

CCIVS 70th Anniversary Book Stories from Kai

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Spring has come to Asia! (Regional cooperation in Asia and Creation of NVDA)

“I’ve been waiting for you”. A middle aged English gentleman with grey hair has approached to me. He is Nigel WATT, a Director of CCIVS and this first meeting has changed my life and IVS movement so much. “Aren’t you cold?” He asked me who always wear half sleeved shirts and sandal. It was beginning of March and the wind was still chilly in the rural area of France. I was joining the Technical Meeting of ALLIANCE in 1993, a year after NICE was affiliated in CCIVS as the only eastern Asian NGO besides the branches of international NGOs.

Then, we had cheers of wine with seeing the eyes of each other, not because of minding to have terrible sex for 7 years according to the proverb of some countries, but because of the exciting topics both of us had expected to have!

“How can we spread IVS in Asia?” “We first need to gather the potential NGO leaders.” “They should experience workcamps first.” After a couple of glasses, we’ve agreed to organize a Training and Networking Workcamp (TNW) in Asia.



The very first workcamp in Asia was started in India, 1935 by SCI. Then, some international NGOs such as SCI, ICYE and FIWC had workcamps in several countries, but volunteers were exchanged only among their branches.



In 1989, I took one year vacation from my univ. to travel around the world and could join the workcamps in Poland. It was so amazing that I have looked for and got a list of CCIVS members (the branches were not there). In Asia, only India and Bangladesh had workcamps. I was disappointed for a while, then, got an idea. “Why not to create!” After coming back to Japan, I got a list of 10 youth who have working experience abroad and wrote a letter to them, then 7 of us gathered in Tokyo. “Cheers!” By power of big ambition and a bit of beer, we founded NICE to start workcamps not only in Japan, but also Asia. Our first workcamp was organized near Mt. Fuji in 1990.

The 1st TNW was realized in 1995 March, at the Vladivostok, Russia. It was co-organized by CCIVS and NICE with financial support from International Foundation of Mitsubishi Bank and Korean National Commission of UNESCO. Our work was to destroy a house that may have been symbolic to break an old ruin before creating new thing??

About 15 youth joined from SCI, NICE, KNCU and a few branches of TEJO, a youth group of Esperanto. Nigel coordinated the first and I did the second week. “Let’s create Network for Voluntary Development in Asia (NVDA)”. We agreed on the last day. But TEJO could not start any workcamps afterwards due to the nature of organizations and a lack of decision making power by the participated youth. So, we have decided to target only NGOs leaders with sufficient capacity and motivation personally and organizationally to start workcamp in their countries.

The pilot workcamp was organized in China, 1996 hosted by All China Youth Federation which had 200 millions of members (!) and I met at the CCIVS GA in 1995. We have talked and agreed to organize the 2nd TNW in China, 1997.

20 NGO leaders gathered in Inner Mongolia including Sheila/ Regis from UK/ France as the friendly support from European based networks, ALLIANCE/ YAP. We planted hundreds of trees on a very dry land but actually, also seeds of actions and cooperation that has brought so many flowers and fruits in the next few decades to all over Asia and the world! We had so many cheers of 56 degree of local wine and so many hot talks even until early morning.



On the last day, the first General Assembly of NVDA was held. Most of us planned to organize tree plantation workcamps in each country. “So, let’s do it together as Greening Asia!” My proposal became the first common action. “Kai, you are the initiator, so take responsibility!!” The first Presidency of NVDA came to my shoulder though I did not at all imagine so long involvement and so many dramatic stories happened in NVDA, for next 20 years...