



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development

BMZ EVALUATION REPORTS 066

# The South-North component of the development volunteers service *weltwärts*

Summary of the evaluation





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# 1 Preface

The new South-North component of *weltwärts* was launched at the end of 2013 in cooperation with the Federal Voluntary Service. Demand for places quickly surpassed the allocation set aside for the pilot phase. The BMZ responded to this strong take-up by increasing the allocation so that up to 800 volunteers from countries of the Global South will now be able to do voluntary service in Germany under the umbrella of the *weltwärts* programme.

For the BMZ, it is important to have an evaluation done in the early years of the programme and identify pathways for the further development of the South-North component. The new component was conceived as a pilot phase, with room left for developing and refining new processes as the programme is put into practice. In part, new structures only evolve “by doing”, in other words in practice.

The team commissioned to carry out the evaluation states insofar the limitations of the evaluation. The measurability of the expected impacts is limited. Some impacts need time to emerge. Dealing with small case numbers that are gradually increasing restricts the methods that can be used. That is why, in addition to taking empirical measurements, the evaluation team also did a plausibility analysis of the assumed causal pathway (theory of change). All of this must be taken into account when assessing the findings and their individual significance.

The evaluation does not provide readymade answers to the questions raised. The recommendations it makes are meant to encourage the BMZ to discuss them with the partners involved in implementing the programme.

A team of evaluators from Syspons GmbH, led by Jan Oliver Scheller, conducted the evaluation. The design developed for the evaluation was based on a contribution analysis and a plausibility analysis. The aim of the contribution analysis was to measure the contribution of the *weltwärts* South-North component to the intended impacts.

Berthold Hoffmann was responsible for managing the evaluation process at the BMZ.

The opinions expressed in this study reflect the views of the independent external consultants and do not necessarily represent the views of the BMZ. The BMZ’s comments on the evaluation can be found at the end of this summary.

This summary is available online at:  
<http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/index.html>

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The full version of the main report and a volume of annexes relating to the evaluation methods used (both only in German) can be ordered from the BMZ division “Evaluation of development cooperation”.

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## 2 Summary

### BACKGROUND

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) commissioned Syspons GmbH to carry out an evaluation of the South-North component of the volunteers service *weltwärts* between July 2015 and January 2017. The objective of the evaluation was to conduct an independent external assessment of the design, implementation and impacts to date of the South-North component of *weltwärts*, and also to evaluate its procedures, organisation and quality management. The evaluation was carried out using the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, overarching development Impact and Sustainability. The programme's coherence, complementarity and coordination were also assessed. In addition, concrete recommendations were elaborated for the further development of the *weltwärts* South-North component in terms of content.

### METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND DATA BASIS

The design developed for the evaluation was based on a contribution analysis and a plausibility analysis. The aim of the contribution analysis was to measure the contribution of the *weltwärts* South-North component to intended impacts (for example, the effect of the South-North component on networking between the participating organisations). The causal pathway of the South-North component, which depicts the theory of change, was the basis for the contribution analysis. In order to investigate the impacts of the South-North component of *weltwärts*, the following goals at three levels were tracked:

#### *At the level of the volunteers:*

- The South-North volunteers have achieved further development within a non-formal learning and training process (aspect of personal development and global learning).
- After returning home the South-North volunteers act as multipliers and are involved in civil society volunteer work (especially in their sending organisations).

#### *At the level of the participating organisations:*

- The host organisations are strengthened by participating in the programme.
- The sending partner organisations are strengthened by participating in the programme.
- Existing equal partnerships between partners of the Global South and North are strengthened/expanded.

#### *At the level of the milieu of the South-North volunteers:*

- Through exchange and interaction with South-North volunteers, new target groups are reached, sparking their interest in development policy linkages.
- Development education in Germany is stimulated.

Since the South-North component has only been up and running for a short time, it is possible that some impacts have not (yet) emerged or that some goals have not yet been achieved. That is why plausibility analyses were also carried out. These analyses focused on the impacts that might theoretically occur and looked at the conditions for achieving an impact.

In order to investigate the theory of change of the South-North component, data from various qualitative and quantitative sources were used. An online survey of South-North volunteers was the central source of data used to evaluate the theory of change

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at the level of the volunteers. At the heart of the investigation was capturing the individual transformation process by tracing the so-called Big Five personality traits: extroversion<sup>1</sup>, openness, neuroticism<sup>2</sup>, conscientiousness and agreeableness plus, in addition, self-efficacy and perspective-taking.

**Figure 1: Replies to the online survey of South-North volunteers**

	Total number surveyed	Completed questionnaires	Partially completed questionnaires
Volunteers (in total)	734 (100%)	284 (39%)	21 (3%)
<b>Status I:</b> Before departure		106	5
<b>Status II:</b> In Germany		92	5
<b>Status III:</b> Back home less than 6 months		33	5
<b>Status IV:</b> Back home more than 6 months		53	6

Source: Syspons GmbH 2016

The impacts of the South-North component on the organisations<sup>3</sup> and on the milieu of the *weltwärts* South-North volunteers was investigated using data

- 1 Extroversion includes characteristics like conviviality, activity, talkativeness and assertiveness, whereas quiet, silent and withdrawn typically describes the opposite pole – introversion. People who are convivial, for example, likewise tend to exhibit all the other characteristics at this end of the spectrum, in other words they tend to be active, talkative, assertive and not so silent and withdrawn.
- 2 Neuroticism describes a person's emotional behaviour. People who are neurotic to a high degree are quick to show uncertainty, or to be nervous, timid and depressed. People who are not very neurotic, on the other hand, tend to be easy-going and relaxed.
- 3 The intended strengthening of the organisations was measured with reference to Peter Morgan's 5C organisation model. The 5C model defines areas of an organisation in which capabilities can be (further) developed (capability to act, capability to deliver development results, capability to relate, capability to adapt and self-renew, and capability to achieve coherence).

from several online surveys and five in situ case studies in Germany. In the online surveys all host organisations, sending partner organisations and places of assignment involved up to that point in the South-North component were asked to take part. The findings of the online surveys were subsequently validated by means of telephone and personal interviews with the organisations.

**Figure 2: Replies to the online survey of the organisations**

Organisation	Total number surveyed	Completed questionnaires	Partially completed questionnaires
Host organisation	65	35 (54%)	2 (3%)
Sending partner organisation	214	44 (21%)	11 (5%)
Place of assignment	225	72 (32%)	9 (4%)

Source: Syspons GmbH 2016

In order to analyse the impacts on the milieu of the South-North volunteers in more depth, five in situ case studies were implemented at places of assignment in Germany. Using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the intended or unintended (positive and negative) impacts at the level of the milieu of the South-North volunteers were recorded. This exercise involved South-North volunteers currently on assignment, decision-makers at the places of assignment, contact persons at the places of assignment responsible for instructing the volunteers, beneficiaries and target groups at the places of assignment, mentors and/or contact persons at the host organisations, along with host families and other people in close contact with the South-North volunteers.

The plausibility of the intended long-term impacts was examined by means of an expert survey. The aim of the expert survey was to involve people whose field of expertise is incoming volunteer programmes and development work in Germany in the evaluation, and ask them about the plausibility of the theory of change.

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Below, conclusions are drawn using the findings of the evaluation. These conclusions are used to assess the pilot phase of the South-North component of the volunteer service programme *weltwärts*, which is supported by the BMZ. Using these conclusions as a basis, options for action were formulated by the evaluation team. At a concluding workshop in January 2017 with the reference group for the evaluation, these options for action were jointly developed into recommendations for action.

#### KEY FINDINGS AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION AT THE DESIGN LEVEL

The decision to pilot a South-North component in the volunteers programme *weltwärts* can be considered correct and appropriate. The design of the programme reflects the desired intention of putting cooperation between partners from the Global South and the Global North on an equal footing. This is in keeping with the political and practical aspirations of international development volunteers services.

Due to its development policy profile, which is firmly embedded in its design, the South-North component is distinct from other incoming volunteer services supported by the government in Germany (FVS = Federal Voluntary Service; FSJ/FÖJ-Incoming = incoming voluntary social year/voluntary ecological year). A distinctive characteristic of the South-North component is, in particular, the education and mentoring that it seeks to offer the South-North volunteers. This support is specifically aimed at addressing development policy, global and intercultural topics. Further mentoring for the volunteers after they have completed their term of service is also foreseen, along with support for their engagement in the partner country.

What is more, this development policy thrust within the South-North component is reflected across all levels of impact of the component. On the one hand there is a focus on the personal development of the volunteers and on the other hand input is sought for development work and development education in Germany, and for contributions to strengthen partner organisations in the Global South. This linking of impact levels is something that is not found in other

state-sponsored incoming volunteer service programmes in Germany.

The evaluation shows, moreover, that the theory of change on which the South-North component is based is not yet plausible in some aspects. It is not always clear how specific activities are to be used to achieve the desired changes in practice. From the point of view of the evaluation, the activities and outputs of the South-North component are not yet sufficient to plausibly bring about or contribute to the desired medium- and long-term changes. For instance, the South-North component is meant to strengthen partner organisations in the medium term and network them with one another in the long term. In practice, however, it offers few specific instruments for strengthening the partner organisations and fostering networking. In particular with a view to confirming the plausibility of the contributions to the desired development impacts, such as contributions towards strengthening civil society in the partner country, a general reflection on and refinement of the assumed impacts along with an examination of the instruments and the implementation of the programme would appear to be desirable.

The component is currently being implemented differently in different contexts, for example as regards the design of the education and mentoring content or models for cooperation between organisations. During a pilot phase in particular, such diversity in the implementation can be seen as positive, since it offers the chance to discover practical implementation models and identify best practices.

At the same time, however, from the point of view of the evaluation, these differences in implementation can also mean a lower degree of plausibility for the assumed impacts, above all as regards the development impact goals of the programme. Examination of the implementation of the programme shows, for instance, significant differences in aspects that are an important part of the development policy profile of the component. For example, few interactions between volunteers and new target groups concerning development policy linkages. Also significant here is the fact that only a relatively small number of the places of assignment are directly concerned with development cooperation and the majority of them are

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located in the general social sector. Although this aspect is covered by the concept, it means that the development policy focus of the programme is not obvious.

In further developing the South-North component, thought must be given to the overarching question of how the specifically development-oriented impact that is designed into the South-North component can be reconciled with the openness which allows the participating organisations a free hand with regard to implementing the programme and shaping their own involvement.

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION:

In the follow-up process, consideration should be given to how the South-North component can be further developed, in particular bearing in mind the need identified in the evaluation to reconcile the development policy (impact) orientation that is designed into the programme with the openness of its implementation. The follow-up phase should therefore also put a special focus on defining specific instruments for promoting goal achievement. It is important, above all, that attention be given to the profile of the places of assignment, to designing the programme so that it encourages returning participants to get involved in post-assignment work, to promoting cooperation between participating organisations, to seminar and educational work, and to using South-North concepts outside the framework of *weltwärts*.

Also to be examined is how the development policy profile of the volunteers service can be made more visible in all aspects of implementation, in order to further underline the uniqueness of the component. For this to be done, there must be a joint understanding with regard to how key concepts (for example, “development topics”, “intercultural”, “new target groups”) are defined, in particular with a view to showing how *weltwärts* differs from or complements other international incoming programmes in Germany. Subsequently, clarity must be reached between the key implementing actors regarding how this joint understanding will be specifically reflected in the implementation of the programme.

#### KEY FINDINGS AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION SO AS TO MAKE THE SOUTH-NORTH COMPONENT AND ITS PROCEDURES COMPATIBLE WITH THE FEDERAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The South-North component is being implemented in cooperation with the Federal Voluntary Service (FVS) of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). This means that the stipulations and procedures of the Federal Voluntary Service apply.

Cooperation with the FVS offers the advantage of a pre-defined legislative framework for the implementation of the South-North component. However, it is evident that the procedures of the FVS are not systematically oriented towards implementing an incoming volunteer service programme with volunteers from the Global South. Although it is generally possible to adhere to the stipulations and procedures of the FVS when implementing the South-North component, in many cases individual solutions need to be sought for situations that arise repeatedly (for example, changing the place of assignment). In the end, FVS stipulations and procedures combined with other areas of policy, such as the right of residence, make implementing the South-North component quite a challenge. In the view of the evaluation, this leads to a lack of procedural certainty for the participating organisations and for the volunteers as well, and results in extra work in connection with implementing the programme. This is a significant aspect, particularly bearing in mind a potential increase in the number of volunteers.

This lack of procedural certainty and the amount of work necessary both for the organisations active within the South-North component and for the Federal Office of Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions (BAFzA) should therefore be taken into account as the South-North component is continued and, possibly, expanded.



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#### 2<sup>ND</sup> RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION:

The BMZ should examine the suitability of the FVS as a framework for the implementation of the South-North component beyond the pilot phase. In the first instance, an attempt should be made – in collaboration with the BMFSFJ – to find partial solutions within the existing legislative framework for specific procedural challenges. Current challenges should be taken into account here, too:

- Challenges with regard to coordinating FVS and *weltwärts* procedures. One challenge in particular is what to do about coordinating with the BAFzA. The present solutions, which are currently still informal, could cause procedural uncertainties or put a high pressure on resources if the component is expanded.
- The lack of options to change the place of assignment and the associated question about the maximum length of the volunteer service period of up to 24 months.

When examining the legal framework, current procedures and experience from other state-sponsored incoming programmes such as FSJ/FÖJ-Incoming should be considered, compared and used, if appropriate.

#### KEY FINDINGS AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION REGARDING THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE SOUTH-NORTH VOLUNTEERS

The findings show that the volunteers experience personal growth as a result of taking part in the *weltwärts* South-North component. Given that global learning is a desired experience for the South-North volunteers, these findings are considered positive: by participating in the *weltwärts* volunteer service their perspective-taking ability and their self-efficacy developed positively. This means that the South-North volunteers state that, since doing *weltwärts* volunteer service, they are better able to adjust to new situations and they have a higher degree of self-confidence in their ability to shape their own enterprises successfully (self-efficacy). In addition, the South-North volunteers feel that they have greater [cognitive] empathy towards strangers (“perspective-taking ability”). In addition, the evaluation shows that the needs and expectations of the volunteers match the objectives enshrined in the component in important areas, for example as regards intercultural exchange, personal development and acting as multipliers after returning home. As a result of this match, the South-North volunteers are highly satisfied overall with their participation in the programme.

Furthermore, the volunteer target groups reached by the South-North component match the formal criteria set out in the programme design. The selection criteria and procedures applied in practice combine to produce a selection of volunteers with specific characteristics: a large proportion of the individuals reached are similar to one another inasmuch as they have already completed post-school training or have studied, were already in permanent full-time employment before taking part in the South-North component, and were also regularly engaged in various kinds of volunteer activities. On that basis, the result of using these selection criteria is that the desired social inclusion of a broad circle of young adults from the Global South is not yet being achieved through the South-North component.

Furthermore, the target group that is reached consists mainly of relatively highly qualified volunteers from the South with specific needs and expectations

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vis-à-vis their participation, especially as regards further professional development. This form of further development is not fully in tune with the programme design or the stipulations of the FVS. As a result, the places of assignment and the host organisations do not place any priority on addressing this aspect. The possibility of letting the volunteers carry out more specialised tasks that are more in keeping with what they wish to get from the programme also depends on how well volunteers and places of assignment are matched and on the assignment profile. The evaluation does show that, particularly in places of assignment from the social sector, which are in the majority, the job profile is frequently heavily weighted towards simple unskilled tasks.

Before leaving their home countries, the people in the target group reached by the programme are strongly and actively engaged in relevant activities on a regular basis. Based on that, there is no increase after they return in their level of engagement as a result of participating in the South-North component. On the one hand, thought must be given to whether or not a (quantitative) increase in the volunteerism of the target group reached by the programme should be seen as a relevant objective for the South-North component. The other question to be considered is whether more weight should be given to developing the technical side of the existing engagement further, bearing in mind the stipulations that apply to such volunteer placements, for example that the activities carried out should not impact in any way on the local labour market.

#### 3<sup>RD</sup> RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION:

Efforts should be made to marry the design of the South-North component and its implementation more closely with the needs and expectations of a section of the participating volunteers. There are three possible options for doing this:

- First, more of an effort can be made to reach a different target group, consisting of people whose needs and expectations are more in tune with the approaches to be used for the South-North component (for example target groups who do not expect further professional development). In order to achieve this, the selection criteria and procedures would need to be developed accordingly, in order to achieve the desired effect of reaching a different target group.
- Second, an effort could be made to do greater justice with the design and implementation of the programme to the expectations and needs expressed by some of the volunteers. This would mean being more specific in selecting the places of assignment and providing more monitoring for the assignments in the South-North component. It would also require a more systematic approach in matching volunteers and places of assignment (taking volunteers' interests and preferences more into account). This would also mean, however, broadening the range of specialisms covered in the places of assignment, so as to be able to meet the expectations of some of the volunteers.
- Third, there is also the possibility of keeping the existing basic openness when selecting volunteers. Then, however, more effort should be put into managing the expectations of the target group reached by the programme, so as to communicate the profile of the South-North volunteer service more clearly. This could help bring the expectations in terms of the professional skills and the actual work involved in the assignment closer to the current understanding [on the German side] of what the programme is about.

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#### KEY FINDINGS AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION AT THE PARTNER LEVEL

The quality of the cooperation between the sending partner organisations and the host organisations is good. The findings make it clear that both groups of organisations appreciate their cooperation in the South-North component and feel that it is cooperation between equals and in partnership. At the same time, the findings of the evaluation show that few specific opportunities to exchange and share ideas have so far been created for sending partner organisations. The exchanges that do take place are primarily with the respective host organisation in Germany. Furthermore, as laid down in the design and confirmed by the evaluation, this kind of exchange is almost exclusively in the form of everyday communications in connection with implementing the programme. There is a lack of specific instruments for regular exchange focusing on a particular topic outside of the cycle of implementation. This aspect should be considered with a view to promoting both partnership-based exchange within the South-North component and cooperation within the framework of the North-South component.

For the sending partner organisations there is currently little evidence of direct effects from participating in the South-North component. This can be because a third of the partner organisations had already been sending volunteers abroad before participating in the *weltwärts* component, so that there was less potential for increasing competencies. All in all, the organisations consider that they already have a high level of competence in the areas in which impacts are to be achieved before participating in the programme. This begs the question, whether the current goals are the right way to address the task of strengthening the sending partner organisations.

Furthermore, there have been no moves as yet to strengthen the sending partner organisations by means of networking with the places of assignment in Germany. This is in particular interesting since, unlike many of the host organisations, the places of assignment offer a professional profile that goes beyond finding work for volunteers. This means that there is unused potential for a professional exchange going beyond the participation in the South-North component.

#### 4<sup>TH</sup> RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION:

In order to increase the plausibility of an impact emerging at the partner level, for example as regards developing new competencies, attention should be paid to the following aspects:

- The definition of the goal “strengthening partner competence” needs to be further developed. In developing this goal, it should be noted that this strengthening should be accompanied, as far as possible, by a gradual transfer of responsibility for the implementation of the volunteer service activities from the host organisations to the partners. This transition could be accompanied by specific support for the partner.
- Apart from that, in addition to the everyday contacts that have taken place up to now, there is a need for specific instruments that can be used for – preferably regular – exchange (realisable, for example, by requesting an accompanying measure) between the partners in the Global South and the Global North.

#### 5<sup>TH</sup> RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION:

There needs to be a greater awareness that the places of assignment are an important source of competencies and a key player in the component. Direct exchange between the sending partner organisation and the place of assignment, for example on particular topics or professional aspects, is therefore an important strengthening mechanism, in particular for strengthening the sending partner organisations. Solutions need to be found here that do not place too much pressure on resources, in particular the resources of the place of assignment. This could be achieved, for example, if the exchange is on a voluntary basis. To do this, however, transparency is necessary and information must be accessible that can be used as a basis for creating incentives for exchange (on professional or development aspects). Appropriate accompanying measures can then contribute to the implementation of ideas.

## 3 BMZ's comments

### CONFIRMATION OF RELEVANCE IN CORE AREAS

The evaluation finds that the launch of the pilot phase of the South-North component was correct and appropriate. The design is in line with the intention of putting cooperation between partners from the Global South and the Global North on an equal footing. It is in keeping with the aspirations in the field of international development volunteers services. In the German context, the development orientation of the programme is unique compared with other volunteer service schemes. It is pleasing that the expected impacts at the level of the volunteers are confirmed. The participants are very pleased with the programme. There are clear positive effects in terms of personal development, also and in particular as regards characteristics that are relevant for global learning. Almost all the volunteers are involved in working with their sending organisation or other civil society organisations after they return home. Since they were already involved in such work before taking part in the volunteer service programme, it would be interesting to know what benefit their organisations and home countries gain from their newly acquired competencies. This would definitely be a relevant focus for subsequent studies.

It is clear that the South-North volunteers are on average older and they have higher qualifications than the participants in the (outgoing) North-South component. There is a need to reconcile the conflict between a volunteer service that does not impact on the local labour market and offering assignments which will appeal to people with higher qualifications, are more in line with their professional background and offer opportunities for further development. Possible ways to tick all these boxes need to be explored.

### PLAUSIBILITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT POLICY PROFILE

As a development policy volunteer service, *weltwärts* expects a range of further impacts which go beyond the learning experiences and personal development of the volunteers, and which make the programme even more unique.

The evaluation team urges here that the impact assumptions should be refined and the instruments and implementation of the programme reviewed. It should be emphasised that a volunteer service like *weltwärts* is based in many respects on non-formal processes whose measurability is limited. The lack of a separate implementation instrument does not mean that there is no impact. However, the evaluation makes it clear that such processes do not take place without any preconditions. We will therefore take a close look at the plausibility of the causal pathway and make a clearer distinction between the development-oriented core of the programme and desirable, optional side effects.

The evaluation also asks in this connection whether the breadth of the assignments that the Federal Voluntary Service (FVS) can offer is sufficient in order to pursue the development policy goals of the component. The BMZ will therefore examine whether, in future, *weltwärts* needs its own procedures for selecting places of assignment with the requisite profile. The question of coherence between FVS and *weltwärts* procedures, which is addressed in the 2nd recommendation for action, also needs to be considered in this connection.

The start of the new South-North component was made easier not only by the cooperation with the FVS but also thanks to the active role played by the German host organisations. The evaluation rightly points out that the way the roles are allocated needs to be clarified anew now that the pilot phase is over.

It has been shown that there is room to expand the role played by places of assignment and sending partner organisations in shaping the design of the programme.

Necessary adjustments in the design and implementation of the programme will be carried out in a **follow-up process** to be completed by the end of 2018. In the same way as they assisted with the evaluation, the public sector and civil society players will jointly support this process. The *weltwärts* Programme Steering Committee and/or the working bodies commissioned by the Steering Committee will assist with this process. One of the strengths of the *weltwärts* joint operation is that self-reflection is an integral part of its work and evaluations are seen as motivation to develop the programme further. Our goal is to work together with the aim of becoming a bit better.

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