



# weltwärts

Der Freiwilligendienst des Bundesministeriums für  
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung

## **Guideline for the development volunteers service “weltwärts”\***



An initiative launched by the  
Bundesministerium für  
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit  
und Entwicklung

\* “weltwärts” = “world-wards”

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P.O. Box 12 06 19, 53048 Bonn, Germany

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**Officer responsible:** Hans-Peter Baur

**Final editing:** Santiago Alonso, Laura Fuesers

**Design and layout:** neues handeln GmbH Köln/Berlin

**Front page photo:** Ruprecht Stempell, Köln

Contents	Page
1. Context and aims of the new volunteer service	04
2. Gender equality	05
3. Volunteer profile	05
4. Profile of the partner projects and assignments in developing countries	07
5. Profile of the sending agencies	09
6. Support for the volunteers	11
7. Legal and financial arrangements	14
8. Administrative procedures and processes	17
9. OECD/DAC country list	18

## 1. Context and aims of the new volunteer service

There is a great deal of interest among young people in working as a volunteer in a developing country. For society, it is good that young people want to work in developing countries and acquire some international experience and qualifications that will be of help to them in their future lives and when choosing a career.

There are currently far more young people looking for opportunities to work abroad as volunteers than there are places. The existing voluntary service opportunities offered by private organisations using their own funds frequently involve high costs for the volunteers. We want young people from lower income groups to also have opportunities to do volunteer work abroad. The new volunteer service is aimed at young women in particular, since they are not eligible for support under the alternative service arrangements for young men who opt out of military service (cf. No. 2).

That is why the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is launching a new volunteer service involving assignments in developing countries, which will be financed from public funds. The idea behind the volunteer service is the successful formula of “learning by serving” and its aims are twofold: to achieve added developmental value for the partner projects in terms of help towards self-help, and to spark new interest in development issues in Germany.

The new volunteer service will make an effective contribution to development policy information and education work in terms of “global learning” and towards nurturing a new generation of development workers. It will enhance intercultural understanding and help increase awareness and acceptance within society of how development policy issues impact on our future. In addition to acquiring a knowledge of foreign languages and of specialist development topics, the volunteers will also learn about intercultural communication, socio-cultural cooperation and social responsibility, all valuable skills in an increasingly globalised learning and working environment. The volunteer service will also help to reinforce civil society structures in the developing countries and in Germany.

Germany has a broad range of established aid and sending agencies which already have flexible, non-bureaucratic schemes for development-oriented volunteer work. The current concept is therefore for a volunteer service that will be implemented through existing agencies, without special legislation, using simple procedures.

## 2. Gender equality

Women are excluded from the financial support that is available under the existing Civilian Service Act for those engaging in alternative service activities. 70% of the 1,500 or so inquiries received by the BMZ in the first four weeks after the political announcement was made about the new volunteer service came from young women. The sending agencies (cf. No. 5) shall therefore make sure that women receive proper consideration when filling volunteer posts. The BMZ will pay particular attention to this aspect when implementing the volunteer service programme.

## 3. Volunteer profile

The new volunteer service is to be open to as broad a cross-section of young people as possible. However, because we have a special responsibility towards our young people they will have to meet certain requirements in order to ensure that they are able to make a meaningful contribution as volunteers.

- The volunteers must have passed their 18th and not yet reached their 29th birthday at the time of signing the pertinent agreements with the German sending agency.
- They must be German citizens or non-German citizens who are permanently resident<sup>2</sup> and have the right of residence in Germany.
- They must be open-minded, eager to learn and team players who are interested in the culture and conditions in developing

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants must have made Germany their long-term base and lived there for at least 3 years; they may not be seconded to their country of origin

countries and are prepared to work hard and with dedication in the country to which they are sent.

- They must either have completed a vocational training course after graduating from school at 15 or 16; or have graduated from secondary school at 18 or 19 having passed the school-leaving examination qualifying them to enter higher education; or have passed a similar school-leaving examination; or have a university degree; or they must offer other proof of their suitability for volunteer service, e.g. experience from doing alternative service.
- They must have a good basic knowledge of a language spoken in the host country.
- They must participate in all the components and events that make up the special training programme for volunteers (cf. No. 6).
- They must be prepared to get actively involved in development policy activities before, during and after their assignment abroad. After returning home they should use their experience gained abroad to make an active contribution to development education work in Germany.

To ensure the success of their period as volunteers in a developing country, applicants will be prepared by the sending agency during an orientation and selection phase (cf. No. 6). A second stint as a development volunteer is only possible in justifiable exceptional cases, and there must be a reasonable gap between assignments.

## 4. Profile of the partner projects and assignments in developing countries

The volunteers will work in projects run by local partner organisations in developing countries that are making an important contribution towards development. They will work full time (usually 40 hours a week) and will be completely integrated in the local organisations. Induction and training periods count as part of the assignment period. Holiday entitlement will be in line with the usual statutory arrangements in the country concerned. The work as a volunteer is educational, but it is also real work and calls for a high level of commitment and dedication.

Assignments can be to any of the countries in the OECD list of developing countries (cf. attached country list). African countries are to be taken into particular consideration, since the German government places a high value on cooperation with these countries in its development policy. Possible sectors for assignments are the priority areas and sectors<sup>2</sup> of German development policy, provided that the particular project and the project environment are suitable for a volunteer service assignment.

For the volunteer service to be successful, it is vital that the partner side's views and requirements are taken into due consideration. In particular, the local project executing agency must have an express need for temporary volunteers with a clear timeframe and goals for the work to be done. The volunteers' contribution must be valued; they must be given proper induction, work and support. Paid positions must not be replaced by volunteers (if appropriate a tandem solution can be adopted).

The local partner organisations will make a substantial contribution by providing proper induction, work and support for the volunteers. For this they will allocate to each volunteer a mentor who has experience of dealing with volunteers and is able to give the volunteer comprehensive support. The support provided by the mentor will cover a wide array of aspects, ranging from collecting

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<sup>2</sup> e.g. poverty reduction, education, health, food security/agriculture, emergency and transitional aid, environmental and resource protection, water, human rights, promoting democracy, youth employment and sport

the volunteers from the airport to their induction and work in the assignment location, to training them and keeping in touch with past volunteers. The mentors should not be members of staff who will be working directly with the volunteer. The partner organisations will also work in close cooperation with the sending agencies – on the basis of clear agreements and goals. Particularly when difficulties emerge or emergencies arise, the respective organisations, together with the sending agencies, will take any necessary steps without delay.

The length of the voluntary service assignments will be flexible, ranging from 6 to 24 consecutive months. In order to ensure the necessary integration of the volunteers into the structures of the partner organisation, the usual period will be 12 to 18 months. It will be possible for two volunteers to have an overlap of one month within an assignment, so that the new volunteer can be shown the ropes.

In addition to the new volunteer posts that are set up, financial support can also be given for existing posts under current “informal” volunteer service programmes. However, the local project agencies should not be overwhelmed with demands. In particular, there must be a reasonable ratio between the number of volunteer posts in a partner project and the number of staff employed by the partner organisation. This aspect will be checked by the BMZ as it approves each individual volunteer post.

## 5. Profile of the sending agencies

Volunteers can be sent abroad by all suitable non-profit aid and sending agencies whose headquarters and centre of operations are in Germany. In the case of judicial persons under private law, their charitable or non-profit status must be recognised by the tax office. Sole traders are not eligible for this scheme.

The sending agencies will bear full responsibility for the success of the volunteer service and will be the point of contact between the volunteers, the project agencies or places of assignment, and German society. They will work closely in partnership with suitable experienced project agencies in the developing countries – on the basis of clear agreements and goals – and must have the technical know-how, staff and organisational capacity to meet the criteria and quality standards laid down in the present paper. Their tasks will be, in particular:

- selecting, advertising and providing support for the volunteer posts in the developing countries,
- finding and selecting applicants,
- supporting the volunteers and ensuring that their rights are respected,
- paying the expenses (cf. No. 7) and insurance of the volunteers, and
- providing a comprehensive in-service programme of specialised training for the volunteers (cf. No. 6).

The sending agencies must document their activities in the form of annual business and financial reports that are open to the public. No support will be forthcoming for agencies that present dishonest or misleading information to the public. Both the volunteer and the sending agency will write a report about the work done by the volunteer, which will be made available to all involved.

The sending organisations will work continuously on their own internal quality development, dialoguing all the time with the partner organisations, and will use appropriate umbrella consultancy organisations, such as fid-Qualitätsmanagement or QUIFD (“Quality in Volunteer Services” label), which are based on voluntary commitments and external monitoring.

Suitable organisations that have not yet sent volunteers to developing countries can begin with a limited number of volunteers so as to gain the requisite experience. The BMZ will examine the possibility of providing financial support for such first-time arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

## 6. Support for the volunteers

The sending agencies will provide the following minimum level of support for the volunteers<sup>3</sup>:

- **Orientation phase / selection of volunteers.** The selection procedure will be based on suitable methods, taking into account all important aspects. For the applicants it will begin with a process of induction and orientation. The project agency on the ground will be included in the selection of the volunteers.
- **Organising the stay abroad.** The sending organisations will provide active support for the organisational preparations in connection with the stay abroad. Before the departure of the volunteer they will check in particular whether the necessary visa and, if required, residence and/or work permit have been acquired and whether the volunteers will be required to pay social security contributions or tax in the partner country. They will also help the volunteers with all other travel arrangements (vaccinations, medical check-ups, lists of the most important local addresses, general code of conduct, etc.). During government negotiations with partner countries, the BMZ will encourage the partner side to give favourable consideration to the applications. Generally speaking, a doctor's certificate that the volunteer is in good health will be all that is necessary; a certificate stating that the volunteer is fit and able to live in a tropical climate will only be required in special cases. For crisis and emergency situations, the sending agencies will organise a contact person for the volunteers and their immediate families who is available around the clock and who will usually be known to the volunteers personally. The sending agencies, the volunteers and the project agencies will sign a special kind of trilateral written contract (not conferring employee status) which contains binding provisions on all the aspects that are important for the success of the assignment and for the cooperation between the parties. A general agreement between the sending agency and the partner organisation relating to the relevant assignment, with an agreement between

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<sup>3</sup>The minimum standards are based on the best practices of sending agencies and the criteria defined, for example, in the QUIFD label (Quality in Volunteer Services)

the sending agency and the volunteer elaborated in consultation with the partner organisation as an addendum, will also suffice. The tasks, rights and duties of all parties must be clearly stated and agreed whichever the arrangements.

- **Preparing the volunteers.** In addition to covering educational and training aspects, the preparatory seminars will also devote appropriate attention to development policy issues and requirements. The sending agencies and volunteers will work together in order to reach a clear understanding about the assignment and the conditions in the assignment location. In particular, the induction to the actual living and working conditions in the host country must also be carried out in the country before the assignment begins, if possible in a separate seminar. Language courses and other training courses will not only be offered in Germany but also in the country itself before and during the assignment.
- **Support during the assignment.** The volunteers will send a short written report back every three months. After the first third of the stay if possible (and no later than the halfway mark) a mid-term seminar for reflection and strategic planning will be offered for volunteers from various projects either in the host country or on a regional basis. This will be attended by the volunteers and by representatives from the sending agencies (various sending agencies may come together to provide a joint mid-term seminar; in exceptional cases a sending agency may be represented by another agency). The sending agencies will provide in-service training themselves or via other providers and encourage the volunteers to act on their own initiative and responsibility in their posts.
- **Post-assignment arrangements.** After they return to Germany, the volunteers will receive a certificate which will be awarded jointly by the sending organisation and the project agency or assignment project. The sending agencies will hold a seminar for the returnees where they will have an opportunity to evaluate and reflect on their assignments. Attendance is compulsory. The agencies will also actively help returnees to pass on what they have learned and to engage in civil society and the field of development cooperation in Germany.

All told, the support programme plus the language courses will add up to at least 25 days of compulsory seminars. The orientation and preparation phase should account for at least 12 days, plus 5 days for the mid-term seminar and 5 days for the seminar for returnees. The remaining 3 days can be used flexibly as needed. Any seminars or courses in development policy or other specialised areas that the volunteers attend during a period of up to six months after they return to Germany may also be counted towards these 3 days. The seminars will be designed by the sending agencies flexibly and in line with needs. They can also turn to experienced training institutions for support.<sup>4</sup> In addition, they will actively encourage the formation of networks among the volunteers and the project agencies in the developing countries and regularly involve former volunteers in seminars.

The sending agencies will ensure that the quality of the seminars is consistently of the same high standard, e.g. by employing teaching staff with officially recognised qualifications, by keeping student/teacher ratios to a maximum of 15:1 and by giving appropriate attention to all priority fields of learning (especially intercultural communication/cooperation, development policy, knowledge of the country, project management and language skills). To this end, increased emphasis will be placed on networking with other sending agencies and on using umbrella institutions if appropriate. Quality control and the further development of the support programme will be an important task during the introductory phase of the new volunteer service.

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<sup>4</sup>e.g. the preparatory training centre for development cooperation postings in Bad Honnef (InWEnt), the IBZW (Internationales Bildungszentrum Witzenhausen), the Servicestelle fid of the AGEH or other organisations

## 7. Legal and financial arrangements

The sending agencies will receive project-related funding of up to 580 euros per person per month from the BMZ:

- up to 350 euros is for pocket money, board and lodging, insurance, travel to the seminars and the travel costs of the volunteers from and back to Germany, and to support the partner projects in the developing country;
- up to 230 euros is for special educational support (see task description at No. 6), and to support the partner projects in the developing country.

Up to 20% of the respective amounts can be transferred from one of the above uses to the other without prior approval from the BMZ.

The insurance cover shall comprise, as a minimum, international health insurance, accident insurance including invalidity and death (insured amount of 200,000 euros with a multiplying factor of 225%), long-term care insurance, third party liability and repatriation. The costs for the international health insurance will be covered by the BMZ separately. The volunteers will be responsible themselves for keeping up their health and long-term care insurance at home in Germany during their stay abroad.

The financial support will cover up to 75% of the total costs that are eligible for support in connection with a volunteer assignment. The sending agency must provide at least 25% from its own funds. The following costs are eligible for inclusion within the agency's 25%: funds used by the sending agency to send the volunteers abroad and to support the partner projects, and in-kind contributions made by the partner organisations for board and lodging (based on normal local standards). Administrative and infrastructure costs incurred by the sending agency are not eligible.

A major aim of official financing for the new volunteer programme is to reduce the financial barriers that existed in the past with the "informal" volunteer services. The deployment will therefore be

free of charge for the volunteers. The sending agencies will not charge any fees for finding places or processing the applications. The volunteers will receive at least 100 euros a month pocket money from the sending agencies and appropriate board, lodging and travel expenses. Once they have been selected for the programme, the volunteers will begin – starting in the preparatory phase – helping the sending agencies as much as they can with the work of educating the public and raising donations for the programme or the partner project, e.g. at information events held in schools, at Christmas markets and at events organised by private charitable groups. Raising donations for the assignment is expressly not a prerequisite for the volunteer service. If any funds are raised a ceiling of 150 euros per month spent abroad shall apply. The selection of the volunteers and their participation in such events will be solely based on the personal qualities and interests of the young people and must not be made dependent on the level of donations raised for the project. The sending agencies will give special consideration to and encourage applications from young people with a low-income background. The BMZ will pay particular attention to these aspects.

During the induction phase, the BMZ will check whether funds can be made available for targeted support of the development information and education work done by returning volunteers and for supporting the partner organisations (training for mentors, networking among partner organisations, etc.) as part of the follow-up measures.

The financial support provided by the BMZ means that some of the budget and donation funds formerly used by the sending agencies for their “informal” volunteer services will now be available for other purposes. These funds are to be used to increase the support for the volunteers and project agencies in the developing countries. To back up this work, the BMZ is setting up a modern, interactive internet portal to promote overall transparency, communication and networking among the volunteers and support their involvement in development policy activities after they return to Germany.

An assignment under the development volunteer service can be counted as alternative service abroad in accordance with section 14b of the Civilian Service Act, provided that the criteria of the present paper are met.

The German government is endeavouring to secure the right to child benefit during the assignment abroad by means of an amendment to section 32 of the Income Tax Act and section 2 of the Federal Child Benefits Act. The German government will also seek to ensure that the time spent as a volunteer is recognised as the kind of service that entitles those who have completed it to preferential treatment when university places are allocated through the central allocation system.

Sending agencies that do not meet the criteria and standards of the new volunteer service will be excluded from any financial support. The volunteer posts for which financial support is already being provided in accordance with section 14c of the Civilian Service Act or under the Child and Youth Services Plan and similar posts supported by funds from the European Volunteers Programme are not eligible for support from the BMZ. The concept for the new volunteer service will be tested in an initial three-year introductory phase.

## 8. Administrative procedures and processes

The sending agencies and volunteer posts will be officially recognised by the BMZ through an application process that will be as simple as possible. In the case of agencies under the umbrella of the ADiA or the FSJ/FÖJ, the examination of the overlapping agency criteria will be based on a simplified procedure. The BMZ will examine whether a simplified process can be used in the case of agencies with the QUIFD label. Proposed new project places for the volunteer service will be first submitted to the Federal Foreign Office for them to comment on foreign policy aspects.

The financial support will be approved as an overall package for the envisaged assignments to recognised volunteer posts for a given year. The sending agencies will submit a brief multi-assignment application in good time for the posts in question. The funds will then be called as assignments are actually implemented. Any changes to the volunteer post or at the project executing agency / assignment location during the period of the assignment must be communicated to the BMZ immediately.

The BMZ will set up an administrative office (weltwärts-Sekretariat) at DED [the German Development Service] to handle the financial and administrative arrangements for the programme.

Each sending agency is entitled to submit applications directly to the BMZ via the administrative office at DED. Cooperation and consortiums between the individual sending organisations are welcomed.

## OECD/DAC country list

All countries are in principle potential destinations for weltwärts volunteers. With some countries, however, it is not possible to consider them for the development volunteers service because of the difficult overall situation and/or security problems. The BMZ will check each individual case to determine whether the conditions in the respective countries, regions and projects meet the requirements for a volunteer assignment.

### EUROPE

Albania  
Belarus  
Bosnia and  
Herzegovina  
Croatia  
Macedonia  
Moldova  
Serbia and  
Montenegro  
Turkey  
Ukraine

### AFRICA

#### North Africa:

Algeria  
Egypt  
Libya  
Morocco  
Tunisia

#### sub-Saharan Africa:

Angola  
Benin  
Botswana  
Burkina Faso  
Burundi

Cameroon  
Central African  
Republic  
Cape Verde  
Chad  
Comoros  
Congo, Democratic  
Republic  
Congo, People's  
Republic  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Djibouti  
Equatorial Guinea  
Eritrea  
Ethiopia  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Guinea  
Guinea-Bissau  
Kenya  
Lesotho  
Liberia  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mali  
Mauritania

Mauritius  
Mayotte  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Rwanda  
Saint Helena  
São Tomé and  
Príncipe  
Senegal  
Seychelles  
Sierra Leone  
Somalia  
South Africa  
Sudan  
Swaziland  
Tanzania  
Togo  
Uganda  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

### AMERICA

North/Central  
America  
Anguilla

Antigua and Barbuda  
Barbados  
Belize  
Costa Rica  
Cuba  
Dominica  
Dominican Republic  
El Salvador  
Grenada  
Guatemala  
Haiti  
Honduras  
Jamaica  
Mexico  
Montserrat  
Nicaragua  
Panama  
Saint Kitts and Nevis  
Saint Lucia  
Saint Vincent and the  
Grenadines  
Trinidad and Tobago  
Turks and Caicos  
Islands

### **SOUTH AMERICA**

Argentina  
Bolivia  
Brazil  
Chile  
Colombia  
Ecuador  
Guyana  
Paraguay  
Peru  
Suriname  
Uruguay  
Venezuela

### **ASIA**

Middle East  
Iran  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Oman  
Palestinian  
Territories  
Saudi Arabia  
Syria  
Yemen

### **SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA**

Afghanistan  
Armenia  
Azerbaijan  
Bangladesh  
Bhutan  
Georgia  
India  
Kazakhstan  
Kyrgyzstan  
Maldives  
Myanmar  
Nepal  
Pakistan  
Sri Lanka  
Tajikistan  
Turkmenistan  
Uzbekistan

### **EAST ASIA**

Cambodia  
China  
Indonesia  
Korea, Democratic  
People's Republic  
Laos  
Malaysia

Mongolia  
Philippines  
Thailand  
Timor-Leste  
Viet Nam

### **OCEANIA**

Cook Islands  
Fiji  
Kiribati  
Marshall Islands  
Micronesia  
Nauru  
Niue  
Palau  
Papua New Guinea  
Samoa  
Solomon Islands  
Tokelau  
Tonga  
Tuvalu  
Vanuatu  
Wallis and Futuna

## Contact information weltwärts - Sekretariat

P.O. Box 12 06 19

53048 Bonn

Germany

Tel.: +49 228 243 4444

Fax: +49 228 243 4443

E-Mail: [sekretariat@weltwaerts.de](mailto:sekretariat@weltwaerts.de)

Internet: [www.weltwaerts.de](http://www.weltwaerts.de)



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