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weltwärts

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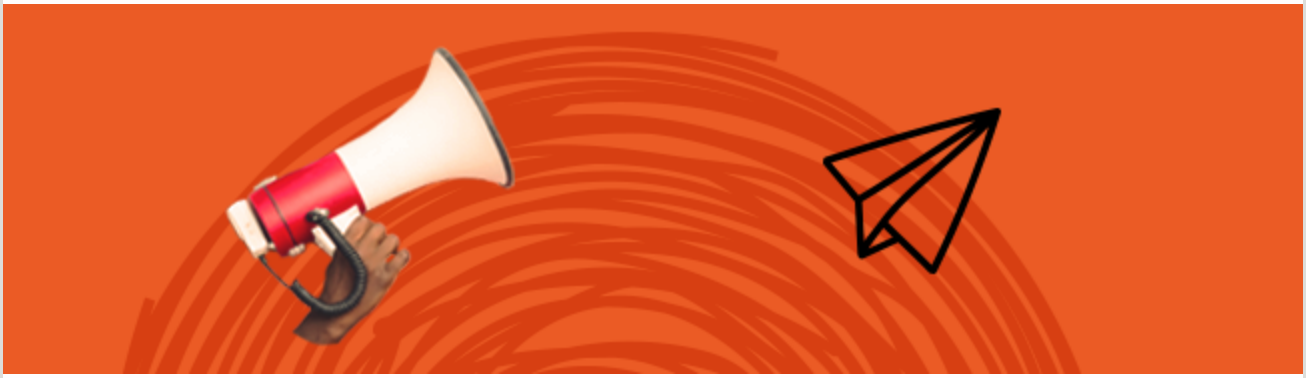

Partners in weltwärts – Newsletter for partners on the weltwärts programme

Dear partners,
weltwärts stands for new perspectives, strong networks, development goals (SDG) and human rights within the One World. The weltwärts development volunteer service embodies these ideals on multiple levels, in its programme management, at partner conferences and in various projects.
Be inspired and find out more about the wide range of weltwärts assignment opportunities available.
Happy reading! Bonne lecture ! Viel Spaß bei der Lektüre! ¡Disfruten de la lectura!

With warm regards
On behalf of the weltwärts joint operation

Ursel Biester, contact person for partner communication at the weltwärts coordination centre and
Lourens de Jong, PSC civil society representative responsible for the partner newsletter

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Achieving more together: the weltwärts community is here!

weltwärts Community Meeting in Immenhausen, May 2025. Copyright: grenzenlos e.V.

Since the start of 2025 there has been a new initiative for former weltwärts volunteers: the weltwärts community. The community provides a cross-organisation forum for former volunteers to exchange ideas with like-minded people, seek inspiration for further volunteer work and learn about qualification and funding opportunities for projects and ideas – in addition to their work for the sending organisation or independently from it. Whether in the Global South or in Germany, it doesn’t matter when or with which organisation the weltwärts service took place: the community is open to all. And what makes it extra special is that it was designed by former volunteers, together with former volunteers, for the benefit of former volunteers –

all thanks to the work of grenzenlos e.V., the association of international volunteers, in realising the project.
Partner organisations, former North-South and South-North volunteers and the roughly 130 implementing organisations in German can get involved in the Worldwide-Network (WWN), the community's social media network, events and training sessions, either online or in person. As a result, the community provides a valuable supplement to the work carried out by former volunteers for the implementing organisations – and more visibility for your activities!
Please feel free to forward this information on to your former volunteers. We look forward to fostering a growing, international community network!

- **Click here for the weltwärts community website**
- **Click here for the weltwärts community Instagram page**
- **Click here for the Worldwide-Network (WWN)**
- **Click here for the events calendar**
- **Want to register an event? Here's how.**
- **Explanatory video on the community**
- **Click here for the WhatsApp group for former volunteers with regional and thematic subgroups**

WAwN : strengthening cooperation in West Africa

Participants at the regional conference for the restart of WAwN 2025. Copyright: ALAGBO Abel

In January 2025 The West African weltwärts Network (WAwN) experienced an official relaunch after its foundation in 2016. WAwN is a regional network uniting organizations from West and Central Africa engaged in the weltwärts program, connecting organisations from Ghana, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Cameroon, Gambia, Nigeria, and Togo.
WAwN was created to strengthen collaboration, visibility, and capacity-building among Southern partner organizations. WAwN members benefit from shared resources, training, and advocacy opportunities. People can connect to WAwN through national networks or directly via the regional coordination at
If you are a weltwärts partner organization in West or Central Africa, please contact WAwN for membership. As of now, the membership is free of charge. The network welcomes contributions in knowledge-sharing, facilitation and technical support.
WAwN is open for collaboration with other regional networks for a stronger Southern voice within the weltwärts program.

→ For more information on WAwN and the founding process, please read this article

Partner conference in South Africa – a special experience

Partnerconference in South Africa. Copyright: German Red Cross in Hesse Volunta gGmbH

The partner conference for southern Africa took place in Cape Town, South Africa from 17 to 21 March, and was organised by the German

Red Cross in Hessen Volunta and Play Handball ZA. Visa problems and questions surrounding education and mentoring for volunteers were discussed. The visit of the consul general of the German Consulate General in Cape Town, who oversaw the entire first morning of the conference, was a standout moment. The atmosphere throughout the conference was characterised by respect, thoughtfulness and constructive dialogue. Controversial topics, too, were discussed in an objective and solution-oriented manner. The group dynamic was remarkably positive – a factor which made the event a special experience for many.

→ You can read a detailed report on the partner conference in South Africa here

News from programme management (meeting of 15/05/2025)

ISSUES FROM THE REGIONAL NETWORKS

In the meeting of 15 May 2025, the weltwärts networks SAwN (South African weltwärts Network) and WAwN (West African weltwärts Network) brought three issues to the attention of the programme steering committee (PSC). They requested long-term financial support for both networks, the intervention of German partner organisations willing to work together to implement accompanying measures for the programme, e.g. a founding conference, and representation on the PSC, specifically a seat on the programme steering committee.

The PSC addressed the issues and reported back that, within the scope of the weltwärts programme, financial support for ww networks in the Global South is not possible. The networks can reach out to German implementing organisations on their own initiative and jointly request accompanying measures for the programme in light of this. With regard to representation of the networks on the PSC, the PSC refers to the existing official position from the 20th PSC 2021, according to which partner organisations cannot be represented on the PSC, because the representative status of the representatives, or rather a functioning mandate procedure, cannot be ensured.

NORTH-SOUTH

In the North-South component, from 2022 to 2024 there was a slight increase in assignments of around 10 volunteers per year. This can be seen as a positive trend. For the upcoming 2025/2026 cohort, however, fewer trips have been authorised as in 2024. This can be attributed both to the increase in the funding rate for the North-South component, which came into effect this year, and the resulting higher expenses for assignments, and to the lower number of applications. The number of volunteers willing to travel abroad has decreased over the years due to behavioural changes on the part of young people, the wish for shorter volunteer services and the limited range of places of assignment. The number of implementing organisations in the ww programme also reduced. At present, 150 implementing organisations are active in the programme, of which 58 work only with the North-South component and 10 only with the South-North component. 82 implementing organisations are active in both components.

SOUTH-NORTH

The number of applications for the South-North component have decreased slightly. This can be put down to the increasing number of problems concerning the issuance of visas, among other things (delayed visa appointments or long wait times for an appointment with the embassy).

FUTURE WORK GROUPS

Tangible progress has already been made in the “future” work groups:
• The age restrictions for North-South were modified; individuals aged up to 35 can now be authorised to volunteer as an exception.
• On 1 January 2026, the pilot project “shorter volunteer services” will launch, whereby organisations can facilitate shorter services between

6 and 9 months thanks to basic funding for their structural costs, provided they look to implement this in cooperation with their partner organisations.

PUBLICITY WORK

The weltwärts coordination unit reports on planned and ongoing publicity measures as well as integrating implementing organisations and volunteers. Current activities include, among other things, the continual maintenance and further development of the weltwärts application and selection process, search engine optimisation and advertising and comprehensive work on social media. Current larger projects are, for example, targeted appeals to students, parents, teachers and in particular school pupils, among other things via a campaign on the learning platform Knowunity. School fairs are also planned.
Shared-interest groups are also presenting examples of their publicity work. The joint initiative FIJ (Freiwilliges internationales Jahr, International Volunteer Year, with over 100 participating implementing organisations) coordinates activities, for example its own fair under the name “Unterwegs weltweit” (on the go around the world), which was held for the first time at the beginning of 2025 and was very successful. FIJ also had a presence at other youth education fairs. FIJ works with employment agencies (info calls) and occasionally with schools and further education colleges in order to reach multipliers.

If you would like more information about the current issues the Programme Steering Committee is addressing, please contact your German implementing organisation. Summary minutes in English, French, Spanish and German will be sent in the summer/autumn, together with the agenda for the next Programme Steering Committee meeting (3rd December 2025).

New coalition agreement: a boost for volunteer services

Reichstag. Copyright: Photo by Ariel Szanto on Unsplash

March 2025 saw Germany elect a new government. The CDU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany, democratic conservative) is in a coalition with the CSU (Christian Social Union, sister party of the CDU) and the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany, social democratic). The coalition agreement stipulates that volunteer services will be bolstered, funded and safeguarded. The priority status of volunteer work has been preserved; volunteer services are mentioned explicitly in two sections of the agreement. Measures to boost volunteer services have been codified. The wording in Section 4.1 “Families, women, senior citizens and democracy” (p. 104, lines 3,327–3,332) states: “We will strengthen volunteer services, secure long-term funding and gradually develop the relevant structures and posts. [...] We want to enable young people to pursue a volunteer service regardless of their parents’ finances.”

You can view the coalition agreement here

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On behalf of

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development