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weltwärts

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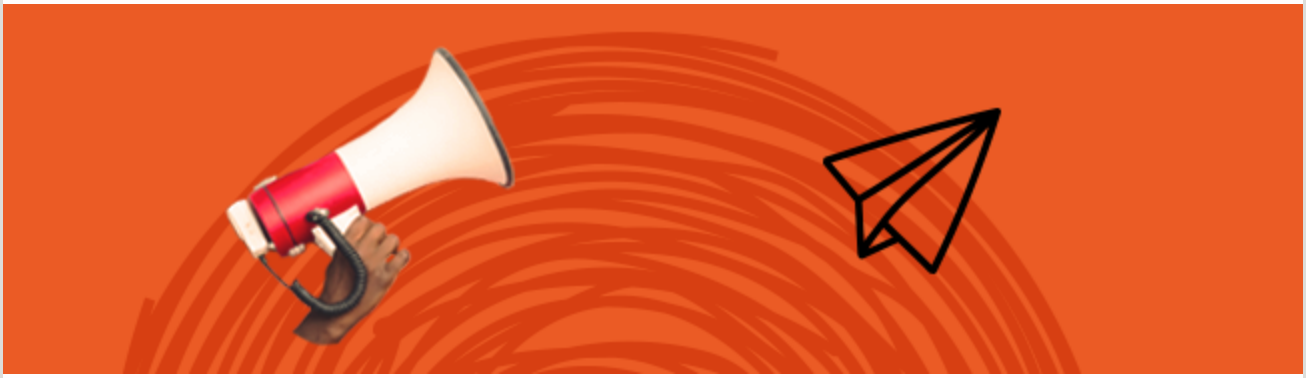

Partners in weltwärts – Newsletter for partners on the weltwärts programme

Dear partners,
weltwärts stands for new perspectives, strong networks, Sustainable Development Goals 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. Read on to find inspiration, discover the latest news from the Programme Steering Committee (marked accordingly) and learn about the wide range of weltwärts assignment opportunities.

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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Longitudinal study

Copyright: Engagement Global

We are delighted to present the first longitudinal study on weltwärts. It now scientifically proves what we know from countless encounters: weltwärts has an impact – one that is long-lasting and spans many years.

The study followed former North-South volunteers over a period of seven years and examined how their attitudes, skills and life trajectories have changed. The results impressively demonstrate how weltwärts shapes young people on a deep level – and how great an impact our collaborative efforts have.

Two key findings from the study:
• Long-term impact on attitudes and engagement: Returning volunteers are more likely than average to be involved in voluntary work, have a global mindset and are characterised by a high degree of empathy as well as international openness and an ability to network.
• Sustained interest in development: Almost 60% of respondents still engage extensively with development-related issues seven years after volunteering with weltwärts.

These findings, and many others from the study, clearly show that weltwärts offers new perspectives, reinforces attitudes and provides motivation for long-term engagement. A real success for all of us who work towards achieving this every day!

Please feel free to use the results for your own public relations work and to promote volunteer service. From May, English, Spanish and French translations will be available on the weltwärts website.

→ **Click here to read the summary report in German**

→ **Click here to read the full report in German**

Report from the partner conference in Ecuador

Participants in the Ecuador partner conference
Copyright: Maria José Almeida

The partner conference took place in Ecuador from 13 to 17 October 2025. Thanks to the excellent organisation by Open Door International and Fiides People Exchange, as well as the outstanding dedication shown by all participants, the conference was a real success.
It focused on volunteers' mental health, and the regional networks and PFIF, the association of former volunteers, also gave presentations on their work. The changing behaviour of volunteers and the resulting challenges were also discussed.

→ Read on to learn about the experience of a weltwärts Coordination Unit representative at the conference.

The weltwärts Day in Ecuador

Highlights from the weltwärts day in Ecuador
Copyright: weltwärts Network

On 4 December 2025, ‘weltwärts Day’ took place in Ecuador. Since 2012, the regional network Red Ecuador, together with the German Embassy in Ecuador, has invited all weltwärts volunteers in the country to spend a day together in Quito.
The event was enjoyed immensely by the participants and made a tangible contribution to strengthening relations between Ecuador and Germany.
Editor’s note:
Not all German embassies in the Global South organise a weltwärts Day. In some countries, other activities are organised, such as safety briefings for volunteers (e.g. in Peru and South Africa).

→ You can find further impressions here

18 years?! weltwärts!

This year, weltwärts is celebrating 18 years of life – a special anniversary. Coming of age symbolises responsibility and the future. This anniversary is to be specifically addressed in weltwärts’ public relations work.

Source: 29th PSC meeting

IVY 2026: Four pillars for lasting volunteer engagement

Copyright: Bernd Dittrich on Unsplash

All around the world, 2026 will be a year dedicated to volunteering: the United Nations has declared this year as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY 2026). The aim is to highlight the key role of volunteer service in sustainable development and to strengthen it in the long term.
Activities are to be coordinated in each country by national coordination bodies. In Germany, the weltwärts Coordination Unit is among those taking part. It has already marked the start of the IYV with social media posts written by volunteers.

You can find a list of national coordination bodies here

Figures, data, facts

Assignments:

In 2025, 2,280 North-South volunteers were assigned and 705 South-North volunteers were welcomed.

Dates:
20 May 2026: Programme Steering Committee meets
13-17 April: Partner conference in Vietnam

Budget planning

According to the German Bundestag’s budget resolution, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will have access to fewer funds in 2026 than in previous years. This cut will also affect the weltwärts programme. In agreement with the Programme Steering Committee, the relevant BMZ department is responding with the following measures: Assignments and hosting will be prioritised to enable volunteer service to continue; accompanying measures and extensions of volunteer service that has already started must be postponed accordingly; this is also to ensure fairness for other applicants. The partner conference that had been planned for autumn 2026 in Frankfurt has also had to be cancelled due to the financial cuts. The challenging budgetary situation has been emerging for some time and further measures will need to be taken in the future.

Source: 29. PSC meeting

Partner conferences 2026/2027

Due to the challenging budgetary situation, the decision on partner conferences for 2027 has been postponed.

Source: 29. PSC meeting

Partner involvement at the management level of weltwärts

Partner involvement is essential to the programme and explicitly desired by programme management. Partner organisations can

influence programme development

• through their partners in Germany
• at partner conferences
• directly via the civil-society Partner Liaison Officer, currently Lourens de Jong lourens.de.jong@ventao.org.

At partner conferences, a time slot is scheduled for discussions with representatives of the Programme Steering Committee (PSC).

Anyone who wishes to learn more can request the report from the 29th PSC meeting on 3 December 2025 on agenda item 11 (‘Partner participation at PSC level’) from their German partner organisation.

The agenda for the next PSC meeting will no longer be sent out to partner organisations via the German implementing organisations; instead, it will be possible to view the key agenda items three weeks before the next meeting using the link provided below. Publication of the agenda will be announced in the newsletter.

The summary minutes of the previous PSC meeting, which were previously sent out, will no longer be available. Instead, as usual, the newsletter will report on the key points of interest. Anyone who is interested in reading the full minutes may still request them via their German partner organisation.

Source: 29. PSC meeting

➔ **You can find an information document setting out how partner organisations can submit topic proposals at the management level here**

➔ **From 30 April 2026, you can find the agenda for the PSC meeting on 20 May 2026 here**

Debate: Military service and weltwärts

On 1 January 2026, a new German Military Service Act was introduced, which is currently based on voluntary service and provides for the

number of soldiers to be increased to up to 270,000 as well as for systematic registration for military service and compulsory medical examinations from July 2027. Should the required increase in numbers not be achieved through voluntary service, compulsory military service may be introduced. Those who refuse military service for personal reasons may choose to undertake civilian service or alternative service.
Accordingly, the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs and Senior Citizens (BMBFSFJ) is preparing for a potentially necessary reintroduction of civilian service.

Up until the suspension of compulsory military service in 2011, recognised conscientious objectors also had the option to undertake ‘alternative service abroad’ (ADiA) since 1 July 1986, next to the option to civilian service. This provision included the weltwärts volunteer service. The BMZ and civil society are working to ensure that weltwärts is also recognised as an alternative to civilian service in the new German Civilian Service Act.

Source: 29. PSC meeting

Comprehensive survey of weltwärts organisations

As part of quality control under the weltwärts programme, the work group has developed a quality, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The aim is to systematically record key developments and highlight them in the long term.
Special focus is given to impacts at the partnership level and to analysing the situation with respect to applications. Aspiring to have an impact at the level of partnerships between organisations is a unique feature that sets weltwärts apart from other types of volunteer service. Having better access to information on this is therefore of key importance for the programme.
To map the partnerships, the work group has designed a questionnaire for a comprehensive survey of all weltwärts organisations. This survey will be conducted in 2026 and is aimed at all German implementing organisations and their partner organisations. You will receive an invitation to participate shortly.

Source: 29. PSC meeting

Onboarding survey

In February/March, the government (BMZ/wCU) conducted an onboarding survey among volunteers who went abroad in autumn 2025. The survey focuses on specific aspects of the quality and safety of the onboarding process, including the place of assignment, accommodation, the security situation, and contacts and support structures. It consists of a short, standardised questionnaire with questions based on a three-point scale and a section for providing open feedback.
It has been conducted against the backdrop of several individual reports of problems in the last quarter of 2025, which have caused disturbance and concern among those involved with the programme and pose a risk to the programme's reputation. The aim of the survey is to obtain a full understanding of the current situation.

Source: 29. PSC meeting

Guidelines now available in all languages

The updated guidelines are now available online as fully accessible foreign-language versions. The guidelines describe the fundamental objectives, legal and financial aspects, and the framework conditions for the North-South and South-North components, as well as the accompanying measures for the programme as part of the weltwärts volunteer service.

→ Guideline for the Implementation of the weltwärts Development-related Volunteer Service

Reminder: Registration on the weltwärts website

Copyright: weltwärts

We kindly invite all partner organisations to become part of the weltwärts community on our website!

• Become visible in the weltwärts community:
Registered partner organisations can be found and contacted by other weltwärts stakeholders. This can lead to new partnerships, collaborations and inspiring discussions.

• Direct contact with volunteers:
Your organisation can directly receive applications and enquiries from South-North volunteers. This facilitates communication and strengthens the relationship with the volunteers.

• Get in touch with others:
Clearly state what you are interested in: for example, new partnerships, jointly holding seminars, joint lobbying, exchanging expertise or network meetings based around specific topics. Get in touch with partner organisations in your area!

We would love for your organisation to join too!

You can easily register here

Follow us on ...

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On behalf of

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