



The annual International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCO) conference was hosted at Northumbria University in September.

Oct 09, 2024 13:00 BST

Leaders from volunteering agencies around the globe meet at Northumbria University for international conference

Over 140 delegates from more than 80 different organisations travelled from 40 countries for the prestigious annual [International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations \(IVCO\) conference](#) hosted by Northumbria University this year.

Representatives from a diverse range of international institutions, NGOs, research centres and government departments gathered in Newcastle upon

Tyne for the event from 9 to 13 September.

Each year the conference is organised by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, known as [Forum](#), and takes place in a different location to bring together leaders from volunteering agencies, researchers and practitioners from across the world.

The IVCO conference provides a valuable opportunity to connect, exchange insights, and learn from one another about challenges and opportunities currently facing the volunteering in development sector.

IVCO 2024 was, for the first time, hosted by an academic institution. This reflects Northumbria's status as a leading centre for expertise on volunteering in humanitarian and development settings and also highlights the importance of cross-sectoral dialogues in achieving change. Researchers from Northumbria University's [Centre for Global Development](#) collaborated with [Comhlámh](#), the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers, to host delegates from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, alongside practitioners based in the North East of England.



A team from Northumbria's Centre for Global Development worked with the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, known as Forum, and Comhlámh, the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers, to organise and host IVCO 2024.

[Dr Bianca Fadel](#), a Research Fellow at Northumbria who led the coordination of this year's conference, explained: "After many months of planning, brainstorming and teamwork, we couldn't have been prouder to welcome so many delegates from across the volunteering and development sector to our City Campus in Newcastle upon Tyne.

"IVCO 2024 focused on 'Building and Sustaining Connections for Change: Volunteering for Solidarity' and challenged us all to reflect on and question relationships of solidarity in volunteering, prioritising convivial spaces to tackle challenging issues and learn from each other's experiences."

Dervla King, one of the conference co-organisers and Programme Manager at Comhlámh said: "IVCO 2024 provided us with a vital opportunity to bring practitioners, thinkers and leaders from around the world together to explore what volunteering for solidarity can and should look like. Our time at Northumbria University was invaluable in helping develop and deepen mutually supportive, lasting relationships, which will enable our community to envision and shape more socially and environmentally just futures."

[Professor Louise Bracken](#), Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange at Northumbria University, and [Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods](#), Chair of the University's Board of Governors, welcomed leaders and representatives of grassroots organisations alongside those from agencies operating globally, including [Peace Corps](#), [Swedish Red Cross](#), [United Nations Volunteers](#), [VSO](#) and [France Volontaires](#).

Practitioners took delegates on a learning journey from Asia to Africa, learning from the [Japan International Cooperation Agency \(JICA\)](#) and the [Waker Welfare Action Association](#), as well as the [National Agency for Volunteerism in Togo](#), [Habitat for Humanity Zambia](#), and many others actively working in these regions and beyond.

North East England organisations, such as [COCO Charity](#), [Sangini](#), [Connected Voice](#) and the [Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland](#) created connections between local and global volunteering, while the team from [Bensham Grove Community Centre](#) in Gateshead and [the](#)

[Relationships Project](#), helped everyone understand what it means to be a Geordie.

IVCO 2024 concluded with a Research Policy Practice and Learning (RPPL) day, promoting roundtable discussions on ethical and impactful volunteer research and practice, also allowing further networking opportunities for around 70 leaders and decision-makers who attended the conference.



Over 140 delegates from more than 80 different organisations travelled from 40 countries for the annual International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCO) conference hosted at Northumbria University in September 2024.

[Matt Baillie Smith](#), Professor of Global Development and Dean of Research Culture at Northumbria University, said: “We thank the participants who travelled from near and far to be with us. Their energy, passion, and commitment to volunteering and development were truly uplifting. It was a pleasure to facilitate the conference and witness the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experiences from such a diverse and inspiring group.

“Together, we’ve deepened our understandings of how volunteering can build new connections, challenge the status quo and enable meaningful, lasting social change in an ever-changing world, and laid the groundwork for even greater collaborations in the future.”

James O'Brien, Forum's Executive Director, said: "This year's IVCO was unique in its shape and format, providing valuable insights and knowledge not only during the convivial days of the conference, but also beyond, through provocative Think Pieces and materials available online in different languages, furthering our efforts to strengthen collaboration and increase impact in the volunteering and development sector. We look forward to IVCO 2025 in Cambodia."

Discover more [here](#) about Northumbria's research expertise, knowledge exchange and learning on volunteering, humanitarian crises and development.

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

--- Please contact media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences
rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk
07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences
andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk
07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk
07377422415



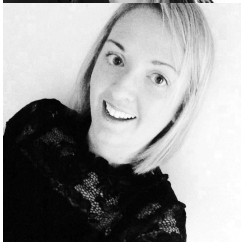
James Fox

Press Contact
Student Communications Manager
james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact
PR and Media Officer
kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact
PR and Media Officer
gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk