



# NEWSLETTER

December 2024



**TAKE A STEP  
FORWARD  
INTO THE  
NEW YEAR.**



The year 2024 is fast approaching its end. This year there was a re-election of the Executive Committee and after Covid, many of our members gathered in Nepal for a face to face talk in GA.

On the other hand, however, there is still no decrease in negative news, such as the decrease in the number of volunteers worldwide, wars, and natural disasters. Let us not give up hope and take a step forward into the new year.

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**WHAT'S  
INSIDE**



## Sister Staff Communities (SSC) - Season 3

Sister Staff Communities are brand new practices of NVDA started this April! It is a platform for the staff of NVDA member NGOs in the same role, consisting of 5 groups (see below) to have;

- \* Trimonthly meetings "Special Week" in the beginning of Apr., Jul., Oct. and Jan.
- \* WhatsApp groups for the daily communications

After the great success of the first Special Week in April 1-5 and the second one in Jul. 1-5, the third special week was fruitfully done with 40 participants from 12 IVS NGOs as follows;

### Outgoing Placement Officers (Oct. 7)

9 staff from 7 NGOs shared the highlights, challenges and happy stories of the peak season, then the freshly made Global IVS Statistics 2023 was presented and analyzed.

Finally, various practices and know-how of "Partnership with 31 Universities" was shared by Kai (General Secretary/ NICE Japan) that has lead the participants actively make Q&A and discuss on the common strategies!



### Incoming Placement Officers (Oct. 8)

12 staff from 10 NGOs firstly shared the challenges of the peak season, then Baatar (Treasurer/ MCE Mongolia) presented the possible reform of workcamp programs to attract more volunteers such as;  
+ Shorter/ more flexible & frequent periods  
+ Add tourism (or beyond) elements

Finally, various ideas of the reform were proposed and discussed by the participants!



### Project Coordinators/ Trainers (Oct. 9)

Ben (GREAT Indonesia) shared their practices of Camp Leader Training from Recruitment to Follow up stages including Pre Workcamp as the on-ground training.

Then, Alex (Vice President/ DALAA Thailand) facilitated the Q&A and discussions how to overcome each challenge such as lack of camp leaders and effective way of training.



### Public Relations staff (Oct. 10)

6 staff from 5 NGOs shared the challenges especially the decrease of Incoming volunteers from Europe and of Outgoing volunteers.

Some good practices were shared by each participant such as SNS use, promotional events and multi stakeholder networking.

### Presidents/ Directors of NGOs (Oct. 11)

5 staff from 5 NGOs shared the challenges, then Sophat (President/ CYA Cambodia) initiated to share the practices of grants as well as introduced the SEAB (one year staff exchange). Then, a new grant of the Japan Foundation was introduced by Kai and brainstormed by all.





# ACTIVITY REPORTS

## STOP CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT - IN MINAMATA, JAPAN-

By Yasu(NICE Japan)

The 2024 SCC Summit was held in Minamata, Kumamoto, Japan from November 22 to 26.

An international workcamp was just underway in Minamata, with 8 international members from Hong Kong, Vietnam, Indonesia, Poland, Italy, and Japan. The work involved cutting down neglected bamboo forests in the region and making bamboo charcoal.

In Japan, bamboo is known as “bamboo pollution” because it absorbs CO<sub>2</sub>, but in recent years, bamboo has encroached on the mountains and the fast-growing bamboo covers the trees within a few months, preventing them from growing. As a result, the trees become thin and the mountain becomes a bamboo mountain. Cutting down bamboo in such a situation has not yet provided a major solution, and cutting it out will help protect the growth of the trees.

Cut bamboo emits CO<sub>2</sub>, but by carbonizing the bamboo before it dies, the carbon that the bamboo contains can be fixed semi-permanently. And the local partner in Minamata have also succeeded in using this bamboo charcoal to generate a heat source.



Thus, the international workcamp in Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture, has been an SCC project since 2016.

This time, SCC members, together with the workcamp members, cut down the bamboo, split the cut bamboo into small pieces, and put the small pieces into the charcoal kiln. Then they light the fire and wait for a few days. SCC members also experienced this process.

In Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture, in the late 1950s, fishermen and people living in the area who ate fish and shellfish from Minamata Bay suffered from numbness in their hands, feet, and mouths, and some died.

The cause was organic mercury contained in factory effluent in the vicinity, which accumulated in fish and shellfish, and people who had eaten them for a long time became ill.

The group also learned about the historical background of Minamata in the environmental field at the museum. The Cambodian group was concerned about the possibility of such an occurrence in the vicinity of TFC, as the port where TFC is held is also a port and many companies have been attracted to the area.

# ACTIVITY REPORTS



In that sense, they expressed their desire to work on mangrove forest restoration and to develop the economy in an environmentally friendly manner as eco-tourism.

This time, not only NGO leaders but also local leaders from various countries gathered. In particular, the local leaders from Cambodia and Indonesia are from different countries and under different circumstances, but they are from the same organization working on mangrove conservation.

This summit, where they worked not on mangroves but on bamboo charcoal production, was not only an opportunity to share information, but also a meaningful time for us to realize the connections among local leaders from each country.

## ASIAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Asian Voluntary Service (AVS) is a special program of NVDA to exchange the LMTVs (Long and Mid Term Volunteers) focusing on various themes (environment, rural development, culture, education and human rights) in the Workcamp (group) format.

It started in 2014 and 94 volunteers from 14 countries have been hosted in 40 projects of 11 countries till now.

AVS 2024 took place during the month of October, this time 9 NGOs (IVP, SVI, FSL, RUCHI, MCE, NICE, GIVE, VIN, Dalaa) participated but not all of them could find volunteers. Finally 5 participants (4 Japanese and 1 Myanmar) working in Thailand, Nepal, Australia, and India.

During their month-long activities, they conducted workcamps and internships, and in the middle of their activities, they participated in an online event, AVV, to report on their activities.



There are some comments by participants.

**Yosuke(NICE → Dalaa)** : “Ability to manage things myself” is not a good achievement. At first, I would like to make other volunteers more motivated but the motivations of them are different from us, so it didn’t work well. I felt I am very stereotyped Japanese, as I always make plans, do reflections, and be punctual. I would like to introduce my experience at the event in Fukui prefecture.



**May(GIVE → Dalaa)** : I tried all the activities. I learned how to organize the organization and group. Motivation came up, because some volunteers are younger than me but good, also Yosuke is good at planning, I learned a lot.

**Kanae(NICE → FSL)** : Great improvement! Now I have friends, connections. I felt safe and got a good impression of India. I didn't do physical work, in future I will plan to do some projects between NICE and FSL.

We conduct AVS thanks to receive a grant from the Mitsubishi Foundation in Japan! (Thanks to the efforts of NICE).

We will conduct AVS-2 next Feb.-Mar., please see the article on Upcoming events!!



# MEMBERS NEWS

## NICE, JAPAN >>> IVS CONTEST



NICE is organizing the 11th IVS (International Voluntary Service) contest in order to promote IVS more widely and raise the recognitions in the society. 10 volunteers and 6 projects were presented at 3 regional contests in Yokohama (Oct. 26th) Osaka (Nov. 2nd) and Nagoya (Nov. 9th).

Winners of each and also of the web voting (Nov. 13th-30th) will go to the final, national contest in Tokyo (Dec. 21st). The grand champions of Volunteers and Project departments will get the annual passport of NICE. Hundreds of people are actively involved and participating every year!



## MEMBERS NEWS

### DALAA, THAILAND >>> DALAA 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Last October 18th to 20th, we celebrated DaLaa 20th anniversary in a former host community resort called Roywan farm stay in Pattalung province, South Thailand. We gathered over 50 people representing a mix of former and present hosts, staff and volunteers from Thailand and abroad. Besides endless inspired discussions and exchanges, we had a few workshops organized during this time and a sharing market where presents are proposed and the most interested and motivated person will receive it, based on the giver decision. There were some seriously funny arguments and situations.



We had great food and a beautiful party on the 20th night, date that we remember as DaLaa birthday in 2004, when a group of young dreamers created the base of what was going to become DaLaa, international volunteers for social development association here is South Thailand.

The network has greatly extended, the volunteers have pass through by dozen, hundreds and even thousands, inspiring and being inspired. Despite the ups and downs or probably thanks to the ups and down, we are what we are nowadays, standing firm as pioneer in this experimental creation that is DaLaa, a School of volunteering to learn our place, to find truth and balance our life, toward the society we are aiming for. More years are to come in our fresh diversity for Living, learning and working TOGETHER.



# IVS STARTING STORIES

By Thao Linh Le (PR Intern)

**What inspiration motivates to you found VPV? When? With who?**

VPV was founded in 2004 when Vietnam was relatively new to the world and a lot of Vietnamese have yet to have opportunities to set their foot on other countries' boundaries. VPV was established to bring the world to Vietnam through the lens of international volunteers to foster mutual understanding and learning. Over the past 20 years, this has always been the primary objective that fuels further development of VPV.



There are two main departments of VPV: Incoming (hosting international volunteers in Vietnam) and Outgoing (sending Vietnamese volunteers abroad - which is now run Vietnam Global Outreach - VGO).

*NVDA has been introducing series of articles on how member organizations have started IVS in their countries. This time, Linh, NVDA - PR intern, interviewed Phuong, the founder of Volunteers for Peace Vietnam (VPV) in Hanoi, Vietnam.*



**Mr. Phuong - Founder of VPV (VN)**

I founded VPV individually and at that time I had never travelled abroad myself nor had experience in international volunteering, so I had to do a lot of research on this field.. With the assistance of the Internet, I have sent hundreds of emails to make connections with other partners around the world. However, on reflection, I felt lucky because I chose the right time to lay the foundation of what is now VPV.





# PHILOSOPHY & UNIQUE POINTS

## *How did you meet IVS, what did you feel?*

At the beginning of 2005, when I started to launch first activities in Vietnam, I was put in touch with the chairman of NICE and got a lot of support from him. It was the turning point for VPV to become a member of NVDA later. At that time, I was not very experienced so the connection with NVDA was very precious for me and VPV as a whole.



## *What is the philosophy of VPV?*

Our main philosophy is “creating chances” for Vietnamese volunteers and others from all over the globe to work together through community-based activities that further aim to address social issues and promote the world’s peace through mutual understanding.

## *What makes VPV different from other organizations?*

There are several factors that make VPV different from other organizations. Firstly, VPV is proud to have a global network with over 40 countries worldwide and is an official member of the UNESCO’s Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) and the Federation of International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE).

Secondly, VPV has a strong network of community programs that brings valuable support to underprivileged groups such as people with disabilities or children in rural areas.

Finally, VPV is a professional volunteer exchange organization in which we have standard criteria, helping the exchange experience to be as systematically smooth as possible. We have office and professional staff who have been exposed to these real experiences before. These factors have secured a stable quality standard for VPV since our establishment.



Another unexpected factor that differentiates us from other organizations in Vietnam lies in the fact that we do not restrict the age limit of participants. Normally, volunteering programs typically allow people aged from 18 to 35; however, VPV welcomes volunteers of all ages. There are programs in which we have people aged 60 or even 70 take part in our voluntary activities which further reinforces our inclusiveness and diversity.



# DIFFICULTIES

*What difficulties the VPV has had since it was founded, how did you deal with those difficulties?*

The very first challenge that I encountered was that I was completely new to this field in the beginning. I needed to read all the related materials and organized all the programs simultaneously. At that time, there was much information about this field available on the Internet but theory alone was not enough, we need practical experience to learn from. After having connections with other organizations around the world, VPV sent staff for training which provided them with vital skill sets to solve problems that may arise during the process.



Another difficulty was that at that time, these international voluntary models were totally new to Vietnam so people would not thoroughly understand the objectives as well as benefits of participating in these activities. Therefore, our mission was to help people better understand the meaningful purposes of our voluntary projects, the motivation that encourages volunteers all over the world to engage in our community programs.



The last obstacle that not only VPV but other organizations might also encounter is finance. At the time of Covid-19 pandemic, many organizations including VPV were seriously affected. Volunteers could not participate in our activities because of social distancing, which left us with little or no income, consequently not having enough monetary resources to operate our programs. However, with our long-standing foundations, fortunately, we could overcome these difficulties quite smoothly because we have a wide range of programs that can support each other in case of unexpected obstacles. During the pandemic we ran program for local volunteers.





# VISIONS

## *What are the visions of VPV in the future? What are the expected challenges?*

Of course, challenges are unavoidable, there will be certain changes in people's choice of volunteer activities; however, VPV believes that international voluntary experiences are important because of their uniqueness. Going overseas to volunteer is not as stressful as working and studying abroad nor as relaxing as going traveling. It is just “enough” for volunteers to be exposed to communities, to local people, to new cultures and enables us to collaborate with others to solve shared problems in a friendly way. In the long run, we aim to not only send more Vietnamese volunteers to other countries in the world but also aim to diversify our programs and activities to attract more international volunteers to Vietnam.



To sum up, I strongly believe that international experiences are vital for youth's overall development especially Vietnamese youth because they enable them to immerse in a culturally diverse world and offer precious chances to better themselves.



**WE CAN SEE  
IMPACT ON THE  
COMMUNITIES,**

**IMPACT ON THE  
VOLUNTEERS**

# IVS IMPACT STORIES

## VOLTRA HONG KONG & GREAT INDONESIA

-These are examples of impact on Members' Projects in 2023 from NVDA annual report-

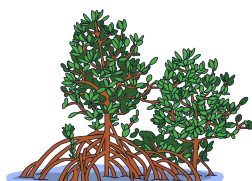
### >>> VOLTRA, HONG KONG

VolTra recently recruited a group of enthusiasts who enjoy making new friends and cultural exchange to participate in the Cultural Facilitator Camp. This camp allows all "Cultural Facilitators" to acquire the "VolTra Way" ✨ through two days of training sessions and various activities. This equips them to lead participants from diverse backgrounds in overseas workcamps, creating journeys full of warmth 🌍! We hope that each "Cultural Facilitator" can take on a guiding role in multicultural environments, bringing various possibilities to the world! Exciting activities are coming one after another, so please continue to look forward to their performance 😊!



義遊 VOLTRA

### >>> GREAT, INDONESIA



Mulyo Asri Mangrove, a conclusion of the hosting year 2023: with the incoming volunteers from the short term to middle term volunteering projects, one after another, has put the real IVS works and image on field to see and feel directly by our local partner that there is hope for future mangrove and its good benefits to the local people.

The later opportunity comes for our local partner to learn and promote more about mangrove from different countries in Indonesia and abroad also motivate them to keep their environmental purposes on its course.

# INTRODUCTION TO SOUTH EAST ASIA & BEYOND (SEAB)

By Linh San Vũ (PR Intern)

*South East Asia & Beyond (SEAB) is a new program started this year by CYA, Cambodia. Here is an interview from San (PR intern) and Nori (Secretariat) to Thet Hnin Han (Tia), a first SEAB participant.*

**S:** Can you please introduce yourself?

T: Hello, my name is Thet Hnin Han, they know me as Tia. I'm 20 years old and I'm a member of GIVE Myanmar. I'm currently a long-term volunteer at the Cambodian Youth Action(CYA).

**S:** Thank you so much. What is your motivation for joining the SEAB program?

T: Since I'm a member of GIVE Myanmar, I saw an announcement about this program, then after checking the project's description, I was very excited to become a volunteer teacher. Moreover, they said we would also have a chance to learn the Khmer language, and since I was really interested in languages and teaching, it motivated me to apply to this program.



**N:** Thank you. May I ask if there are any difficulties or challenges for you?

T: Yes. There were times when there was no local volunteer (for around 2 weeks), so it was a bit hard to communicate with the kids, because they were really young to understand us, so we had to use a lot of body language while teaching, only if there were no local volunteers, but most of the time, I was fine, thanks to the help from CYA and local people.



**S:** During those 5 months, what experiences have you had with the local Cambodian culture and community?

T: I found that the Cambodian culture is almost the same as ours. We have prayed for Buddha, and 80% of the pronunciation is the same, so I was really shocked. Even our traditional events are similar. For example, they have Songkran, and we have Thingyan, which is the water festival for our traditional New Year. Also, about the Khmer language, though I find it difficult to pronounce, I'm trying my best.





**S: How have you felt yourself grown during this experience?**

T: Now I've been here for 5 months, and something has obviously changed. I used to forget almost everything. For example, like my friends and I planned to go for a swim, yet I forgot to bring swimsuits, so yeah, I used to be a bit clueless. However, I become more aware and since I have to follow the CYA's plan as well as lead the volunteering groups, I have improved my time management skills and become more organized. Also, I think I'm better at taking care of other people. As I have to take care of the volunteers mentally and physically, I have to make sure they are doing well, like do they need help, or if is there anything I can do for them, etc. Lastly, I think that my networking's expanded, as I get to know many friends from different nations.



**S: From these experiences, what do you consider the most important when interacting with local people?**

T: I believe effort and a smile are the most important things. If you don't know how to pronounce a word exactly, just try your best, and put effort into learning their language and they will welcome you and teach you how to do it correctly. The next one is a smile. It's not only for interacting but also for communicating with everyone. A smile is the best way to communicate when you try to interact with someone.



**S: How do you hope this experience will influence, or help you for your future career?**

T: Actually, before joining this program, I was thinking about which major should I apply to the university, and I was considering becoming a journalist or a teacher since all of my aunts are teachers. However, after joining this program, I've decided to become a teacher. Every day, I have to communicate with kids, and watching them grow up, and learn more about the world from me is very pleasing.

**S: I see. So, do you have any advice for young people considering participating in this program?**

T: I would like to say: Don't be afraid to start. One year goes by very fast, so you just need to prepare yourself, with an effort, and be yourself. The host I'm with of the CYA are very kind-hearted so they will take care of you like their child rather than a volunteer. Therefore, you'll see other parts of your world by meeting various people and befriending numerous peers from different countries. I guarantee that this one year will be one of the best parts of your life!

N: Thank you so much for your sharing. I think that's all!

T: Thank you so much for having me!



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## ➤➤➤ ASIAN VOLUNTEERS VOICE

We have been doing this for a year with the aim of introducing work camps directly to Asian youth through online events. During the year, participants came from Africa and Europe as well as Asia. Also, even if the number of participants on zoom is not very large, there have been times when the number of views on FB has exceeded 1,000, and we feel that awareness of the event is gradually increasing.

The next AVV on **December 19** will feature GIED from the Philippines and GV4GF from Sri Lanka. We hope to see a lot of participation and a lot of excitement!

## ➤➤➤ ASIAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE 2025

The AVS held in October 2024 had 5 participants, a second round will be held for a month **from February 14 to March 15, 2025**. The program, which combines workcamps and office internships, will be held in 7 Asian countries plus Belgium.

AVS has 3 aims.

In order to create a more peaceful, fair and sustainable Asia and the world;

A. Asian youth will work together and foster friendship, mutual understanding and solidarity to powerfully create peace from the grass root level.

B. Young NGO activists in Asia will develop their senses and competency to be grown as the future leaders through organizing the activities abroad.

C. Practical actions and collaborations on environment, rural development and education will be empowered toward the achievement of SDGs.

We are looking for young participants who would fit these aims!!

## NVDA NEWSLETTER (DECEMBER 2024)

Issued by NVDA (Network for Voluntary Development in Asia)  
<https://nvda-asia.org/>

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