

Report on Asian Volunteering Summit 2017

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Cebu City, Philippines

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The 1st Asian Volunteering Summit in Cebu City took place from October 6-9, 2017 and jointly organized by Network of Volunteers & Development in Asia (NVDA) and Global Initiative for Exchange & Development (GIED) as the gracious host. The summit aims to achieve the below objectives with the participation of 35 international delegates and 15 local delegates representing 15 different organizations from 13 countries mainly from Asia.

- Appreciate the importance of IVS for social cohesion/ development towards active global citizenship
- Provide an opportunity for IVS practitioners and supporters through interactive sharing and learning
- Share, discuss and conclude the impact of IVS in the attainment of SDGs
- Create a strategic plan of actions and cooperation anchored to the SDG thematic areas.
- Strengthen network and commitment among stakeholders in the realization of SDGs
- Recognize exemplary contribution in volunteer work and provide opportunity for cultural appreciation

During the plenary sessions, there were some interesting discussions such as on the history and future of IVS. Service Civil International should be very proud as the first IVS in Asia was by Pierre Cérésolle and it kicks start the IVS movement to what it is now. But what is interesting during this session was presentation on the new trends of volunteerism such as micro-volunteering, digital volunteering, voluntourism, corporate volunteering. The speaker was sharing that in this fast paced environment, young people are always on the lookout for something more convenient and able to accommodate to their lifestyle.

However, there were mix feelings from the floor, saying NGOs have the duty to change how the current state of the society to something better and not simply adjusting everything to their needs and wants. Fundamentally, the direction and way forward lies in the responsibilities of the organizations. Being in SCI, we have the responsibilities to uphold our mission and vision of the movement and how we would run our workcamps/voluntary projects.

Discussion on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) was a part of the agenda in this summit. There were representatives from UNV Philippines sharing with the participants on what are the SDG and how we can translate or incorporate them into IVS work. Then there were thematic workshops /breakout session on IVS roles and contributions to SDGs such as focusing on Poverty, Hunger and Health, Education and Gender, Climate change to name a few. We learnt during this workshop that what we are currently doing in our IVS work are already meeting the objective of some SDGs, just that we did not categorize them into SDGs. There were many learning points from other participants and also the moderators.

The summit also wanted to compile practical action points from all the discussions earlier to Practical Vision of IVS 2030 in line with the SDGs by 2030. All the working groups discussed, present to other participants on their given thematic topics, and finally compiled them to action plans that can be adopted and hopes/visions by 2030. The compiled document is then presented to President of NVDA as an outcome from the summit.

During this summit, a session was allocated for engagement with international network organizations such as SCI, NVDA and UNV. Edward, Rita represented SCI and share with the participants the history of SCI, our current campaigns, structure of SCI, different working groups and ADC. There were other presentations by secretary of NVDA and representative from UNV followed by Q&A session with the panels.

The summit ended with a modest but joyous celebration of NVDA 20th Anniversary, awards & recognition presentation and the next day with an international exposition; showcase of local and international organizations.

Rita attended the Global Medium and Long Term Volunteer Meeting along with Julia who was one of the facilitators. Here there were 18 delegates from various networks. The delegates were motivated and engaged and there was a high level of sharing, an openness and willingness to collaborate to ensure effective practice. SCI has been attending these meetings for a number of years and should continue to do so. My mission was to find people willing and capable to take on upkeep of the SCI LMTV database but unfortunately there were no volunteers for that.

In summary, SCI was a small fish in a big sea and many of the organisations had not heard of SCI. Representing SCI there were Rita (IEC), Edward (ADC) and Julia (SCI). Rita presented a short history of SCI and later the three of us gave a brief presentation on SCI structure, activities and campaigns. It was mind-expanding to meet all kinds of organisations involved in exchanging volunteers, from Indian Rotary to a local orphanage, from lone operators sending volunteers around the world to government departments and education institutions, from Surf Life Saving Association of Philippines to a workcamp organisation from Myanmar.

