

# IYV Joint Campaign



CCIVS



Service Civil International



**AVSO** Association of  
Voluntary Service  
Organisations



**2 0 0 1**  
**International Year**  
**of Volunteers**

# IYV Joint Campaign

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The year 2001 has been declared **the International Year of Volunteers (IYV)** by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 20th of November 1997 (resolution A/RES/52/17). For this occasion, a number of international organisations, the "*Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)*", the "*Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO)*", the "*Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (Alliance)*", "*International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE)*", the "*Service Civil International (SCI)*", and "*Youth Action for Peace (YAP)*" have decided to organise a one year **Joint Campaign**.

The "**UNESCO Youth Coordination Unit (UCJ)**" and the "**United Nations Volunteers (UNV)**" support this joint initiative.

The campaign aims to highlight the concept of **voluntary service**, in all its various guises and to facilitate thematic debates throughout the entire year.

Actions and debates are organised around the topics presented in this brochure.

The targets are public and private institutions and organisations, local governments and municipalities new to voluntary service, and those already active in the domain.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness among the millions of active and potentially active volunteers about the voluntary service movement.

The IYV Joint Campaign was launched on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, with the support of the UNESCO Youth Coordination Unit. It will be concluded in Madrid, Spain, in January 2002 with a symposium, which will summarise the debates and draw conclusions from the wide-ranging discussions and activities carried out during the Campaign. The symposium aims at complementing the various events linked to the International Year of Volunteers through a thorough self-critical and creative reflection on the types of voluntary service proposed by the international youth NGOs involved.

An **Action Week**, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, gives the opportunity to volunteers and voluntary service organisations themselves to participate in several activities: distribution of symbolic **volunteer visas** about the necessity of a legal status for volunteers and collection of stories about volunteers' visa 'adventures' for a **blackbook of visa refusal** during the IYV 2001; a "**human chain**" made of volunteers, symbolising that they are part of a global movement of voluntary service promoting mutual understanding and peace, and **debates** related to the topics described in the following pages.

The Joint Campaign wishes to engage as many people and organisations as possible in the discussions on voluntary service. For this reason we hope to promote our thematic debates at a number of seminars and conferences organised by our members and partners around the world during IYV 2001.

The recommendations resulting from the campaign shall be submitted to the UNV as a contribution to the final results of the overall IYV presented at the UN GA 2002.

Apart from being an opportunity to raise awareness on voluntary service and to address particularly topical issues, this Joint Campaign also represents a chance to reflect internally on the past, present and future direction of our work and define possible partnerships with intergovernmental institutions. We not only want to show the world how great volunteering is, but also to ask ourselves some critical questions after almost 80 years of existence of our movement. For example, how can *voluntary service balance the personal benefit and training interests of the volunteer with the service aspect for the community?* As a matter of fact, this last question which inspired the title for the launching event on International Volunteer Day on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2000.

# Organisations involved

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## CCIVS

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The Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) was created in 1948 under the aegis of **UNESCO** as an international non-governmental organisation responsible for the coordination of voluntary service. It is today one of the main international structures which acts as a coordinating link between 250 voluntary organisations which run workcamps and medium and long term activities in over 100 countries in the world.



## AVSO

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AVSO is an international non-governmental organisation, which forms a European platform for national and international non-profit organisations offering long-term full-time voluntary service opportunities. Its role is to promote long-term voluntary service by lobbying government institutions and by networking with other non-governmental and public organisations. It also aims to broaden participation in voluntary service among new organisations in the non-profit sector and among individuals who may traditionally not have had access to volunteer opportunities (disabled, socially/ economically disadvantaged and ethnic minorities etc.).



## ALLIANCE

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The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations is an international network, born in 1982, that represents national organisations promoting intercultural education, mutual understanding and peace through short term as well as long term voluntary service. Each member organisation runs an annual programme of International Volunteer Projects in its own country, and exchanges volunteers with other members and partners.



## ICYE

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The International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE) originated in 1949 as a reconciliation programme between the USA and Germany. Today the ICYE Federation is an international, independent, non-profit organisation with 30 National Committees in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America. ICYE's mission is to promote youth mobility and international understanding through long and short term voluntary service exchange programmes. Building bridges of peace, justice and understanding through personal encounters has been its goal over the past 50 years. Its programmes are founded on principles of global education and intercultural learning, and offer international voluntary service in community development projects (working with children, elderly, disabled, youth clubs/centres, environmental protection, education, health care and fair-trade shops, etc.)



Service Civil International

## SCI

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*web site: [www.sciint.org](http://www.sciint.org)*

Service Civil International (SCI) is an international voluntary service organisation, founded in 1920, with 33 branches and groups worldwide. The aims are to promote peace, international understanding and solidarity, social justice, sustainable development, and respect for the environment. The main activities of SCI are organising voluntary service projects for international teams of volunteers on a long and short-term basis. The activities can be categorised by the following topics: international volunteer projects, thematic seminars, medium and long term voluntary service, education and training courses, individual trainee-ships, solidarity campaigns, East-West and North-South exchanges.



## YAP

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Born in 1923 in order to work for peace and reconciliation between countries formerly at war, Youth Action for Peace (YAP) has evolved towards an international voluntary service movement, with member and partner organisations in different continents. Working with and for young people, YAP amongst others focuses on the combat against social exclusion and the support of people in their struggle for freedom and self-determination, through the exchange of volunteers.

## How to get involved in the actions ?

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Inform us about the projects and workcamps of your organisation wishing to participate in some or all activities proposed for the **Action Week** as soon as possible so that we can send you some background material

### During the Action Week:

- Form a **Human Chain**, symbolising a global movement, working for mutual understanding and peace and take pictures of it!
- Distribute the '**Volunteer Visa**' informing about and calling for solutions to the obstacles to mobility of volunteers and send stories about your 'visa adventures' that we'll collect in a 'visa blackbook'.

### During the Action Week and during the whole year:

- Take part in real and virtual thematic **Debates** based on the following topics: "Working for Peace", "Legal Status and Visas", "Inter-regional Exchanges", "Accessibility of Voluntary Service" and "Returning Volunteers".
- Then send us your results, comments and pictures - be as creative as you wish! We will be glad to receive your contributions, questions and comments at :

CCIVS / UNESCO House

1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15. France

E-mail: [ccivs@unesco.org](mailto:ccivs@unesco.org)

or directly to the website forum at: <http://www.unesco.org/ccivs/iyv-ic>

**You find more background documents for each issue and action on our webpage.**

## Topics for the debates

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### Accessibility of Voluntary Service

The world of voluntary service is not as open as it might seem. It could sound paradoxical, however there are many obstacles, which could discourage people from volunteering.

The following are examples of the kind of obstacles that can be met: no access to Internet, rural areas with lack of information on voluntary service programmes, age (bad feelings in a group of youngsters), physical handicap, language barriers, very little or no money, no travel experience, parents/family do not like the idea of travelling abroad/workcamps and therefore will give no support to the volunteer, etc.

### Work-camps – a step towards peace?

Most international voluntary service organisations started their activities shortly after the first world war, focusing mainly on promoting peace and reconciliation. The initial idea behind this could be described as follows:

Organising voluntary exchanges → participants are confronted with each other, and will see their differences → in the camp, where they work together towards a common objective, they can start to tolerate "the other" → they can even start to respect "the other" in his difference → in the end they will be less eager to fight each other → promotion of peace in society

The simplified scheme is an extreme presentation, but can be used for any kind of confrontation between cultures, ideologies, opinions. The important thing is not necessarily the presence of a huge and potentially dangerous conflict as such, it is in how you learn to deal with difference.

A work-camp brings together people from very different cultural, social, economical and educational backgrounds in a situation which can be called at least "uncommon". By putting them together, almost inevitably, you will end up with smaller or bigger conflicts (sometimes even unrecognised). Since a work-camp is about everyone participating in the camp life, volunteers will have to find ways either to solve the conflict, or to live with it without being frustrated.

In this sense, a work-camp is not really a “conflict-avoiding” activity, but becomes in a way a conflict-generating activity (although – as said before – the conflict is in many cases very minor and hardly affects the atmosphere of the camp). The end objective is not to deny differences, but rather to acknowledge their existence, overcome them and live with them without it developing huge proportions and leading to war. In this philosophy, out of the micro-experience of work-camps, volunteers evolve towards people that are less eager to end up in a situation where they reduce “the other” to an enemy to be fought. And they can start to pass on this experience to others.

### **Supporting returned volunteers**

While there is growing agreement and understanding on what is needed to make international voluntary service as beneficial as possible, little is known about what happens to long term volunteers (LTVs) upon their return home and what is the long-term impact of volunteering abroad on LTVs and their own communities.

Upon their return, very often LTVs feel just as disoriented and confused as when they first arrived in the host country. They are likely to „suffer“ from a „reverse culture shock“ and go through a new intercultural experience - this time feeling strangers at home, misunderstood and out of place in the family, study, work and other familiar environments. The „rite of passage“ which started abroad continues: realising changes happening within oneself can be just as lengthy and painstaking.

Against this background, sending organisations need to evaluate the necessity and desirability of accompanying, providing support and monitoring LTVs’ re-adjustment and re-orientation process in their home country. Support and understanding should help returning LTVs to channel positively their desire to feel useful, to build on their past experience, and to find ways to engage with others in action and reflection.

### **A legal status for volunteers: facilitating engagement and mobility (visas)**

Once I asked a volunteer abroad what it meant to be a volunteer...

"It is not easy to explain...: For example, when applying for my residence permit, the man in the Local Government Office told me: 'You are neither a worker, nor a student, or an Au Pair; a volunteer doesn't exist!' After three times with at least one hour to wait, I finally had my permit. I was happy. However, they gave me a residence permit for workers. But I'm a volunteer! I didn't go back because I was fed up with the Local Government Office. I hope that me and my organisation will not be checked".

This girl was lucky. Many other people willing to contribute with their skills and powerful motivation to volunteering abroad never succeeded in joining their programmes. They did not get their visas. The authorities of the host country rejected their petitions arguing that they were neither supported by a study programme nor by a work contract.

These are only some examples of the many different obstacles that volunteers do actually face - visa refusals, excessive and confusing bureaucratic procedures to get residence permits, taxation over expenses as if they were a paid worker, loss of social benefits, lack of recognition of their voluntary service...- because, legally, “a volunteer does not exist”.

### **Inter-regional exchanges between North, South, East and West**

International voluntary service has been characterised essentially by two components: an **international group** (or an individual from another country) work within the frame of a given **locally defined project**. An international project bears the potential for intercultural learning, empathy with and solidarity between the volunteer/s and the local population. If the countries of origin of the volunteers among themselves or with the local population are very different from the country where the project takes place (inter-regional or inter-continental), it also bears a number of additional obstacles on the way to reach its set objectives.

The topic will be discussed under three different angles to be discussed by volunteers, activists and decision makers of organisations:

- The **philosophy** of international voluntary service between different regions in the world: voluntary service between development, tourism and intercultural learning
- The **partnership with organisations** all over the world and the connections with them (networks): questions related to the system of fees between sending and hosting organisations and the question of regional co-ordination
- The **partnership with institutional actors** (UNV, EU, Council of Europe and others)

We would like to confront you with some provocative statements and ask you to react

We are aware that some of the issues ask for some previous knowledge on the issue. We have therefore subdivided the issues in statements to be discussed by volunteers in a project (questions about Philosophy) and statements to be discussed by activists/ board members/ staff (question of partnerships).

**Send your questions, comments and contributions to**

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