



IVCO 2024

Building and sustaining connections for change: volunteering for solidarity

**Newcastle upon Tyne,
9-12 September 2024**

Northumbria University has been named as the first academic institution to host the prestigious International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCO) conference.

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First university hosting of international volunteering conference highlights value of collaboration

Northumbria University has been confirmed as the first academic institution to host the prestigious International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCO) conference organised annually by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, known as Forum, in 2024.

[Forum](#) is the most significant global network of organisations that work with

volunteers across the globe to achieve sustainable development goals. Since 2001, the IVCO conference has brought together leaders, staff and volunteers of volunteering agencies from around the world, alongside representatives of government and wider civil society, in a unique dialogue focusing on the challenges and opportunities currently facing volunteering and development, including the climate crisis and displacement of people.

Following a successful annual conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia earlier this year, Northumbria is leading preparations to host next year's conference at the University's City Campus in Newcastle upon Tyne, with support from Ireland-based social justice organisation, [Comhlámh](#). The IVCO 2024 conference will take place from 9 to 12 September 2024 with the theme of *Building and Sustaining Connections for Change: Volunteering for Solidarity*.

[Professor Matt Baillie Smith](#), Dean of Research Culture at Northumbria University, has actively engaged with the Forum network in previous years and also joined the 2023 conference as a guest speaker. His research focuses on volunteering in humanitarian and development contexts, and young people and the climate emergency.

He said: "After attending the conference in previous years and seeing the impact it has by bringing together brilliant people from across the sector and enabling change to happen, it's a huge honour to be bringing the conference to the North East of England, and to host it at Northumbria.

"The University has a global reputation for academic excellence and our Centre for Global Development is a growing research group connecting expert academics, practitioners, policy makers and students who work together to create knowledge, insights and awareness of key issues around volunteering, humanitarian crises and development.

"We can't wait to work with our partners at Comhlámh to welcome conference delegates and visitors to our wonderful region. The event will strengthen bridges between academics and practitioners in this sector and it presents a rare chance to foster new collaborative efforts, driving evidence-based solutions, community impact and meaningful change when it comes to volunteer participation in development efforts."

The Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers, known as

Comhlámh, is a Forum member organisation with nearly 50 years of experience in supporting people and organisations to mobilise and respond to many of the unprecedented challenges facing the world. It has also developed a niche in international volunteering and, through Comhlámh's Code of Practice, provides a set of standards for Irish Volunteer Sending Agencies facilitating international placements.

Dr Caroline Murphy, CEO of Comhlámh, said: "IVCO 2024 marks a unique collaboration between Northumbria University and Comhlámh, rooted in social justice and a shared interest in deepening solidarity-based collaborations and relationships through volunteering. This partnership extends Forum's dedication to building robust research and an evidence base for volunteering.

"Conference participants will connect with practitioners and researchers working on volunteering, climate change, displacement and other vital global issues. We are delighted to be working with the Northumbria team to make this happen."

Holding the event in Newcastle upon Tyne will also provide a unique opportunity to promote knowledge exchange between organisations working on inequality in the global South, and organisations tackling social justice through volunteering in an area of the global North historically characterised by persistent inequality and poverty.

Northumbria University's City Campus in Newcastle upon Tyne.

[Dr Bianca Fadel](#), a researcher from Northumbria's [Centre for Global Development](#), explained: "The conference will allow us to critically consider many questions in relation to the roles of volunteers in an increasingly unequal world characterised by division and crisis.

"We will celebrate and explore how volunteering can create connections at diverse scales – community, national and international – building new solidarities that challenge the traditional focus of aid and development flows and enable meaningful and lasting social change."

Northumbria University academics are creating a world-leading hub of research expertise, knowledge exchange and learning on volunteering in

humanitarian crises and development contexts. Their work is supported through significant funding from UK research councils, leading global humanitarian agencies and NGOs in the UK and internationally.

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

Further details about the IVCO 2024 conference and registration information will be released in the coming months. Keep up to date with the latest developments by visiting <https://forum-ids.org/ivco/>

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