

Volunteer security checklist for weltwaerts partner organizations

Imprint

Verein entwicklungspolitischer Austauschorganisationen e. V.

c/o Stiftung Nord-Süd-Brücken
Greifswalder Str. 33 a
10405 Berlin
Germany

Contact

Fon: +49 30 42 85 13 85
Fax: +49 30 42 85 13 86
Email: info@ventao.org
Internet: www.ventao.org

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Design: Elke Molkenthin | mo.tif visual art | www.mo-tif.de
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Author: Anette Schwitzke

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The idea for this checklist was born during the weltwaerts partner conference in South Africa in 2016. It became clear during the conference, that there was a substantial interest by local partners and German sending organizations in a simple tool, which would offer local partners orientation and support with providing security for their international volunteers. I would like to thank all of you, who have supported this project with many thoughtful comments. We hope, that it will be useful for weltwaerts partner organizations all over the world.

Within your organization:

- ➔ Are you aware of the details of the agreement/partner contract with your German partner organization with regard to the security related responsibilities of your organization?

According to the [funding guideline](#) of the weltwaerts program “the sending organizations bear overall responsibility for the success of the volunteer service.” The hosting/receiving organization obviously play an important part in supporting a safe and secure stay for their volunteers, are often the first to help in an emergency and do feel morally obliged to care for the wellbeing of their volunteers. However, unless they are acting in a grossly negligent way, they are not liable for any security incidents involving their volunteers.

However, there may be cases where a contractual liability claim exists, depending on the individual contracts of the receiving organizations with their German partner organizations. As partner contracts may vary considerably these issues should be clarified directly between the partner organizations.

- ➔ Are you familiar with the emergency plan of your German partner organization?

All German weltwaerts organization need to have a written document in which procedures and responsibilities in case of an emergency are spelled out. This plan should be shared with all partners and mentors.

- ➔ Do you know how your volunteers are insured?

The sending organizations insure their volunteers for the full term of their assignment abroad. The insurance package comprises, as a minimum, an international health insurance, an accident insurance including invalidity and death (insured amount of 200,000 Euros with a progression of 225%), a third-party liability and repatriation insurance. Partners do not need additional insurances for their volunteers.

- ➔ Do you have the emergency number (assistance service) of your volunteers?

All volunteers are provided with an emergency number, which varies from one insurance provider to another, but which is always part of the insurance package and may be contacted 24/7 in case of any kind of emergency. Usually these emergency hotlines operate in several languages. Do not be shy to call!

- ➔ Do you have the phone numbers of all your volunteers? Do they have yours?

- ➔ Do you have other important numbers, such as the numbers of your German partner organization, the number of the local volunteer mentor or of the German Embassy?

In case of a serious accident/injury or potentially fatal illness, the German Embassy has to be informed. The same is true, if a volunteer commits a felony and/or is arrested by local police forces.

- ➔ Are you aware of hospitals, doctors, ambulance services, etc. nearby and do you provide this information also to your weltwaerts volunteers?
- ➔ Is it possible to check in advance, what the nearest hospitals expect in terms of covering the costs of the treatment before they actually start treating a volunteer in an emergency? (Ideally, the hospital will contact the insurer and they settle any claim directly with the hospital. Some hospitals will need a credit card deposit/cash deposit upfront before taking in the patient.)
- ➔ Are you aware and did you discuss details for the possibility of accessing emergency funds with your German partners, in case you need to cover the hospital fees in advance, before the confirmation of the insurance has arrived? If not, try to find a solution with your German partners.
- ➔ Have you briefed all relevant staff members of your organization about safety and security aspects relating to your volunteers?
- ➔ Have you briefed host families or landlords about safety and security basics?

Towards your volunteers:

- ➔ Have you informed your volunteers about typical health risks in your region, and how to prevent them?
 Examples:
 - Malaria and other non-communicable diseases
 - HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases
 - Schistosomiasis and other water-borne diseases
 - Toxic animals and/or wild animals
 - Safe and unsafe food
 - Safe and unsafe water
 - etc.
- ➔ Have you advised your volunteers about other risks, they may face during their services and how to deal with them? Are there any policies in place in your organization with regard to those risks and do you discuss them regularly with your German partner organizations and inform your volunteers about them?
 Examples:
 - Traffic and local transportation
 - Driving motor vehicles incl. what to do in case of an accident
 - Safe and unsafe areas

- Going out in the evenings
- Crime, such as theft and robberies
- Alcohol and drugs
- Travelling
- Special risks faced by girls/women and gay people
- Dealing with local authorities (police, military, local administration etc.)
- etc.

You are free to set the ground-rules for your volunteers. Discuss them with your German partner organization, but do not be shy to introduce the rules that you consider necessary for the safety of your volunteers. Some organizations have developed a Code of Conduct for their volunteers. Do remind your volunteers, that they take responsibility for their own safety & security as well and advise them on how to best blend in and avoid risks.

- ➔ Are there any natural disasters, occurring on a regular basis in your region, and do your volunteers know, what to do in such an emergency?
(Examples: flooding, tsunamis, earthquakes, sandstorms, bush fires etc.)
- ➔ Have you informed your volunteers about specific safety procedures and rules to follow with regard to their tasks in the project?
(Examples: rules relating to the use of tools, driving project vehicles, dealing with beneficiaries with HIV/AIDS, etc.?)
- ➔ Have you informed your volunteers that they should keep you, the partner organization as well as their sending organization up to date about their whereabouts at all times, no matter whether being away for professional or private reasons (when travelling, visiting other projects, etc.)?
- ➔ Have you informed your volunteers about local values, customs and traditions, whose violation might affect the safety of the volunteers and the reputation of your organization? (e.g. gender relations, public drinking/smoking, moral and/or religious issues, etc.)

Your volunteers will arrive with at least 12 days of orientation and preparation, covering issues such as health, safety, the host country etc. However, it is very difficult to communicate the specific conditions of all volunteer placements in such a seminar given the fact that there is usually a group of volunteers going to very different regions all over the world. Therefore, it is important that you brief your volunteers on arrival about the situation on the ground and stay in touch with them during their service to share information with them and help them to learn. Be aware, that some of the volunteers may be travelling outside of Europe for the first time and simply may not be aware, that their behaviour may harm themselves and their host organization/family.

- ➔ Remind your volunteers, that they should always carry their cards with the emergency numbers with them and make sure, that their mobile phones/cell phones are functioning (enough credit, mobiles charged, etc.).

In general, if you are unsure about any safety and security related issues concerning your volunteers, get in touch with your German partner organization. They should provide you with all necessary information and with support.

We wish you a good time with your volunteers!