



International Volunteer Day

INTERNATIONAL

VOLUNTEER

DAY

Academics and researchers from Northumbria University's Centre for International Development carry out leading research on volunteering, humanitarian crises and development.

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International Volunteer Day 2022

Today, Monday 5 December, is the United Nations' (UN) International Volunteer Day 2022 (IVD 2022) and this year the theme is *solidarity through volunteering*. The campaign aims to highlight the power of using collective humanity to drive positive change through volunteerism.

The latest estimate from the UN suggests that more than one billion people around the world volunteer their time, skills, and experience to help improve the communities they live in. International Volunteer Day is a special day set aside each year to celebrate the contributions of these volunteers across the

globe who dedicate their time and efforts to supporting the inclusion of individuals and communities who are often left behind. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the barriers to volunteering, and the challenges faced by volunteers who are themselves from communities facing hardship.

Despite the critical roles of local volunteers globally, most research has focused on international volunteers and the 'gap year', or volunteering experiences in Europe and North America. Limited work has investigated volunteering by vulnerable groups and individuals and its impacts on their lives and livelihoods.

To mark IVD 2022, we're highlighting the latest developments of two key research projects on volunteering, humanitarian crises and development led by academics and researchers who are part of [Northumbria's Centre for International Development](#).

The [Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda \(RYVU\)](#) project explores the kinds of voluntary labour practiced by young refugees and investigates if and how, through volunteering, they are able to gain employability skills. The project was funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council/Global Challenges Research Fund and led by [Professor Matt Baillie Smith](#) in collaboration with academics at Loughborough University (UK), Uganda Martyrs University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (Uganda), and with local NGOs and youth refugees themselves. In recent months, an exhibition of photographs taken by young refugee participants has been staged in Uganda, Newcastle and Senegal, challenging existing thinking about who volunteers, why they do it, and the impacts of volunteering. You can visit the online gallery of photographs [here](#).

To mark IVD 2022, the team behind the RYVU project are launching a series of policy briefings and downloadable interactive games based on the research findings. The briefings provide recommendations on how policy makers and humanitarian and development practitioners can enhance the impacts of volunteering on refugee skills and employability, while promoting fairer practices for recruiting, training and recognising refugee volunteer activity, and prevent volunteering from increasing the inequalities they experience.

[View embedded content here](#)

The RYVU project team have also developed interactive games to raise awareness of the issues young refugee volunteers face and explore what volunteering means to them, in order to improve policy and practice in this area. All briefings and games are free and available for download in Arabic, English, French and Swahili on the [dedicated project page](#).

The research project *Volunteering Together: Blending Knowledge and Skills for Development* was developed collaboratively with [Voluntary Service Overseas \(VSO\)](#) and focused on understanding the concept and practice of blended volunteering.

The research took place between 2020 and 2022, exploring how different types of volunteering come together, how different combinations of volunteers may work in different sorts of ways, and what kinds of impacts and outputs this produces. In order to understand the roles and potential of blended volunteering for VSO's programming and beyond, three case study countries were selected: Tanzania; Uganda; and Nepal.

The research was led by Professor Baillie Smith and [Professor Katy Jenkins](#); the UK-based research team also included [Dr Inge Boudewijn](#) and [Dr Bianca Fadel](#). Research in each country was led by local partners, whose expertise has been critical to developing an understanding of the different contexts in which blended volunteering takes place.

Findings from this project were presented at the International Volunteer

Cooperation Organisations (IVCO) and Royal Geographical Society conferences this year, and a new podcast discussing blended volunteering and the research findings, featuring Dr Boudewijn, has just been released by the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment as part of the *Future Economies start with Youth* podcast series. You can watch the podcast [here](#) and read a research summary, briefing papers and case studies on the [Northumbria website](#).

You can also find out more [here](#) about International Volunteer Day 2022.

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