs, drug mafias and militarized conflicts. Little was known about this diverse and beautiful country. Conversely, you prepared the incoming volunteers: ICYE Colombia tried to convey a differentiated picture of Colombia, its different cultures and internal challenges. In many cases, you have succeeded in turning the volunteers into foreign ambassadors for their home country.

The ICYE Colombia team managed to make ICYE Colombia the strongest ICYE organization in Latin America in the 2010s and, if I am not mistaken, one of the three largest in the ICYE Federation. You should be very proud of these achievements.

When I asked you what makes ICYE so special for you, you explained how wonderful it is to get to know other countries, to learn how to see and do things differently, and how you have learnt that we humans are all the same and yet different. You emphasized how important it is to respect others. Working with the volunteers was especially about listening and respecting to each other. You can talk at length about the importance of listening. You and Omeira have often come across young people who you feel have not had anyone really listening to them for a long time.

One of the things you are particularly proud of is your contact with about 10 participants in the program with whom you are still in touch today. In most cases, you have hosted them in your home for a longer or shorter period of time. Whenever your health and finances allowed, you enjoyed visiting them. Most recently, I believe, on your 80th birthday.

All of this makes you a perfect representative of the ICYE for me. You are worthy of being recorded in its 75th yearbook. Perhaps in this way you will even inspire others and give them an example of the idea of our work, just as you have inspired and been an example to me for more than 30 years.

Your commitment and passion have left an indelible and important impression on so many lives. Thank you for everything you have done.

Abrazos

Stephan

Accepted GA '81, Denmark

A.1.

THE FEDERATION OF
NATIONAL COMMITTEES IN THE
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN YOUTH EXCHANGE (ICYE)

Application for Membership

Name of Committee: Comité colombiano para el Intercambio
in National Language: Juvenil Cristiano.....
in English Translation: Colombian Committee for the CYE.....

Person (s) who carry executive and administrative responsibility
for the Committee and its works:

Name: RICARDO ORDOÑEZ..... Name: EDGAR BETANCUR.....
Position: PRESIDENT..... Position: VICEPRESIDENT.....
Address: Cr. 16A #22A-16..... Address: Calle 17 #13-14 Apto. 203
Bogotá - Colombia..... Bogotá - Colombia.....

Person designed to be National Correspondent for Contacts with the
Federation and other National Committees:

Name: RICARDO ORDOÑEZ.....
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12792 Bogotá Colombia.....
Telephone: 2702026/2431206..... Cable:

We hereby acknowledge our adherence to the constitution of the Federation of National Committees in the International Christian Youth Exchange and our acceptance of the responsibilities of membership including financial obligations as defined by the Federation and its Board of Managers.

We hereby apply as a

Associate Member Committee of the Federation

Signature of Person
authorised by the Committee:

Date: July 20th 1981 Place: Bogotá, Colombia.....

Application for associate membership ICYE Colombia

The Dutch way of life



Hannu Mustakallio

Exchange Student from Finland to the Netherlands (1968–69)

I spent a year in the Netherlands as an exchange student in 1968–1969. I lived in the suburb of Haag in a businessman's family with five children. I threw myself in the Dutch way of life by biking daily to school over ten kilometres in one direction. After a month I could get by in Dutch, which I studied on my own for the whole year.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

My exchange student year included many kinds of encounters. The year began with a week-long orientation camp with other exchange students from the USA, Brazil and Sweden. Together we heard the news about the invasion of Czechoslovakia. We also got together later to share our experiences. In March every exchange student in Central Europe went to Berlin for their final conference in August. What stuck with me of the first one was that we had to stop at the border of West and East Germany for as long as the federal election was going on in West Berlin.

The year in a Dutch host family and in a Christian private school were new experiences for me. I came from a rural municipality in Northern Finland and from a priest family. Now I had to get by in a big, Western European city. The year increased my independency and ability to cope in different situations. I wrote about my observations and experiences actively, for example, for a Finnish regional newspaper and once even for a magazine for teachers.

Along with my host family, I took part in the activities of the local reformed congregation. I learned to understand another kind of Christianity, and also the reasons that had led various Dutch confessional communities to build ecumenical cooperation. On Easter vacation the youth of my congregation took a trip to Northern Netherlands. We got pulled there by a pony, as the picture shows.

The exchange year awakened in me a societal as well as a political sense. A global world had presented itself upon me. As a result, I might have criticized the national selfishness of Finnish people in my speech on the next Independence Day, for example.

Hannu's text was written in the winter of 2018. It was part of the photo exhibition "Meetings around the world", organised by Maailmavaihto – ICYE Finland, which was exhibited at the 60th anniversary of the organisation in Mustasaari, Helsinki, on 25 August 2018 and later toured in secondary schools. The exhibition consisted of pairs of images and complementary texts. The pairs, in turn, consisted of archival photographs of former exchange students or volunteers and photographs of them taken in the Helsinki Winter Garden in spring 2018. Later, the text was published in the book "Kaikki me olemme jostain kotoisin" (2019) by Hannu Mustakallio.

“Ichi-go ichi-e” Making the most of every opportunity



Gordon Noble-Campbell
Volunteer from New Zealand to Japan (1985–86)

New Zealanders are inveterate global travellers, with our young nation comprising immigrants from many nations throughout the world. When I reflect today on the catalyst for my decision to apply for an overseas placement with the International Christian Youth Exchange, as it was then known, as my final year of high school was coming to an end in 1984, my family history was likely a contributing factor.

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

My father's great, great grandfather was a seafarer who, in 1840, captained one of the early settlers' sailing ships from London to Wellington, New Zealand. My mother was a World War Two Polish orphan who, one hundred years later in the 1940's, escaped the horrors of Siberia with her sister and brother, to find safety and a new life in New Zealand, 17,000 kilometres distant. As an 18-year-old, and as their son, it's perhaps not surprising that I felt a strong desire to see the world beyond the islands where I was born and raised.

From memory, I believe the reason I was selected by the local New Zealand ICYE committee to go to Japan, as opposed to any other country, was because I was "polite". While I probably did not consider myself to be particularly reserved, my education had been traditional and influenced by a religious upbringing. Over the subsequent four decades following my Japanese experience, I have often thought how "politeness", meaning respect for others, has been a keystone value supporting the success of Japanese society over millennia.

This value has certainly shaped how I engage with people from diverse backgrounds, both in my professional career in finance and in the many community roles I've taken on as an adult, including serving as a judicial officer and spending nine years on the board of the Volunteer Service Abroad Foundation in New Zealand.

My experiences as a volunteer worker in Japan directly influenced my attitude to volunteer in my adult life. As noted, my mother was a war orphan and one of the memorable experiences of my year in Japan was volunteering at an orphanage in Yamaga, near Kumamoto City, in Kyushu. In 2019, my wife Jayne and I returned to "Ai Ri Nen" and were warmly welcomed by Miura-san, the chairman of the charity, as if I had only been there yesterday. I also volunteered at "Fukushi No Mura", (or "welfare village") in Okazaki City, near Nagoya, which offers productive and rewarding work for disabled people who are unable to work in a normal environment, and "Yone Yama Ryo", a foster care facility for disabled children in the same city. In navigating my way through these experiences, the support of Yukio and Miyuki Ota helped me to easily transition from one to the other.

The Japanese kotowaza (proverb), "ichi-go ichi-e", (which loosely translates to "make the most of every opportunity"), is a sentiment I fully embraced while in Japan. I was perhaps one of the earlier foreign visitors who travelled "by thumb", (i.e., hitchhiked) when journeying to and from various destinations within the country. This very unconventional mode of transportation, for the time, brought me into contact with a diverse range of people who were pleased to share their life stories with me in transit, and to learn more about a country that most had only heard of, and not had the opportunity to visit.

A teenager's life on the potter's wheel is barely formed, with the hands of experience shaping the finished ceramic, which then fulfils a purpose in the adult life in which it is placed and exists. If I said that while in Japan in 1985-86, I was pursuing a specific plan which led me to where I have arrived at today, I would not be telling the truth.

The reality is quite different. Japan required me to learn a language, in which I am still proudly proficient today. This taught me that learning is a life-long process. Japan required me to change my understanding of cultural norms to become part of something unfamiliar. I learned that I am capable of assimilation, to respect different ways of life. Japan required me to participate in experiences where the outcome was unknown. This taught me new ways to assess and accept risks.



Japan required me to work with people who came from less advantaged backgrounds than I did. This taught me the importance of humility. But overall, I learned that people who are not the same as me in terms of their culture, language and history are in fact just the same as me, in terms of their needs, wants and aspirations. Forty years ago, ICYE achieved great success, by creating experiences that have shaped my life and influenced many of those whom I know.



435 First St.
Henderson, Ky.
July 1, 1955

Dear Wolfgang,

Greetings from Henderson, Kentucky! It was with much joy that we received word that you will be a member of our family this coming school year. That's certainly exciting news, and we can hardly wait until we get to meet you in person! I bet you're all full of curiosity about your new home, so here's an introduction. . . Henderson is a town of 20,000 people on the Ohio River, in northwestern Kentucky, just south of Evansville, Ind. (By the way, there's a big high school in Evansville called Bosse High School!) I'm the pastor of Zion Evangelical and Reformed Church, a congregation of 190 members--the first picture shows the building, and the parsonage on the left. (The smoke stack over the parsonage belongs to a furniture factory on the other side of the block). I'm 28 years old; and my wife Donna is 24. She's also a school teacher--teaching kindergarten in Evansville. The rest of our family consists of one beagle hound, aged one year; three hamsters which live in a cage as pets; and all the birds (cardinals, sparrows, etc.) which come to our bird feeding platform in the back yard. I've been in Henderson about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years now, and Donna, about 2 years.

If you you play a musical instrument, please bring it along! I play the violin, Donna plays the cello, and the church has a little orchestra which we have a lot of fun with. The school also has a band.

We got a postcard from Walter this past week, saying he'd like to come down to Henderson to meet us, and to leave greetings here for you. So on July 11 or 12, we hope to have a personal introduction to the Bosse family! When you come, memories will no doubt come back to me of one of my years in seminary--I had a German roommate--Gustav-Adolf Krapf, from Hirsau. Quite a few of the names in our congregation ought to sound familiar to you. Some of them are: Feix, Bosch, Reuter, Hund, Haag, Sasse, Schuette, Deicken, Friedrich, Vogel, Unverzagt, Hoffman, Lutz, Roederer, Heine, Jacobshagen, Schmidt, Leinenbach, Kockritz, Hartung, Brenner, Dempewolf, Weiner, Ashby, Saalwaechter, Zehner, Paff, Hirschberger, Wolf, Kreipke, Klein, etc.

Well, I must get this off in the mail. We just got back from vacation, and are just now catching up on our letter writing. Have a good trip to the United States, and we'll be waiting with eagerness your arrival. Give our greetings to your folks, also.

Auf Wiedersehen,

Ted + Donna Braun

Letter sent by the host family welcoming the German volunteer
Wolfgang Bosse who volunteered in the US during 1955-56.

The transformative power of volunteering



Interview with Adeoluwa Onamade
Director of ICYE Nigeria (since 1994)
Member of the ICYE Board of Manager
(1997 – 2001 and 2023 – 2025)

ICYE 75 years of promoting peace and social justice

Tell us about your journey with ICYE? What was your motivation to join ICYE?

My journey with ICYE is a testament to my deep commitment to international volunteering and intercultural exchange. My involvement with the organization spans over three decades, during which I have taken on various roles and contributed significantly to the growth and success of the ICYE Federation. My journey began in the early 1990s when I started working as a co-worker with ICYE Nigeria. My early work involved helping foreign volunteers settle into Nigerian society, assisting them in overcoming the culture shock, and preparing Nigerian volunteers for their own international experiences. This initial experience with ICYE ignited a lifelong passion for international volunteering and set the stage for my continued involvement with the organization.

What different functions have you held in the Federation so far?

Throughout my time with ICYE, I have taken on a variety of roles that have allowed me to contribute to the Federation in meaningful ways. After starting as a co-worker, I quickly became involved in coordinating the program of sending and hosting volunteers under ICYE Nigeria, a role I have held since 1994.

Over the years, I have held several key positions within the ICYE Federation. I had twice coordinated the affairs of the African region, providing leadership and support to National Committees across the continent. My work in this capacity

helped to strengthen the ICYE network in Africa and ensured that the region's unique perspectives and challenges were represented within the broader Federation.

I have also served as a member of the Federation Board of Managers, where I played a crucial role in shaping the strategic direction of ICYE. My contributions in this role were instrumental in guiding the Federation through periods of growth and change, always with a focus on maintaining the organization's commitment to intercultural understanding and social justice.

Currently, I serve as the Treasurer of the ICYE Federation. In this role, I am responsible for overseeing the financial health of the organization, ensuring that resources are managed effectively and transparently. My expertise in this area has been invaluable in maintaining the sustainability of ICYE's operations and supporting the Federation's mission.

What makes you stay with ICYE?

What has kept me involved with ICYE for so many years is my unwavering belief in the organization's mission and the profound impact that international volunteering can have on both individuals and communities. I have seen firsthand the transformative power of volunteering—how it can change lives, foster understanding, and build bridges between cultures. My long-standing commitment to ICYE is also driven by the sense of community and shared purpose that I have found within the organization.

For me, ICYE is not just an organization; it is a family of like-minded individuals who are dedicated to making the world a better place through intercultural exchange and volunteerism.

Moreover, I am inspired by the continuous evolution of ICYE and its ability to adapt to changing global challenges. The recent introduction of our new policies, such as the Safer Together Policy against Sexual Violence, the Greener Together Policy for climate justice, and the Care to Engage Policy on safeguarding children as well as our Code of Ethical Practice, resonates deeply with my values and commitment to ethical and sustainable volunteering.

What makes ICYE different to other IVS organisations?

The International Cultural Youth Exchange stands out in the landscape of International Voluntary Service (IVS) organizations for its unique approach to intercultural exchange, commitment to long-term volunteering, emphasis on reciprocal exchange, and focus on social justice and ethical practices. ICYE emphasizes deep cultural immersion, fostering mutual understanding, and building bridges between diverse communities. This approach promotes peace and respect on a global scale. Unlike short-term programs, ICYE's extended placements allow for a deeper connection with host communities, overcoming cultural barriers, and creating a lasting impact. This approach ensures a more meaningful and sustainable volunteer experience. ICYE's unique reciprocal exchange model involves a two-way exchange of volunteers, fostering global citizenship and solidarity. By sharing

the volunteer experience, both sending and receiving communities benefit from mutual learning and growth. This approach strengthens international connections and addresses global challenges collectively.



How has ICYE changed since you started with ICYE?

I have witnessed significant changes within the ICYE since I began my journey with the organization in the early 1990s. Over the decades, ICYE has evolved in numerous ways, adapting to the shifting landscape of global challenges, expanding its reach, and refining its mission to stay relevant and impactful. The expansion of ICYE's network has led to a more diverse range of volunteer opportunities, allowing the organization to address a broader spectrum of global issues. This growth has been accompanied by a deepening commitment to ethical standards and safeguarding, ensuring the protection and well-being of all participants.

ICYE has embraced the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age, incorporating remote volunteering

and adapting to a changing world. The organization has also placed a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, recognizing the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues. By prioritizing inclusivity and diversity, ICYE has created a more welcoming and equitable environment for volunteers from all backgrounds. Through strategic partnerships with local and regional organizations, ICYE has strengthened its impact and ensured that volunteer projects are aligned with community needs. The organization’s commitment to continuous improvement is evident in its ongoing rebranding and strategic planning efforts. With a focus on global citizenship education, ICYE is empowering volunteers to become informed and engaged citizens who can contribute to a better world.

What are your key learnings from your time so far with ICYE?

My journey with ICYE has been a transformative experience, marked by profound insights into the power of intercultural exchange and the importance of long-term commitment. I have witnessed firsthand how bridging cultural divides can foster understanding, friendship, and personal growth. Moreover, I have come to appreciate the significance of sustained engagement in volunteer work for creating lasting impact and building strong connections with host communities. I always underscore the value of strong partnerships and continuous learning for organizations like ICYE to thrive and create meaningful change. These lessons have not only shaped my approach to international volunteering but have also reinforced my

commitment to ICYE’s mission of fostering global understanding, social justice, and sustainable development.

Why would you recommend international volunteering for young people?

Because I have spent decades working with ICYE and have seen firsthand the profound impact that international volunteering can have on young people, I passionately believe in the value of this experience and would strongly recommend it for several key reasons. International volunteering for young people offers a unique and transformative experience. It not only fosters personal growth and intercultural understanding but also provides the opportunity to contribute to meaningful social change, build lifelong connections, and enhance career prospects. Most importantly, it equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to become engaged global citizens committed to making a positive impact on the world.



1949 - 2024

ICYE Timeline

1949

After the Second World War, in 1949, the Church of the Brethren in the United States arranged for German youths from refugee families to spend a year living in the USA with families and attending high school. Between 1949-1957 a total of 680 Germans, 3 students from Latin America and 17 US Americans participated in the exchange.

1957

The International Christian Youth Exchange is established, expanding participation beyond Germany and Austria to include youth from various backgrounds. The intention was from the start that ICYE would be a direct two-way, reciprocal exchange programme.

1965

At the Annual Consultation in Oslo, Norway, internationalisation was the main issue. For the first time there were representatives from Asia, Africa and Latin America. A proposal for an International Board of ICYE was given serious consideration.

1985

Beginning in 1985 six month exchanges in addition to full year exchanges were introduced.

1987

The 1980s saw ICYE developing a clearer social and political profile, exemplified by the exchange of peace activists, for example through the Peace Action to Action exchange programme to Nigeria or the Solidarity Brigades to Nicaragua. During the UN International Year of Peace, ICYE was designated as Peace Messenger by the United Nation Secretary General.

2001

At the 22nd General Assembly in Mombasa, 2001, the Federation got its current name - International Cultural Youth Exchange. At the assembly all the NCs agreed on changing the name to (inter) cultural instead of Christian, as it was considered to be more inclusive and representative to the diverse group that the Federation consists of.



75 YEARS
ICYE
1949-2024

1969

In 1969, the International Committee voted to become the International Council for the International Christian Youth Exchange, registered as a legal corporation in Switzerland. An international office was set up in Geneva to facilitate operations and to improve communication among the National Committees.

1977

At the Council meeting in Iceland, the International Council was dissolved and a new 'Federation' was formed of autonomous national ICYE committees.

1978

The International Office moves from Geneva, Switzerland to Berlin, Germany.

2007

The ICYE Federation began offering a short-term exchange programme called StePs.

2020

The early 2020s brought one of the biggest challenges to ICYE yet with the global pandemic and recession, but with dedication and courage we have managed to adapt. ICYE developed new virtual exchange programmes, and our NCs put in an outstanding effort at recruiting new members and volunteers. The Federation's statutory Sub-Committees developed three new policies to strengthen our commitments to social and climate justice: Greener Together, Safer Together, and Care to Engage.

2024

In 2024, ICYE launched the Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) to strengthen young people's voice in the Federation and to bring their unique perspectives and specific skill sets to tackle the challenges international volunteering is facing. The next 75 years we hope to stay relevant through changing times, to be able to work for our shared values and to keep facilitating invaluable experiences to young people's lives all around the world.

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The International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) is an international, non-profit, youth exchange organisation that provides intercultural learning and international voluntary service opportunities to help people break down prejudices and acquire competences for a more sustainable, just, and peaceful world. ICYE organises long and short-term exchanges in 40 countries around the world.

In 2024, we are celebrating our 75 year anniversary with contributions in this publication from former and current colleagues, from members of our Youth Engagement Committee and alumni from different decades.

75 years of resisting together



[icye.org](https://www.icye.org)

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