weltwärts

2024

West African partner conference in Ghana

Documentation
Accra, Ghana
29th January – 2nd February 2024

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Group picture with all participants of the partner conference in Ghana 2024 and the Minister of Education of Ghana

ROYAL BEAM ACADEMY

Anidaso Ghana e. V.

Eine Welt Netz NRW

weltwärts

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1 Introduction and background

1.1. Opening words by Verena Schlinkert, representative of civil society at the weltwärts Program Steering Committee, partner conference in Ghana 2024

Dear employees of the partner organizations and the present German sending organizations,
Dear Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum (minister of education, Ghana)
Dear representative of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development,
Dear representative of the weltwärts Coordination Unit,

On behalf of the Program Steering Committee of the weltwärts program, I am very pleased to welcome you to this year's partner conference in Ghana. My name is Verena Schlinkert, I work as a consultant for one of the four shared-interest groups in the weltwärts program and I represent the civil society side of the Program Steering Committee at this conference.

Last year, 2023, we celebrated the 15th anniversary of the North-South component and the 10th anniversary of the South-North component of the weltwärts program. We owe the many years of existence of the program to the good cooperation between all stakeholders in the partner countries and in Germany, which was celebrated at various events in the anniversary year. In October, as part of the partner conference in Berlin, many stakeholders, and in particular many partners, came together and at the anniversary evening they were ceremoniously honored for their tireless work in and on the program, for the joint design and the good cooperation.

The great potential of weltwärts is to work together to promote development-related engagement worldwide. We have successfully achieved this together over 15 years. Today we can say that we have even survived a global pandemic together. We would also like to thank you for this.
Thank you for having the courage and conviction to shape and develop the program with your creativity and inspiration.
Thank you for having the courage and conviction to look to the future together and to face the global challenges - for the dialog, exchange and international friendship that the volunteer services can promote. My thanks also go to the BMZ, which has helped to find quick solutions to ever new challenges during the years of the pandemic. Due to the many and generous special arrangements that have been created, civil society has been able to maintain the structures of the program.

Now there are new challenges, and I am convinced that learning together and the challenges we have already overcome can help us to face them together. Inflation, wars and the effects of the pandemic require new solutions to make the weltwärts program fit for the future.

I look forward to discussing current developments in the weltwärts program with you over the next few days. I would like to engage in an exchange with you and bring your comments and suggestions on the weltwärts program back to the Program Steering Committee. I look forward to continuing the dialog that was initiated at previous conferences. Since the pandemic, 7 conferences like this one have already taken place worldwide. Perhaps some of you have already been to one of the partner conferences in Ghana, which took place in 2012 and 2016, and have already exchanged views with your partners and many other partner organizations from the region on the weltwärts programme and overarching issues relating to international volunteer services. Some of you may also be new to the program and bring many questions and new ideas with you - in any case, your feedback gives us important impetus for the further development of the program.

Regarding the content, we would also like to look with you at the impact of partnerships in the weltwärts program. Strengthening partnerships between organizations is one of the programme's objectives. But how do you perceive the impact of partnership-based cooperation, what significance does it have for you, your environment and for the implementation of the program? You have received a questionnaire with a few questions in advance and we would like to get into conversation and to get to know your perspective about these questions over the next few days.

It is particularly important to me to mention that, in addition to the German volunteers who do their voluntary service in many countries around the world, volunteers from the Global South have also been coming to Germany every year since 2013 to do voluntary service as part of the South-North component. Currently, 8 volunteers from Ghana are doing weltwärts in Germany. Also volunteers from the neighboring countries as Togo, Ivory Coast and Cameroon are volunteering in Germany.

At this point, I would like to turn my attention to all the volunteers on the program and also express my thanks to them. It is the aim of all of us to support the volunteers on their journey. With the experiences they gain and their great commitment, they help to develop the program and strengthen social exchange on a global level.

I would also like to thank the organizing partner organizations Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation and Royal Beam Preparatoy Academy as well as the sending organization Eine Welt Netz NRW e.V. for the organization of this conference. Partner conferences strengthen partnerships and promote networking. They provide the programme steering committee with direct, authentic insights into the cooperation between sending and partner organizations.

In addition to the exchange with us as representatives of the steering level of the program, the partner conference offers you the opportunity to bring in your own topics, to exchange experiences with others in your daily work with the volunteers, to initiate joint projects and thus to take contacts and ideas back into your work.

The exchange is characteristic of the program and also essential for its further development. It helps us to strengthen partnerships, develop the program and promote international solidarity. I look forward to exchanging ideas with you and hope that you will take many new impulses and interesting and new ideas with you for a motivating look into the future.

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Verena Schlinkert, representative of civil society at the weltwärts Program Steering Committee

1.2. Opening words by Oliver Wiesel, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for economic Cooperation and Development

Dear representatives of partner organisation,
Dear representatives of the German implementing organisations, ladies and gentlemen,
on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for economic Cooperation and Development or abbreviated to: BMZ, I'm delighted to address you all at the weltwärts programme's 42nd partner conference in West Africa here in Accra!
As part of the team responsible for the weltwärts programme at the BMZ, I am particularly pleased to see here the representatives of the partner organisations that make the weltwärts volunteer service possible in the first place. I am delighted that members of the weltwärts joint operation from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo are coming together for this conference. This conference serves as a forum for direct dialogue with and among you, the people who put weltwärts into practice every day.
I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the implementing organisations here today, whose commitment also contributes to the success of the programme.
While 2023 was a difficult and crisis-ridden year worldwide, from weltwärts' perspective we also had reasons to celebrate. We had a double weltwärts anniversary year! Together,

we can look back on 15 years of sending volunteers from Germany around the world and 10 years of hosting volunteers from countries all over the world in Germany. Over 50,000 volunteers have completed a weltwärts service since the programme was founded. Of these, over 4,000 South-North volunteers have come to Germany. Since its foundation in 2008, weltwärts has developed into one of the largest international volunteer services. Over 140 implementing organisations and, above all, more than 2,000 partner organisations are actively implementing the weltwärts programme today. Following the coronavirus-induced downfall, the number of volunteers is now on the rise again. However, the programme is taking place in a more difficult geopolitical environment. Even though we have left the pandemic and its consequences behind us for the time being, the circumstances for volunteer services remains challenging. In times of various crisis we notice, that these are also affecting young people and are having a particular impact on their life. This has an impact on their planning and willingness to make a long-term commitment – meaning over a whole year – to voluntary service. We need to better understand the issues that interest and mobilise young people today.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise that the management of the BMZ remains fully committed to the weltwärts programme and will continue to strive to provide stable funding for the weltwärts programme in the coming years.

The number of volunteers shows: We have achieved a great deal in the last 15 years and I am also very confident that together we will succeed in continuing this success story, even under difficult and changing conditions. The partnership based responsibility of the programme between you as civil society organisations and the BMZ and Engagement Global on the government side contributes to the success of the programme. I would therefore particularly like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues at Engagement Global for their professional coordination of the programme. Partner conferences like the one we are currently attending play an important role in setting up the weltwärts programme. I would therefore also like to take this opportunity to thank the Eine Welt Netz NRW and their partner organisations Royal Beam Preparatory School and Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation for organising this partner conference. Looking at the agenda, we have some exciting topics ahead of us. In addition the agenda also leaves room for dialogue with and among yourselves. And that is very good. Partner conferences are designed above all else to facilitate direct communication with and amongst you all – you who set the weltwärts programme in motion day in, day out. Therefore, I cordially invite you to take advantage of this opportunity. Use this partner conference to exchange ideas and network. Last but not least I would like to thank you all for your active, productive and often voluntary work in making the weltwärts programme what it is and what it should be: a joint operation. A joint operation that sets high standards for itself and for all those involved! With this in mind, I wish you an exciting and insightful conference and a good exchange among yourselves! I am very much looking forward to it!

Thank you!

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Oliver Wiesel, German Federal Ministry for economic Cooperation and Development

1.3. Following keynotes

Keynote presentations by Lawrence Kpabiteh Lawer (German embassy) and Prof. Yaw Osei Adutwum, (Ghanaian Minister of eEducation) covering topics from North-South dynamics to the impact of volunteers in Ghana and the importance of modern education facilities.

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Prof. Yaw Osei Adutwum, Minister of Education of the Republic of Ghana

1.4. Organizers´ foreword

Dear participants of the partner conference Ghana 2024,
Dear readers of this documentation,

On behalf of the three host organizations we welcome you to the partner conference.

We, that is the Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation (Ghana), the Royal Beam Academy (Ghana) and the Eine Welt Netz NRW e.V. (Germany).

Within the weltwärts program we have been working together for more than six years. Today, it is a pleasure for us to host the West African weltwärts partner conference in Accra, Ghana. Once again, thank you for coming and reading our documentation.

Who are we?

The **Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation** is a registered non-profit organisation. It was established in 2009 and employs a staff of 4 dedicated Ghanaian local people and 2 German volunteers. The Anidaso Woho Foundation provides care, love and life development for orphans, children living on the streets and the underprivileged children in Ghana. The **Royal Beam Academy**, then Child Aid Foundation is a non-governmental initiative to give children of all walk of life formal education irrespective of economic status, religious denomination or political affiliation. Established in 2009 with five children, the school currently has 219 students with twenty one (21) teaching and non-teaching staffs respectively. Apart from formal education, we give children who have interest in football and music the basic training. The school is open from Monday to Friday, 8AM - 3:30PM each day. The **Eine Welt Netz NRW** (english: The One World Network NRW) is the state network of development policy associations and activists in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. We are committed to cosmopolitan politics, a fair balance of interests between the global North and South, global environmental protection, democratization, fair consumption and trade, anti-discrimination, cultural diversity, compliance with human rights, civil conflict resolution and peace. Our offices are in Münster and Düsseldorf, Germany.

For the past five months, we have been working closely together to organize a remarkable conference here in Ghana. With a team of seven individuals including Gifty Wiafe (moderation from Ghana and Germany, Eine Welt Netz NRW), Hannah Fischer (Eine Welt Netz NRW), Nicholas Wassan (Royal Beam Academy), Gabriel Cudjoe (Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation), Perel Yawo Selorm Gligbe (moderator from Togo) Sandra Dickson, Evelyn Afedzo (both assistant organizers), we are well-prepared and hopeful to make the conference a success. The focus is on fostering exchange, but also on achieving concrete outcomes for strategic further collaboration within West Africa. The content will revolve around the Sustainable Development Goals, and we look forward to receiving valuable inputs and discussion from and with all of you. We all bring expertise in the fields of civil society engagement and education. Therefore, we are particularly delighted to have the Minister of Education present today to deliver his remarks.

Once again, thank you all.

Accra, 29th of January 2024

Hannah Fischer

Eine Welt Netz NRW e.V.

Gifty Wiafe

Eine Welt Netz NRW e.V.

Nicholas Wassan

Royal Beam Academy

Gabriel Cudjoe

Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation

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The organization team (Hannah Fischer, Gabriel Cudjoe, Nicholas Wassan, Sandra Dickson and Evelyn Afedzo)

1.5. Conference schedule

You will find the program outlined below. The program is composed of content provided by Engagement Global, as well as the expectations and ideas of the participants and the host organizations.

Day	*Programme weltwärts partner conference in Ghana, 01/29 – 02/02.2024*
01/29 10 am 1 pm 3 pm 6 pm	**Opening ceremony** **Presentation of the weltwärts structure** (South-North and North-South) and news of the weltwärts program *Lunch* **introduction** of the participants and their NGOs *dinner* **evening program**
01/30 9 am 1 pm 3 pm 6 pm	**Sustainable Development Goals** – Agenda 2030 in times of global crises **Bar-Camp** – open discussion concerning the SDGs *Lunch* **Mental health** among volunteers and within the weltwärts program Presentation of the **West African Network** (WAWN) *dinner* **evening program**
01/31 8 am 3 pm 6 pm	**Field trip** Visiting the two host NGOs - Royal Beam School and Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation(lunch break included) **Exchange of experiences** dinner **evening program**
02/01 9 am 1 pm 3 pm 6 pm	**Sensitive topics** – drug abuse, visa, host families and more – how to deal with that? **"Our voice within the weltwärts program"** – the role of partner organizations and host organizations **Discussing and improving the West African Network** (WAWN) *lunch* **Open Space** *Dinner*

	Surprise Night! (everyone is invited to contribute)
02/02	
10 am	**Evaluation and feedback**, certificate presentation
	Closing ceremony
12:30	Lunch
1 pm	**Good-Bye!**

1.6. Factsheet of the conference

Conference location: Country and City	Accra, Ghana
Organizing institution(s)	Eine Welt Netz NRW e.V.
Partner institution(s)	Royal Beam Academy and Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation
Conference date	29th January– 02nd February 2024
Total number of all participants	60
Number of all participants from the following countries	Germany 14 Ghana 34 Togo 6 Benin 4 Cameroon 1 Nigeria 1
Male/Female ratio	65% men /35% women
Conference language	English
Main topics	Sustainable Development Goals Mental health among volunteers West African Weltwärts Network Exchange and field trips

2. Results on the topics presented by the program steering committee

2.1. Participants feedback on the following information topics

After the introducing words and the presentation of the weltwärts program the moderator asked the participants what they would like to feedback. The following aspects were mentioned:

North-South and South-North Cooperation: The conference underscores the critical importance of North-South and South-North cooperation, particularly emphasizing the role of volunteers in community development and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Modern Educational Facilities and Empowerment: The significance of modern educational facilities was highlighted, along with the empowerment of marginalized communities. Special focus was given to promoting girls' participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields, recognizing the transformative impact of education on societal progress.

Challenges and Mitigation Strategies: Global challenges such as inflation and resource availability were discusse, with participants exploring strategies to mitigate their impact on volunteer numbers.

Structured Networking and Experience Sharing: The session emphasized the value of structured networking and the sharing of experiences and expertise among organizations. This collaborative approach was seen as essential for enhancing problem-solving and decision-making capabilities within the volunteer community.

Insight: The presentations of the North-South and South-North weltwärts program and discussions which were done after the opening words and presentation of the weltwärts program provided deep insights into the complex dynamics of international cooperation. During the discussions the participants highlighted the pivotal role of education and volunteerism in fostering sustainable development. The emphasis on inclusivity, technological empowerment, and strategic partnerships emerged as crucial elements in driving positive change and achieving global goals.

2.1.1. News from the weltwärts program

Presentation by Melanie Segueda:

Melanie Segueda's presentation at the Cross-organization Weltwärts Partner Conference West Africa 2024 provided valuable insights into:

- The establishment of partner organizations since 2012 and the regular review of operational documents.
- The annual surveys conducted with volunteers and the dissemination of information through digital platforms.
- Challenges like global inflation and resource availability, which could affect volunteer numbers and program sustainability.

This presentation reiterated the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation to maintain the efficacy of volunteer programs amidst changing global conditions.

2.1.2. Overview of the weltwärts program

Quiz:

A quiz hosted by Oliver Wiesel and Verena Schlinkert covered topics such as volunteer participation and conference statistics, engaging attendees in an interactive and informative manner.

2.1.3. The South-North Component in the Weltwärts Program

Oliver Wiesel (BMZ), Melanie Segueda (Engagement Global) and Verena Schlinkert (PSA) introduced the South-North component in the weltwärts program via a power point presentation.

Since 2013, around 4,388 weltwärts volunteers have participated in the South-North component in Germany, with 89 active host organisations. For 2023/24, up to 767 volunteers may come to Germany.

Participation Eligibility:

- Sending organisations: Experienced partners from the weltwärts program, recognised weltwärts organisations, and initiatives of returned volunteers.
- Volunteers: 18-28 years old, with a school or vocational qualification, a willingness to learn German, and an openness to learning and engagement. Participation in the accompanying program and commitment to engage in their home country after the program is required.

Organisational Responsibilities:

- Host organisations: Bear overall responsibility, provide accompaniment in Germany, select and support places of assignment, ensure framework conditions (pocket money, accommodation), and facilitate networking for participants.

- Sending organisations: Promote the program, manage the application and selection process, prepare and support participants, assist with administrative matters, and work with volunteers upon their return.

2.2. Results on cross-cutting issues

2.2.1. What are the expectations for the volunteer's program?

Throughout the conference, discussions and workshops repeatedly highlighted what the participants expect from the Weltwärts program. We have summarized the results in this paragraph.

Close Contact with Sending Organizations:
Partners expect to maintain close contact with sending organizations. Effective communication and collaboration are crucial to ensure that the needs and expectations of both parties are met. This includes regular updates, feedback sessions, and joint problem-solving to enhance the volunteer experience and program outcomes.

More Weltwärts Structures On-Site:
Partners desire more weltwärts structures on-site, such as dedicated offices or general contact persons. Having local offices or representatives would facilitate better coordination, provide immediate support, and address any issues that arise promptly. This infrastructure would strengthen the program's presence and effectiveness in the host countries. The participants viewed the establishment of these local offices as the responsibility of the BMZ and Engagement Global. The program steering committee should take this idea forward and give it serious consideration.

Importance of Volunteers for Local Work:
Volunteers play a vital role in the partners' work on the ground. Their contributions are essential for various projects and initiatives, bringing fresh perspectives, additional manpower, and new ideas. Recognizing the importance of volunteers, partners expect the program to continue prioritizing volunteer engagement and support, ensuring that their involvement is meaningful and impactful.

By addressing these expectations, the weltwärts program can improve its collaboration with partners, enhance on-site support, and maximize the positive impact of volunteers on local communities.

2.2.2. Which topics from the conference are important for the further development of the program and will be presented back to the Program Steering Committee?

Key Highlights and Insights:

1. **Cultural Adjustment Support**: The profound impact of cultural shock on volunteers highlights the critical role of mentors in facilitating cultural adjustment. Enhanced mentor training and resources are essential to better support volunteers through their cultural transitions.
2. **Alignment with SDGs**: The weltwärts program aligns with the global initiative of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate extreme poverty, promote sustainable development, and ensure universal access to basic needs such as food, healthcare, and education. Emphasizing these goals in the program's framework will reinforce its global impact.
3. **Collaboration and Learning**: The importance of collaboration, continuous learning, and proactive mentorship in achieving the SDGs cannot be overstated. Regular workshops and training sessions for mentors and volunteers will foster a culture of continuous improvement and effective problem-solving.
4. **Sharing Best Practices**: Breakout sessions have proven to be valuable for sharing innovative solutions and best practices. Establishing more frequent and structured opportunities for these exchanges will enhance the program's overall effectiveness and adaptability to challenges.

Improvement Suggestion:

Increased Financial Support for Partners: Assisting volunteers is a significant commitment that requires substantial resources. Providing more financial support to partner organizations through weltwärts will ensure they can adequately mentor and support volunteers, contributing to the program's success and sustainability. Enhanced funding will enable partners to:

- Offer better training and resources for mentors.
- Provide comprehensive support and guidance for volunteers.
- Facilitate continuous learning and development initiatives.
- Organize more frequent and effective breakout sessions to share best practices.

By addressing these key areas, the weltwärts program can better support its volunteers and partner organizations, ultimately contributing more effectively to the achievement of the SDGs.

3. Highlights during the partner conference

Although it was not an official part of the program, we believe it is important to highlight a group activity that brought everyone together and created joy: the game "My Secret Friend." On the first day, all participants wrote their names on slips of paper, which were collected and then redistributed so that each person drew a name. The name drawn became that person's secret friend for the week.

Participants were tasked with secretly performing kind acts for their secret friend in any form, such as clearing their plate, offering a friendly smile, or writing anonymous notes. The key was to remain discreet and not reveal their identity. Throughout the week, there was much speculation and laughter as people guessed who their secret friend might be, creating a sense of camaraderie and excitement.

At the end of the week, the identities of the secret friends were revealed, leading to many laughs and joyful moments as participants shared their experiences. This activity fostered a positive atmosphere and strengthened connections among the group.

3.1. Field Trips

The third day of our conference program began at 8 AM with two visits to our partner organizations in Ghana, Royal Beam Preparatory School in Kasoa and Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation in Community 26 which was led by Nicholas Wassan and Gabriel Cudjoe. The aim was to foster collaboration, share expertise, and empower children through education and advocacy.

Summary of the day activities:

- First Visit: At Royal Beam Preparatory School, we were welcomed by the staff and students, followed by speeches and discussions on educational practices. A tour of the school's facilities provided insights into the learning environment.
- Second Visit: At Anidaso Woho Ghana Foundation, we shared a meal with the children and heard from the orphanage manager about their mission and challenges. Discussions with volunteers and a facility tour deepened our understanding of their work.

Attendance and participation:

A total of 65 participants joined the visit, engaging in discussions and tours at both locations.

Key highlights and insights:

- The warm welcomes and insightful speeches at both locations highlighted the dedication and resilience of our partner organizations.

- Engaging with teachers, students and volunteers provided valuable perspectives on educational practices and community service.
- The tours offered a glimpse into the daily lives and challenges faced by the children and staff, reinforcing our commitment to supporting their efforts.

Conclusion:

The visits to the preparatory school and orphanage were enlightening experiences, showcasing the impactful work of our partners in Ghana. We left with a deep sense of gratitude and a renewed commitment to empowering communities and transforming lives.

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Partner conference arrives at Royal Beam Preparatory School in Kasao

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Warm welcome by the stuff and students with its band

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Introduction by Nicholas Wassan (founder of Royal Beam Preparatory School)

3.2. The West African Weltwärts Network Session

Introduction

The evaluation session of the West African Weltwärts Network commenced at 9:30 AM on Thursday, 1st February 2024, moderated by Gifty Claresa Wiafe and Perel Yawo Selorm Gligbe. The session was designed to assess the network's current status, discuss its operational challenges, and explore strategies for enhancing collaboration and communication among its members.

Summary of Day's Activities

1. **Opening Session**: The moderators, Gifty Claresa Wiafe and Perel Yawo Selorm Gligbe, officially opened the session, outlining the day's agenda and setting the stage for the discussions.
2. **Presentation by Felix Edem Kodzo Ekpeko (from Togo)**:
    - Felix Edem Kodzo Ekpeko provided an in-depth presentation on the West African Weltwärts Network.
    - The presentation covered the network's composition, its aims, and the challenges it faces.
3. **Open Spaces Discussion**:
    - This segment focused on fostering communication and collaboration within the organizations.
    - Discussed the quality of exchanges between volunteers and coordinators.
4. **Concluding Remarks and Q&A Session**:

- Addressed operational details of the network.
- Discussed strategies for volunteer engagement.

Attendance and Participation

A total of 65 participants actively engaged in the evaluation session and the presentation, contributing to a dynamic and constructive dialogue. Their involvement was instrumental in identifying key issues and proposing potential solutions.

Key Highlights and Insights

1. **Network's Goals and Collaboration**:
   - The presentation highlighted the network's primary goal: to enhance collaboration and communication among its members across five countries.
   - Emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive environment for volunteers and coordinators.
2. **Identified Challenges**:
   - **Visibility**: The network struggles with a lack of visibility, which impacts its ability to attract and retain members.
   - **Language Barriers**: Diverse linguistic backgrounds pose significant communication challenges.
   - **Geographical Constraints**: The wide geographic spread of members complicates coordination and face-to-face interactions.
   - **Funding**: Securing sustainable funding remains a critical hurdle.
3. **Proposed Solutions**:
   - **Resource Mobilization**: Leveraging local and international resources to support network activities.
   - **General Assembly**: Organizing regular General Assemblies to strengthen governance and member engagement.
   - **Structured Network**: Building a more structured and coherent network to enhance efficiency.
4. **Participant Suggestions**:
   - Emphasized the importance of fostering interpersonal connections among volunteers.
   - Recommended setting clear membership criteria to streamline operations.
   - Highlighted the need for effective collaboration among member organizations to ensure cohesive action.
5. **Q&A Session Insights**:
   - Clarified operational aspects such as the establishment of a physical office.
   - Discussed the registration process for networks in each country to ensure compliance and formal recognition.

Insight

The session underscored the critical need for a cohesive and well-structured network to address the challenges faced by the West African Weltwärts Network effectively. Key factors for the network's success and growth include clear communication, robust collaboration, and sustainable funding. These elements are essential to enhance the impact of volunteer efforts and to foster a supportive environment for both volunteers and coordinators across the region.

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Felix introduces the WAWN and prepares the working groups for the upcoming session

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Group discussion on improving the WAWAN (West African Weltwärts Network)

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Group presentation – German perspective and support of the WAWN

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Group presentation – financial independence of the WAWN

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Group presentation – national organization

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Group presentation – communication within the WAWN

3.3. SDGs and mental health among volunteers

“Sustainable Development Goals”

Dr. Sottin Richard Arnaud Patrick from Benin introduced the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). His presentation focused on the African continent, highlighting both its challenges and the potential of the SDGs for Africa and the world at large. He also emphasized the importance of Europe-Africa relations. Each SDG was examined individually, addressing specific issues and opportunities relevant to Africa. Dr. Sottin concluded that, given the analysis of the achievement levels of the various SDGs, the economic, social, and environmental challenges to overcome are enormous to emerge from the crisis.

To tackle these challenges, Dr. Sottin proposed organizing workshops that will bring together all involved stakeholders to develop a comprehensive global strategy with specific actions to be taken in each country. This workshop would involve group work to develop project concepts that can help overcome the crisis and establish a roadmap for implementation.

The detailed presentation is attached.

After the session the group discussed in breakout sessions best practices related to various SDGs, such as environmental protection, quality education, and gender equality.

The breakout session was utilized to work on practical case studies, but it also raised many critical voices regarding the extent to which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) truly address the challenges faced on the African continent. Participants expressed concerns that, in 2024, there are few tangible improvements being felt. This led to the pressing question of how global agreements can genuinely "help" in addressing these challenges.

While this question remained unanswered, the discussion highlighted a significant political awareness and development interest among the participants. It was deemed important to provide space for this dialogue, perhaps even more crucial than discussing the practical examples themselves.

Overall, the breakout session fostered a critical examination of the SDGs in the context of Africa, emphasizing the need for ongoing conversations about their effectiveness and relevance in promoting meaningful change on the continent.

“Mental health”

Reverend Father Isaac Benuyenah's presentation focused on supporting volunteers facing psychological and cultural challenges, emphasizing the importance of mentorship. He defined cultural shock as a normal reaction to being cut off from one's familiar environment, which can lead to depression or trauma if not handled well. His "Midwife’s Approach," developed over eleven years with volunteers from Canada, Germany, and Austria, likens the mentor’s role to that of a midwife. Just as a midwife carefully guides a pregnant woman through childbirth, a mentor provides care and support to volunteers, helping them navigate the anxiety and emotional trauma of adapting to a new environment. The mentor's role is crucial in preventing serious consequences such as depression or even suicide.

After the presentation the group had an intense discussion:

The discussion following Reverend Father Isaac Benuyenah's presentation revealed a mix of doubt and support for his "Midwife’s Approach" to mentoring volunteers facing psychological and cultural challenges.

Doubt: Some participants expressed concerns that in extreme psychological situations or cases of mental illness, mentoring alone might be insufficient, necessitating professional help. It was emphasized that this limitation should be carefully considered to ensure the well-being of volunteers.

Support: The approach received approval for its effective comparison of mentors to midwives and for highlighting the critical role mentors play in addressing the exceptional circumstances volunteers face. The importance of providing attentive and compassionate support to volunteers was widely acknowledged.

Overall, the discussion underscored the need for a balanced approach for mental health issues, recognizing the value of mentorship while also being aware of the necessity for professional intervention in severe cases.

3.4. The last day of the conference

The conference began at 9:30 AM, with moderators Gifty Claresa Wiafe and Perel Yawo Gligbe overseeing the opening session.

Throughout the event, feedback was actively collected from participants through surveys. This evaluation aimed to gauge the conference's effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and gather insights to inform future planning.

A total of 65 individuals attended the evaluation session and the subsequent certification presentation, actively participating in the discussions and activities.

In her closing remarks, Gifty Wiafe expressed gratitude to all participants for their engagement and contributions. She encouraged them to maintain the momentum generated during the conference and wished everyone safe travels as they departed.

> I have attended a lot of conferences and organized a few. This one I can say, was a really successful conference. I met so many wonderful people, I have learned a lot and I am grateful I was part of the conference.

Sandra Dickson, organization team

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The organization team of the conference in Ghana 2024 (Sandra Dickson, Gifty Wiafe and Evelyn Afedzo)

4. Attachments

4.1. List of Abbreviations

BMZ (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit – in english: The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

PSA (Programmsteuerungsauschuss - Program Steering Committee)

5. Imprint

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