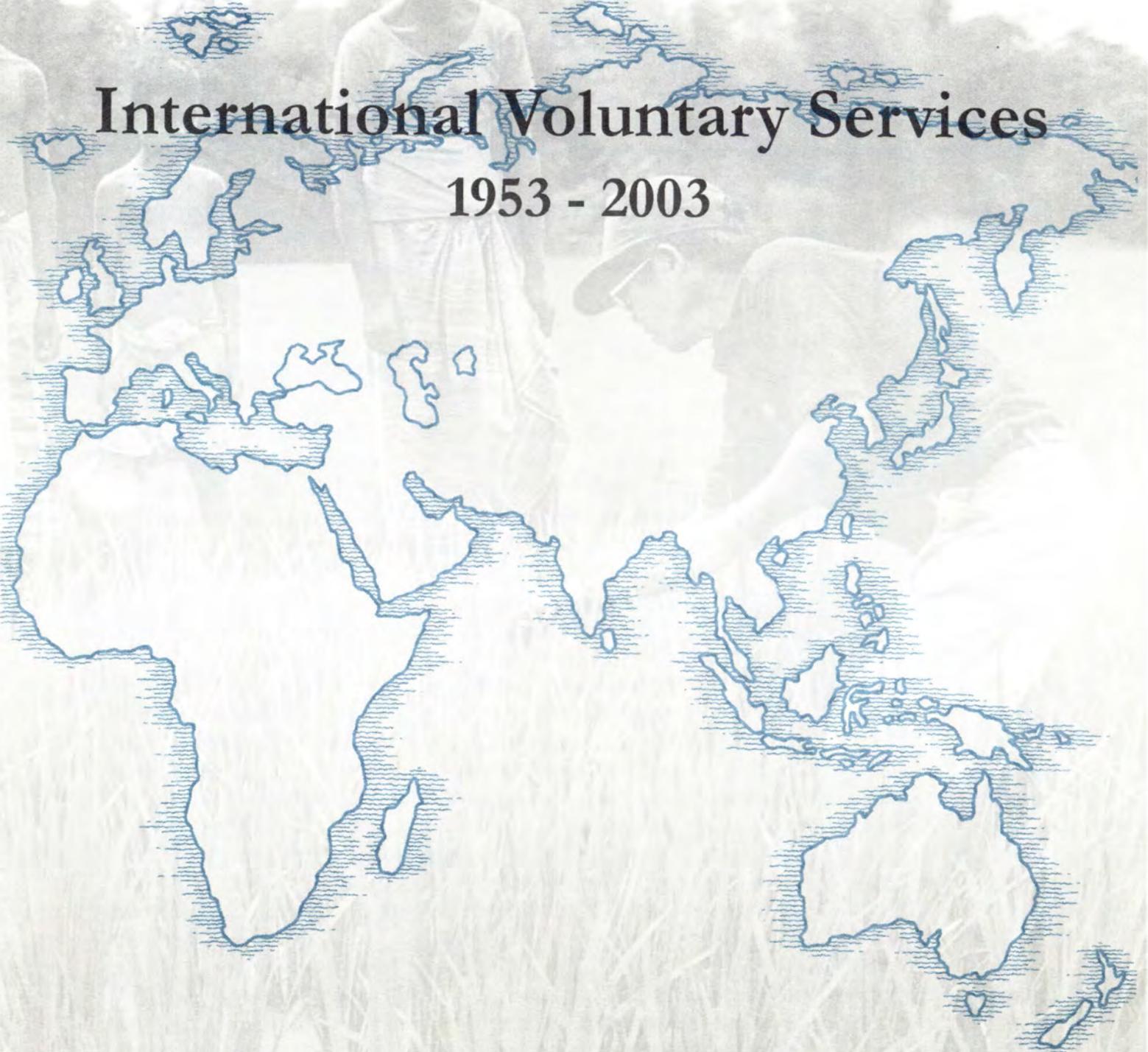




International Voluntary Services

1953 - 2003





International Voluntary Services, 1953-2003

Mission Statement, 1953

International Voluntary Services is a private, non-profit organization designed to promote "people-to-people" cooperation in improving health, productivity and living standards and fostering better understanding among peoples. It is a mechanism for uniting the energies of individuals and private organizations, and of providing program direction and administrative services for foreign service projects. Some IVS projects are sponsored and supported entirely through private contributions and others may be operated in cooperation with governmental or international agencies.

THE FIRST DECADE, 1953-62

This is a chronicle of the activities of International Voluntary Services building on this mission statement written 50 years ago. IVS was founded under the aegis of the U.S. Technical Cooperation Agency (now USAID), when a determination was made to involve private voluntary agencies (PVOs) in sharing skills and techniques in agriculture and other technical areas with people in the underdeveloped world as a way to expand its efforts.

A committee was formed by TCA, which included representatives from the Brethren and Mennonites who had experience in placing young volunteers in overseas work projects. The goal of this group was to create a private, voluntary organization, secular and non-political, with a conscience, a sense of moral and ethical mission to serve at the grassroots level in distant parts of the developing world. Well-educated volunteers would act as demonstration workers at village levels to improve agricultural production, education and health practices. Throughout its history, the mission of IVS never veered from its humanitarian concerns to respect the dignity and expressed needs of all the people it served.

Egypt - 1953-57
Iraq - 1954-57
Laos - 1954-75
Jordan (Jericho) - 1955-62
Nepal - 1956-58
Vietnam - 1956-72
Cambodia - 1960-63
Ghana - 1960-61
Liberia - 1960-63

IVS became a reality when two young men, seconded from the Brethren Volunteer Service, were sent to **Egypt** to work with farmers and cattlemen in Assiut as the first IVS volunteers. A cooperative project with World Neighbors, they were assigned as farm demonstration

workers assisting with a poultry improvement program, which was expanded to include a dairy program for upgrading native cows. Two other volunteers were later part of the project as well as the newly married wife of one of the first team. This was only the beginning of a busy year for the fledgling IVS since there was a need for skilled technicians willing to work at the grassroots.

In **Jericho**, then part of Jordan, poultry raising and dairy organization were taught at the request of Musa Alami, a progressive Jordanian. Originally a six-month project, it was carried on by a team of two and later three volunteers for a period of two years. Riots in the area destroyed most of the buildings and equipment later in the year, which were replaced. This project was phased out by IVS in 1956 for lack of funding, but Alami's Arab Development Society continued the program itself.

A contract was signed to place a team of demonstration workers in agriculture, village sanitation, nursing, home construction and home economics in **Iraq**. An office was opened in Baghdad, and the first team of volunteers entered the country early in 1954 to work with the Kurds in the northern part of Iraq. This was the largest IVS group in country during the early years and the first to include both men and women volunteers.

A four-man team was assembled to assist a new project in Nepalgunj, **Nepal**, as advisors in a training school for community development workers. This program was planned to be transferred to local administrators, which took place at the end of two years when the original contract with the U.S. government was not renewed.

These projects although involving small numbers all served to test the IVS concept of working at the grassroots together with host country people. While all of them were closed within a few years for a variety of reasons, they proved the validity of the IVS mission in community development and the spirit and enthusiasm of the volunteers.

The first program in Indochina began when a team of volunteers was sent to **Laos** in 1954 to assist with community development, agricultural and education projects. They were the first of several hundred volunteers who would serve in the region during the following 21 years. Volunteers in Indochina often worked in conjunction with U.S. government rural development programs and among the people displaced by the growing conflicts.

Because it was considered too dangerous for volunteer placements earlier, they did not enter **Vietnam** until 1957 with the first teams composed of agronomists and public health nurses. No IVS project has ever started with such promise. While the Board of Directors had some reservations about the work in resettlement projects, it was so successful that contract expansion talks with USAID began immediately. **Cambodia** received volunteers in 1960. They left within the next three years. The work done in these countries was to provide direct assistance to people at the village level in agricultural development, to teach and to develop person-to-person friendships. This was made possible by the strong emphasis IVS placed on language training both before leaving for an assignment and in country.

Work also began again in Africa. In 1959 a small team spent a year in **Ghana** under the auspices of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund demonstrating a simple machine with which to make bricks from earth and cement. In 1960 a much larger team of teachers was sent to **Liberia** to teach at the elementary level in village and rural schools under funding from USAID. An extension of this program was later supplemented with volunteers from the newly created Peace Corps.

During the first decade IVS worked in nine countries, but by the end of 1962, there were programs in only Liberia, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and 70 volunteers in the field. The next ten-year period would continue the rapid geographic expansion of programs as well the number of volunteer assignments, particularly in Indochina.

Virtually all funding during this decade, and the next, was from the U.S. government, directly or by sub-contract. The Washington staff consisted of, the executive director, an office manager and part-time financial assistance until 1958 when it expanded to include a program officer and a recruiter. The director traveled two to four months a year both inspecting existing projects and seeking to develop new programs. This was a remarkable feat and was made possible by strong support and assistance from a very small, committed Board of Directors, many of whom also traveled on behalf of IVS, either with the director or on separate trips for monitoring and evaluation or for discussions with host governments for future program planning.

Issues, which were visible in these first ten years, set a pattern that continued throughout the life of IVS - financing problems plagued IVS; programs were begun without adequate financial support in place and often had to be closed precipitously; programs were widely scattered, ranging from West Africa to Southeast Asia, rather being concentrated regionally. Outreach was also being made to countries in east and southern Africa, the Middle East and northern and southern Asia. Yet there were few funds available for consistent program development.

John S. Noffsinger, Executive Director, 1953-61
Russell Stevenson, Executive Director, 1961-64



THE SECOND DECADE, 1963-72

This is the decade that was commonly thought of as the Indochina period. Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were all well organized and expanding projects in 1962, yet only a year later the volunteers in Cambodia were shifted to Laos and Vietnam due to Cambodian government policy, which closed the project. In 1963 there were about 60 volunteers in Indochina; by the time IVS left Indochina twelve years later, approximately 800 volunteers had served in the region. Tragedy struck IVS. Eleven men were killed or died in accidents during this period. Two volunteer men, one American and one Canadian, were captured during the Tet offensive of 1968 and imprisoned in North Vietnam for five years. A woman volunteer, who was also captured, was released in a matter of weeks.

Syria - 1963-64
Gaza (Jordan) - 1963-65
Algeria - 1963-77
Sabah - 1965-87
Sudan - 1966-83
Morocco - 1968-72
Congo/Zaire - 1970-74, 1986-89
Libya - 1971-73
Yemen - 1971-79

In the late 1950s IVS worked in harmony with the USAID Rural Development staff in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, but as the years progressed, and the U.S. military presence increased, this relationship began to erode. The volunteers who initially went to Vietnam were trained in agricultural techniques and were working with villagers displaced from North Vietnam. These teams were later transferred to community development projects focused on agricultural demonstrations and research projects. Later volunteers worked on malaria eradication projects, science education and classroom teaching. These volunteers were more often placed in the cities rather than the villages. Likewise, the projects and number of volunteers in Laos increased both in the northern rural development projects and teaching teams at the elementary and high school level in the cities. By the late 1960s these programs had become caught up in the turmoil and controversy of the war, and the number of volunteers was sharply reduced.

An important aspect of the Indochina period was that IVS began to recruit foreign nationals as volunteers as well as Lao and Vietnamese translators, tutors and office staff members. This was a first step in what was to become the "internationalization" of the organization.

The program in Liberia was in negotiation with the Peace Corps to create a joint project, however no agreement was reached and by June of 1963, IVS had withdrawn its volunteers and turned the program over to the Peace Corps.



Program expansion continued:

- 1963, a large group of volunteers was placed in **Algeria**, both to assist with agricultural development and to teach in village schools. Over the next 15 years more than one hundred volunteers were assigned.
- 1963, two teachers were placed for a year, as part of an UNWRA program with displaced Palestinians, in **Gaza** (Jordan).
- 1963, a two-man team was placed in **Syria** on a small technical project.
- 1965, two teachers went to **Sabah** for two years to teach civil servants English.
- 1966, another team of teachers was assigned to **Sudan** beginning 16 years of IVS work in the southern part of that warring country. Fewer than 50 volunteers were assigned in Sudan over the years, so each of the teams was small.
- 1967, a range management program was opened in **Morocco**.
- 1969, an agricultural credit program began in the **Congo**. The first team in the Congo was evacuated during the revolution in 1970 and returned to the renamed country, **Zaire**, for three more years. In the late 1980s another small group of volunteers were assigned for a three-year period.
- 1971 a two-man agricultural team was in **Libya** for two years.
- 1971, a public health and agricultural development program opened in **Yemen** to which small individual teams were assigned for the next eight years.

Nine countries received IVS volunteers during this decade, and four programs continued, which had begun in the first decade. Two programs, Cambodia and Liberia, were terminated during 1963. Several of the small projects were not sustainable or work was completed, and the pull out from Vietnam took place in 1971. At the end of 1972, seventy volunteers remained in Laos, Algeria, Sudan, Libya, Zaire, Morocco and Yemen.

In 1971 a conference was held at Harper's Ferry to consider the role of IVS in the 1970s. Participants included staff, Board of Directors and Advisory Committee members as well as former volunteers. The primary decisions were: 1) IVS broaden its financial base so that 51% of its funding be obtain from sources other than the U.S. government; 2) diversify programs in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the United States; and 3) achieve multinational representation among volunteers, Board and staff. This group had the responsibility and opportunity for considering the present and future role of IVS as an organization in a global context. Their goal was 500-1000 volunteers in the field by 1975. While these hopes did not come to fruition, the conference did set IVS on new directions for the future.

***John Provinse, Executive Director, November 1964
until his death in January 1965***

Arthur Z. Gardiner, Executive Director, 1965-70

Richard J. Peters, Executive Director, 1971-74

THE THIRD DECADE, 1973-82

Financial problems were besetting IVS by 1973. The organization had been over-committed in Laos and Vietnam and was now faced with a new challenge to find funding that would release its dependency on USAID grants. In Laos a small group of teachers was still in place following the change of government, however by 1975 the entire program was closed, ending the Indochina period 21 years after the first volunteers entered Laos. After 14 years in Algeria, IVS withdrew in 1977.

In **Indonesia** one volunteer was placed to assist the Indonesian National Voluntary Program with funding from CARE. Another lone volunteer in **Madagascar** provided technical advice for water projects with funding from Church World Services, and the last volunteer in Zaire was completing his tour and closed the program. A married couple spent a year with *Accion Cultural Popular* in **Colombia** as teachers/administrators at farmer training institutes.

In the newly independent **Republic of Bangladesh** contracts were being negotiated and sites selected for volunteer teams. The initial programs in rural development focused on agriculture, siculture and horticulture, community health and family planning. Later disaster relief became an important part of the program.

IVS continued to expand. In 1975 a contract was signed with yet another emerging nation, **Papua New Guinea**, for projects in public health, public works, business management and agriculture and sericulture. In **Mauritania**, a dozen volunteers overall were assigned to water resource, agriculture and public health services. Another long-term program was established in **Botswana** to develop subsistence and commercial horticulture and support for local rural development organizations as well as financial and agricultural resource management.

In the Andes, skilled volunteers in agriculture, public health and community development were placed in **Ecuador**. The projects were focused in the highlands and the Amazon basin area among the indigenous people of the region, the most marginalized by the government. The following year similar programs were opened in **Bolivia**, later a crop substitution program in the coca-growing region was added. A program for vocational training instruction in health, agriculture, horticulture and cooperative management was opened in **Honduras**.

In Bangladesh, Ecuador and Bolivia the programs would be expanded to utilize the talents of college and technical school trained national volunteer technicians. They, in turn, worked at the village level providing training in simple health care, small business management and

Bangladesh - 1973-2002
Ecuador - 1974-2002
Bolivia - 1975-2001
Indonesia - 1974-75
Madagascar - 1975-77
Colombia - 1975-76
Mauritania - 1975-79
Papua New Guinea - 1975-84
Botswana - 1975-88
Honduras - 1975-87

agricultural techniques. These three programs were to continue throughout the life of IVS. At the end of 1982 there were 15 volunteers in the field in Bangladesh, Ecuador, Bolivia, Honduras, Sudan, Botswana and Papua New Guinea and a Washington office staff of twelve. During this decade more than 60% of the volunteers were internationals following the mandate of the Harper's Ferry agreement. The programs to which they were assigned were planned to provide technical expertise, both in problem solving and working with local organizations so that these new techniques could be applied to other local problems.

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, 1974-76
John Rigby, Executive Director, 1976-80
Nan Borton, Executive Director, 1981-1989



THE FOURTH DECADE, 1983-92

In 1983, the IVS staff and Board again undertook a serious review of program planning and development. The financial situation was precarious; USAID general funding was coming to an end and a matching grant request was pending. The major issue was economies of scale, small projects with one to five volunteers in place were expensive to operate and maintain and often closed quickly. By now the IVS overall program approach was the transfer of skills by training local people to meet immediate community

Zimbabwe - 1983-92
Caribbean - 1983-89
Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent
Ethiopia - 1984
Cape Verde - 1987-88
Mali - 1988
Thailand - 1991-95
Vietnam -- 1992-2002
Cambodia - 1992-2002

needs in agriculture and non-agriculture income generation, health, business management and cooperative development. It was clear that larger contingents of volunteers should be placed in fewer programs. By this time, "volunteers" were skilled professionals who came to projects with their families and were relatively expensive to support. It was estimated that one married volunteer in Africa cost about \$40,000 per year. Fielding these skilled volunteers in sizeable numbers would incur expenses that IVS could not manage due to its limited budget.

The program in the Sudan was closed after 17 years due to staffing problems during the continuing civil war and the expense of operations in the country. Also during the year agreement was reached with the government of **Zimbabwe** for program development and the first staff person was sent to plan specific projects. The first priority was the resettlement of people from over-populated and marginal tribal areas to more productive formerly colonial owned commercial farms.

In 1984 IVS took a new approach opening a regional program in the **Caribbean Basin**, which assigned a multi-disciplinary team to establish a multi-national regional program. Volunteers were each assigned to a local host organization. Their task was to improve economic opportunities by building and strengthening the capabilities and skills of community-based private economic development organizations. When the project closed all the volunteers were native to the Caribbean. This project became the first IVS venture to make the transition to an independent, indigenously managed development agency, Caribbean Advisory and Professional Services (CAPS).

At the same time, another new approach was attempted when IVS worked with Africare to locate medical staff for an Africare clinic in **Ethiopia**. One placement was made with the hope that IVS would gain entry into Ethiopia for more traditional IVS programs. However, funding for such expansion could not be obtained.

In 1987 an IVS technical advisor was sent to **Cape Verde** to help design and plan a new cooperative project in conjunction with the Universalist Unitarian Service Committee for a period of a year. A similar attempt in 1988 with a colleague agency project in **Mali** was not implemented. However a collaboration with the Methodist Church of **Zaire** was very successful, and five health care professionals and construction workers spent a total of four years working with the refugee population in the western part of the country.

In 1991, IVS supported three international volunteers for *Empower*, an NGO in **Thailand**, to assist in HIV/AIDS education within the communities of sex workers in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Two more collegial agreements were reached in **Vietnam** and **Cambodia** in 1992. The first was with the Vietnamese Women's Union, a governmental organization that operates like an NGO, to provide HIV/AIDS education in clinics for commercial sex workers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and the second with *Indradevi*, a Cambodian NGO, for similar work in Phnom Penh.

The placement of IVS volunteers with collegial agencies was one of two significant changes in the role IVS had now adopted in development. The other, and far more significant, change was recruiting and placing national volunteers in Ecuador, Bolivia, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh. These volunteers were college and technical school graduates whose skills were not being utilized due to vast under employment in their countries. Like the international volunteers, they were compensated at a rate far lower than a comparable job in their country and were expected to be involved on a grassroots basis in the community development projects to which they were assigned. Over the years these national volunteers became as dedicated to the spirit of IVS as any U.S. volunteer. Thus by the

beginning of the 1990s, over 80% of IVS staff and volunteers were host country nationals or internationals.

As another decade ended, the projects in Botswana, Honduras and Zimbabwe had been closed, however the long-term programs remained in operation in Bangladesh, Ecuador and Bolivia. IVS now had 22 international volunteers and staff and ten national volunteers in the field with a Washington staff of nine.

David R. Smock, Executive Director, 1989-91
Linda Worthington-Don Luce, Co-executive Directors, 1991-93



THE FINAL DECADE, 1993-2002

In the mid-1990s, the final Cooperative Agreement with USAID had ended with IVS unable to match a significant portion of the funds. A small institutional development grant from USAID, made to computerize both the Washington office and the three remaining country programs, was 90% matched by virtue of in-kind contributions of goods and services. USAID grants had provided funds for program development and Washington costs. Further U.S. government funding would come as sub-grants for specific projects in the overseas programs. The financial was now critical.

While assigning international volunteers to national development organizations had been undertaken during the 1980s, moving into the area of HIV/AIDS within a special population was a new direction. No IVS volunteers were assigned in either Vietnam or Cambodia, but consultations by Washington staff took place on a yearly basis, and IVS provided some support for national staff people. In effect, IVS became a granting organization rather than implementing grassroots development projects, which distanced it further from its original roots in volunteerism and rural development. IVS had placed public health professionals in the field since the 1950s, but they worked either in hospitals, training nurses and administrators, or in village settings training village health workers. Now, multi-national and PVO organizations were providing medical assistance for the victims of HIV/AIDS. IVS was

not doing public health programs but participating in HIV/AIDS education programs. Unfortunately, IVS was unable to build on this partial return to Indochina and to develop broader based, more traditional programs because the competition for limited funds was overwhelming.

Two other attempts were made to rebuild during this period. An idea that had been explored in the 1980s was reconsidered, entering into an alliance with a larger PVO. Encouraged by USAID, IVS entered into an alliance with PACT, which appeared to offer a positive direction since the two had shared resources and projects in the past. It was hoped the alliance would provide needed assistance in some joint program development and give IVS the opportunity to move back into significant development work. Unfortunately, this alliance became little more than a leasing arrangement and in little over a year was disbanded.

The other program possibility was placing experienced, short-term, self-funded, volunteers in national NGOs and schools in countries where IVS was working. Two university professors worked for a summer in Hanoi with a Vietnamese NGO. While their experience was successful, there was little interest from potential volunteers and too small a staff in Washington to undertake the kind of planning or recruitment that would be required to implement the size program that was envisioned.

As the new century began, USAID policies on grants changed; institutional donors preferred to fund programs in country rather than through Washington; and the financial climate of the U.S. began a downward spiral. IVS was in dire financial straits. The Board of Directors was faced with the decision to dissolve IVS. Although there was virtually no Washington staff, the programs in Ecuador, Bolivia and Bangladesh were still viable. Over the preceding 15 years, the question of closing had often arisen, but nostalgia and a conviction that the mission of IVS was still valid, had encouraged earlier Boards to continue operations. This was no longer an option.

However, before IVS closed, a commitment was made to establish the remaining programs as national NGOs. This plan had been underway for several years, which made implementation a realistic goal. By 1999, Bolivia had received its national status. In Ecuador plans were already in process for establishing a national NGO, *Fundacion Mingo/IVS*, with a grant from the Inter-American Foundation. Shortly before IVS dissolved, *Fundacion Mingo* became a national NGO. The nationalizing was well underway in Bangladesh, as well, and its national NGO status as *IVS Bangladesh* was secured. In these three countries, as had been the case in the Caribbean program over a decade earlier, the staff and volunteers were all native to their country at the time of the transition. It was with great pride that IVS was able to achieve the goal of "sustainable development" in these countries. The devoted IVS volunteers in Bolivia, Ecuador and Bangladesh also celebrated their indigenous status with much gratitude for their long association with IVS.

Don Luce, Executive Director, 1993-96
Parker F. Hallberg, Executive Director, 1996-97
Anne D. Shirk, Executive Director, 1998-2002

IN CONCLUSION

Mission Statement, 2002

International Voluntary Services seeks to build self-sustaining human and institutional capabilities for economic and social development by engaging volunteers both nationally and internationally. IVS volunteers, often at the grassroots level, build the collegial relationships necessary to identify and address community needs in our partner countries while also seeking to promote the values of volunteerism in the evolution of democratic civil societies.

International Voluntary Services has had a long and remarkable history. Its final mission statement recognized the new realities of development. However, the organization was not able to develop stable programs that reinforced its commitment to participation in efforts to combat poverty, hunger and inequality. This cursory summary of the history holds within it the issues that IVS confronted, which were never fully resolved.

First, the financial situation was always a concern. IVS began with minimum funding and never developed a strong fiscal base. Projects were often undertaken outside of budget in the hope that a small beginning would result in a well-funded larger program. This seldom happened, and the projects were closed. IVS was initially funded entirely by the U.S. government, and it never was able to lose its reliance on government funds. By the 1970s USAID required that PVO recipients must have at least 20% non-governmental funding, and some years IVS barely achieved that goal. Funding criteria changed in other ways as donors preferred to make grants directly to country projects rather than through Washington based organizations.

Second, programs were frequently reactive, responding to special requests, rather than evolving from a concrete development plan. The result was many projects in cooperation with national NGOs required only one or two volunteers, which vitiated the impact of IVS achievements. Only in Vietnam, Laos and Algeria were the economies of size achieved with groups of volunteers at work. In the two Andean nations and Bangladesh, as international volunteers began to work along side national volunteers, the programs burgeoned and provided the broad grassroots assistance and relationships envisioned by the founders.

Third, the role of the IVS volunteers changed. Volunteers were no longer young college graduates, technically trained in specific fields or "generalists" who were assigned in community development and teaching roles. In the 1970s the decision to "internationalize" the volunteer group and the request for skilled technicians to fill positions in the developing world resulted in older professional volunteers, a majority of whom were not Americans. Volunteer recruitment became skill-based with requests to fill specific technical or academic positions. IVS lost a strong resource, for there were fewer returning U.S. volunteers to share their experiences and encourage future volunteers. From 1976 through 2002, fewer than 40 Americans volunteers were placed in field programs.

Finally, IVS programs were on the edges of the developing world. Volunteers were placed in countries where there was political instability or civil war, which caused programs to be closed. Volunteers in Egypt and the Congo had to be evacuated briefly, and in other countries the total American presence was withdrawn. Negotiating programs with newly emerging countries required modifications of program aims to meet government requirements for participation in rural projects.

Could IVS have done things differently, is a question that should not be asked. IVS, for nearly 50 years, made significant contributions to an understanding of volunteerism in its deepest sense, in this country and in 40 countries around the world. Crops that were introduced by IVS volunteers still flourish, teachers who were taught or trained by volunteers learned a great deal about people-to-people relationships, and four national NGOs carry forward the mission and spirit of IVS. The lessons learned and the breadth of experience gained by each volunteer is incalculable. The IVS experience must fill everyone who has been a part of it with deep pride and gratitude.





IVSAA, P.O. Box 765, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425, ivsaa@aol.com