WELTWÄRTS VOLUNTEERS AND THEIR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN GERMANY

2017
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and objectives of the evaluation
Since 2008, more than 30,000 individuals have participated in the development volunteer service weltwärts. Measured in terms of the number of annual assignments and its financial volume, weltwärts is the largest international youth volunteer service in Germany and one of the largest development volunteer services for young adults worldwide. In the North-South component of the programme, volunteers from Germany are currently assigned by over 150 civil society sending organisations to placements in countries of the Global South and mentored in situ by a partner organisation. The weltwärts programme is organised as a Gemeinschaftswerk [collective venture] formed from representatives of sending organisations, volunteers and governmental actors – the latter being the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Engagement Global. Partner organisations are involved in the steering of the programme indirectly, via regular partner conferences and partner dialogues, for example.

This evaluation is intended to contribute to accountability about the effectiveness of weltwärts and support the continuing development of the programme’s content. The effects of weltwärts on volunteers of the North-South component are captured by means of a rigorous, i.e. reliable, quasi-experimental evaluation design. By focusing on effects in Germany the evaluation closes an important gap in knowledge, not covered by the evaluations and studies available to date, on the contribution of weltwärts to development education work in Germany. In addition, the persistence of changes experienced by weltwärts volunteers as individuals and the relevance of the current steering structure of the Gemeinschaftswerk are investigated empirically for the first time.

The evaluation’s focus is best explained against the background of current development agendas. In Agenda 2030, adopted in 2015, including its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in the BMZ Charter for the Future “ONE WORLD – Our Responsibility” and the German government’s current Development Policy Report (BMZ, 2017), development processes within German society are given an important role under the heading of “global partnership”. In this context the evaluation aims to contribute to a better understanding of the outcomes of development volunteer services for young adults in the field of development education, and the role of volunteers in society as actors in development education work. In light of the increasing social and domestic policy debates on global themes with a bearing on development issues, such as international migration and refugees, knowledge about the effectiveness of development education measures gains additional importance.

Object of the evaluation
In the North-South component of weltwärts, volunteers from Germany complete a period of volunteer service in countries of the Global South. This is complemented by a South-North component in which volunteers from the Global South can do volunteer service in Germany.

The object of this evaluation consists of selected outcome domains of the North-South component: the outcomes of weltwärts for volunteers and the outcomes of the programme in Germany. By participating in the North-South component, volunteers are intended to acquire competences and reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour patterns and thus become skilled in acting with global solidarity and social responsibility. It is hoped that after they return they will also inspire other people in Germany – for example, through civic engagement – to take an interest in globally sustainable development and development issues. In this way returnees are expected to make a contribution to development information and education work in Germany. Equally, they are expected to pass on the diverse lessons they have learned to others in their social circles and professional contexts. It is further envisaged that, through their civic engagement, returnees will contribute in ways such as strengthening civil society organisations actively involved in the field of international development.

Overall appraisal of the North-South component of weltwärts
The results of the evaluation show that weltwärts is relevant for volunteers. The offer of a period of development volunteer service suits the motivations of weltwärts volunteers. Moreover, weltwärts is effective with regard to the following aspects of volunteers’ learning: they acquire knowledge about their host country, learn its lingua franca, further develop their ability to see things from the perspective of people from their host country, and gain empathy and positive attitudes towards
them. Following their return, change is also seen in their civic engagement in Germany. The share of volunteers whose engagement is aligned with development issues increases substantially once they have returned from assignment. It can also be observed that in comparison to the demographic average, volunteers are involved in civic engagement more frequently than average, even before they depart on assignment.

However, the results also highlight potential room for improvement. They show that volunteers do not learn or change on all the dimensions assumed. Much as volunteers learn, especially in relation to their given host country, they do not transfer that learning to other countries or other groups of people. Furthermore, volunteers do not view German society’s multicultural composition more positively after their stay abroad than before. These two results possibly express that volunteers may relativise their own pre-departure high assessments as a result of participating in weltwärts. Also, a possible explanation for the lack of learning transfer to other contexts might be that returnees consciously resisted making generalisations in their responses. Both findings suggest that the programme can be developed further in these areas: either by realistically adapting future expectations regarding change, or by stepping up efforts in these areas – where change is more difficult to achieve, according to the results of this evaluation – to facilitate changes more effectively in future.

Overall, weltwärts has great potential for outcomes in Germany: even with the progressive passage of time since they participated in weltwärts, the volunteers' knowledge, competences and attitudes as well as their engagement with development issues remain consistently high. This suggests great stability in the individual dispositions of returning volunteers, and favours the transmission of knowledge, competences and attitudes to others, even years after having participated in weltwärts. The fact that this transmission can be successful is demonstrated by changes in other people in the volunteers' social circles. The present evaluation analysed this area for the first time and the results provide evidence that both parents and friends of former weltwärts volunteers experience changes in knowledge, competences and attitudes towards people from the host country. This potential can be actively used by the programme.

Likewise, the evaluation results show that altogether the weltwärts programme is relevant from a development policy perspective. Its objectives are in keeping with current development agendas, for example Agenda 2030, including its SDGs, and the Charter for the Future “ONE WORLD – Our Responsibility”, including the action areas it sets out for German development cooperation (DC).

With regard to the context of international youth volunteer services run by other government departments in Germany, the evaluation identifies a need for action. Although complementarity on the levels of concepts and contents is found between weltwärts and the International Youth Volunteer Service (IJFD), in particular, on the operative level complementarity is in need of improvement. Results of a first evaluation of weltwärts (Stern et al., 2011) already pointed to overlaps between the weltwärts programme, which was established first, and the IJFD which came into being some time afterwards.

Regarding complementarity between the Post-Assignment component of weltwärts and other programmes in the field of development education work, the evaluation results similarly indicate potential for improvement. The Post-Assignment component represents the weltwärts programme's main financial support instrument for the achievement of objectives in Germany. The term “Post-Assignment component” is not to be equated with the term “post-assignment phase”, which refers to the period of time following the volunteers' return to Germany. The complementarity of the Post-Assignment component – consisting of the Post-Assignment fund and weltwärts Small-Scale Measures – with other instruments of BMZ development education work can be improved. The BMZ recognised the similarity of these programmes of development education work even before the evaluation was concluded, and initiated a structural overhaul. The aim of this is to integrate the weltwärts Post-Assignment component into other pre-existing funding programmes.

Since 2012, the programme has stepped up efforts to support the diversification of weltwärts volunteers and to make it possible for a broader target group to participate in weltwärts. To this end, two competence centres were founded in 2015 for the purpose of increasing or facilitating and supporting
participation, as the case may be, by holders of vocational qualifications and by people with disabilities. A competence centre that will be addressed to residents of Germany with so-called migrant backgrounds was still at the application and establishment stage at the time of data collection. The aim of equitable participation in weltwärts by a diversity of population groups is thus underpinned by a series of programme activities. The significance that the weltwärts programme attaches to this aspect of its activity is demonstrated in the area of inclusion of people with disabilities, among others. For instance, the role of a development volunteer service that is inclusive particularly for these people is explicitly mentioned in the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (BMZ, 2013), and its activities in this area can be considered exemplary within German DC (Schwedersky et al., 2017).

The results of the present evaluation show, however, that the goal of a diversified target group has not yet been achieved. In keeping with the known situation in other fields of civic engagement (Simonson et al., 2017), participants in weltwärts are preponderantly people from privileged, well-educated and, more often than not, Christian-influenced social milieus. Other groups of people are under-represented in weltwärts to varying degrees, sometimes very markedly; for instance, people not educated to university entrance level, people not identifying themselves as upper or middle class, people with vocational qualifications, people with disabilities and people with different religions. From the perspective of the evaluation, the challenge arising from this for the Gemeinschaftswerk is to continue to remove obstacles to participation for the under-represented groups, and at the same time to formulate realistic objectives for their involvement.

The present evaluation results demonstrate that the goal of broad participation in weltwärts is also worthwhile from the viewpoint of learning: volunteers benefit from participating in weltwärts irrespective of their schooling or vocational training or their so-called migrant backgrounds. Volunteers with vocational qualifications or a so-called migrant background benefit as much from the positive effects of weltwärts as volunteers without vocational qualifications or a so-called migrant background, and learn in accordance with the programme’s aims.

**Methodology**

The present evaluation follows the programme-theory-based approach to evaluations (Funnell and Rogers, 2011). Since no up-to-date and collectively upheld programme theory existed for weltwärts, this was produced at the beginning of the evaluation on the basis of programme documents and scientific findings and validated jointly with stakeholders in the context of the reference group.

In order to be able to triangulate results, a mixed-methods approach was chosen in which qualitative and quantitative methods were combined (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Woolley, 2009; Yin, 2006). Accordingly, various data collection and analysis methods were applied to the majority of the evaluation questions (Flick, 2011). This makes it possible to validate the results by considering the perspective of different actors and by making combined use of methods, where the specific advantages of each given method usefully offset any disadvantages of other methods.

In order to be able to establish causality between participation in weltwärts and the outcomes for volunteers, a quasi-experimental design was implemented. To this end, in the second half of 2016 standardised online questionnaires were used to survey both departing and newly returned volunteers as well as a representative demographic sample of the weltwärts programme’s target group (people who did not take part in weltwärts but potentially could have done). A total of 7,940 volunteers took part in the survey of volunteers while 5,022 persons were questioned for the target group survey. In order to identify a comparison group from the representative demographic target group of weltwärts and to ensure comparability between the comparison and volunteer groups, persons from the target group were assigned to the volunteers from both the departing and the current newly returned cohort as “statistical twins” by means of a matching procedure (Propensity Score Matching: PSM; Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983).

In the subsequent analysis, effects were examined on the basis of four groups: 1. departing volunteers from the 2016 cohort, 2. newly returned volunteers from the 2015 cohort (returned in 2016), 3. persons matched to the departing volunteers as a comparison group, and 4. persons matched to the newly
returned volunteers as a comparison group. Differences between departing and newly returned volunteers which exceeded the differences within the respective comparison groups (known as difference-in-differences analysis) were identified as outcomes intended by the programme.

In order to be able to explain potential outcomes and triangulate the quasi-experimental results properly, group discussions were carried out with returnees. A total of 53 volunteers who had departed for their assignments in 2015 and returned in 2016 took part in five different group discussions in the course of post-assignment seminars. 15 volunteers who had returned to Germany in earlier years took part in a total of three group discussions held at DEval. The transcribed discussions were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Another element of the evaluation’s methodology was the completion of a standardised survey by people in the returnees’ social circles. This survey of family and friends made it possible for the first time to find out about the diffusion of the volunteers’ experiences in their immediate social circles — and hence into German society. Moreover, the results made it possible to gain an external perspective on the effects of weltwärts participation on volunteers.

Furthermore, a standardised survey of current and former sending organisations was carried out, in which 124 organisations participated. The results were consulted to answer relevant evaluation questions and for triangulation purposes. Overall this survey made it possible for the perspective of the sending organisations to be taken into account in the evaluation.

Finally interviews were also conducted with 16 experts, and documents and secondary data — e.g. for producing the transparent breakdown of costs — were analysed.

Conclusions

Relevance, and coherence, complementarity and coordination

In the first part of the study of the evaluation criteria “relevance” as well as “coherence, complementarity and coordination”, the significance of weltwärts was examined against the background of current development agendas and the complementarity between weltwärts and comparable volunteer services and programmes of development education work was analysed.

The context of current development agendas: as a result of the ongoing development of weltwärts during the follow-up process to the first evaluation (Engagement Global, 2013a; Stern et al., 2011) and its focus on the volunteers’ learning, weltwärts is aligned with concrete objectives of Agenda 2030 and fields of action of the Charter for the Future “ONE WORLD – Our Responsibility” (BMZ, 2015). Apart from the direct link with “Quality education” – Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals – links are identified with a series of other goals, for example Goal 12 “Sustainable consumption”. As a Gemeinschaftswerk that is implemented by civil society sending and partner organisations and jointly steered by BMZ, Engagement Global, advocacy networks of the sending organisations and volunteers’ representations, weltwärts also fulfils the aspiration towards multi-actor partnerships. On the other hand, there is potential for improvement with regard to participating actively in international discourses on development volunteer services and explicitly making links with current development agendas in programme and strategy documents.

The context of international youth volunteer services in Germany: conceptually, weltwärts exhibits a range of unique distinguishing features in comparison to other international youth volunteer services in Germany; for example, the link to development issues and the concept of Global Learning. In practice, however, a share of the sending organisations do not differentiate between the different government-financed volunteer service programmes, particularly between weltwärts and the IJFD. When surveyed, almost half of the sending organisations which offer several volunteer service programmes responded that in certain of their places of assignment, weltwärts volunteers were placed alongside volunteers from other services, especially from the IJFD and from services operated on a private-law basis. The share of sending organisations that send volunteers from different volunteer service programmes to the same partner organisations is even somewhat higher. While the complementarity of weltwärts and the IJFD is evident from the programmes’ concepts and contents, it frequently fails to manifest in the practical implementation.
The context of governmental development education work: the BMZ finances a series of other programmes in the field of development education work that are comparable with the fund that finances the Post-Assignment component of weltwärts. In relation to these other programmes, the Post-Assignment component has only a few unique features. There are overlaps between the weltwärts Small-Scale Measures and WinD* and the Programme for Action Groups (AGP), and also between the regular weltwärts Post-Assignment Measures and the Funding Programme for Development Education in Germany (FEB). These overlaps concern the target groups, objectives and funding conditions. BMZ recognised the corresponding synergy potentials and initiated the aggregation of these programmes even before the conclusion of the evaluation.

The second part of the study of the evaluation criteria “relevance” as well as “coherence, complementarity and coordination” examined the significance of selected aspects of the weltwärts programme for sending organisations and volunteers, two key groups of actors involved in the programme.

Relevance of the Post-Assignment component: within the scope of this evaluation, the Post-Assignment component is understood to mean the funding line for the financing of post-assignment activities. This is subdivided into Small-Scale Measures and the regular Post-Assignment fund, and is not to be equated with the post-assignment phase, which refers to the period of time after volunteers return to Germany. There is scope for weltwärts to improve the take-up of the Post-Assignment component by volunteers and sending organisations. Offers from this component (Post-Assignment fund and Small-Scale Measures), some of which are addressed to volunteers directly, are barely taken up by volunteers. Many volunteers participate in a seminar or training course after their return, however, and thus possibly benefit indirectly from the funding line. Overall, the high level of civic engagement by returnees is a special strength of the programme, which should be further developed in order to achieve intended outcomes in Germany even more effectively.

The use of the Post-Assignment component by sending organisations is another aspect that can be improved: for one-third of sending organisations, development education work beyond the regular seminar programme does not fall within their activity area. Of the sending organisations that are active in the field of development education work, fewer than half take up funding through the Post-Assignment component. Moreover, its available funding is not used up completely every year.

Relevance of the steering structure: the steering of weltwärts as a Gemeinschaftswerk is a unique feature that notably contrasts with other international youth volunteer services. However, not all sending organisations are fully familiar with the Gemeinschaftswerk’s committees, and a share of sending organisations perceive the Gemeinschaftswerk more as a steering and control structure rather than experiencing and using it as a participatory structure.

Effectiveness and sustainability in volunteers

Outcomes and persistence of outcomes for volunteers: volunteers learn and change in the course of participating in weltwärts: they acquire knowledge about their host country, enhance their language skills, develop the ability to see things from the perspective of people from their host country, and gain in empathy and positive attitudes towards them. Volunteers thus learn and change in relation to their host country and its people.

They do not, however, apply what they have learned to other countries or to a wider group of people: no change is found in the volunteers' knowledge about other countries, or in their competences and positive attitudes towards people from other cultures in general. Their attitudes towards a multicultural German society also remain unchanged, as do aspects of their personality. These results possibly indicate that volunteers relativise inflated self-assessments prior to departure, or that they consciously resist generalising in their responses. However, these kinds of effects have not been included in the Programme Theory so far.

Distinct effects are seen in the area of volunteers’ civic engagement. Even before they depart on assignment, they are
markedly more engaged than the demographic average. While
the proportion of actively engaged volunteers does not rise
post-assignment, the engagement of returnees changes in
terms of its content: the proportion of volunteers whose civic
engagement is linked to development issues increases
substantially after weltwärts.

The key factors conducive to knowing more about the host
country, having positive attitudes towards the host country’s
people and being able to see things from their perspective
(“perspective-taking ability”) are the volunteers’ everyday
experiences and intercultural encounters in the host country,
as well as factors associated directly with the design of
weltwärts (the nature of the tasks at the place of assignment,
the assessment of weltwärts overall, and the accommodation).
Special importance is attached to “contact at eye-level”, which
is understood to mean encounters between volunteers and
people from the host country with mutual respect and an
interest in learning about and from one another without being
reduced to one’s own place of origin. (A more extensive
discussion of the term “eye-level” is presented in the report
[Box 6].) Volunteers can make productive use of both positive
and negative contact experiences in order to learn. Productive
handling of the role attributions (e.g. “foreigner”) that they
are confronted with in the course of their participation in
weltwärts makes a meaningful difference here.

Intercultural encounters are an equally conducive factor to
volunteers’ engagement with development issues. In addition,
seeing and experiencing social inequality in the host country
correlates positively with engagement with development
issues. The same is true of the education and mentoring
programme.

Overall weltwärts has great potential for outcomes in
Germany: volunteers’ knowledge, competences, attitudes and
engagement with development issues are, for the most part,
equally high in all the cohorts analysed. The evaluation thus
shows that volunteers with different lengths of time since
participation in weltwärts are barely distinguishable from
one another. This is an indication that returnees’ individual
knowledge, individual competences and attitudes, and
engagement with development issues are largely stable.

Effects in the volunteers’ social circles: it is not only volunteers
who are changed as a result of participation in weltwärts but
also people in their immediate social circles. Knowledge about
the host country is found to be higher both in parents and in
friends of newly returned volunteers. Changes are also found
in parents’ attitudes towards people from the host country and
in friends’ empathy towards people from the host country of
their respective volunteers.

Effects on civil society: weltwärts acts as a “door-opener” to
international as well as national networks, particularly for
those sending organisations without pre-established
networking structures; however, organisations which were
already offering volunteer services before starting to assign
weltwärts volunteers, or which already had sizeable networks
at their disposal (the church organisations, for example),
seldom forge new links. Nevertheless, weltwärts can also rely
on existing network structures and in many cases the
programme contributes to strengthening and deepening
existing relationships with other organisations.

Cross-cutting question on equitable participation in weltwärts
weltwärts pursues the goal of being accessible to a broad and
diverse target group. Building on a “Concept for the
diversification of target groups in the weltwärts programme”
written in 2012, two competence centres were established in
2015 to reach out to people holding vocational qualifications
and people with disabilities in a more targeted way and to
support their participation in weltwärts. Special funding was
also made available to cover extra disability-related needs
associated with the assignment of volunteers, for example.
Another sign of the special role of weltwärts for the inclusion
of people with disabilities is that the development volunteer
service is mentioned in the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion
of Persons with Disabilities (BMZ, 2013). Activities in this area
can be viewed as exemplary within German development
cooperation (Schwedersky et al., 2017). Another competence
centre that will be addressed to people with so-called migrant
backgrounds was still at the application and establishment
stage at the time of data collection.

The evaluation results show that currently, certain groups
participate in weltwärts with above-average frequency, namely:
young people under 19 years of age, people with a university
entrance qualification, women, people with a Christian faith,
people who grew up in western Germany, people who self-
identify as upper-class, and people without disabilities. The
extent to which the different groups are over-represented
varies. Furthermore, weltwärts volunteers are more willing to
take risks, are more open, more left-wing politically, and have a
more pronounced interest in development issues than people
in the comparison group. Of the population groups that
weltwärts addresses through the competence centres, only the
group of people with so-called migrant backgrounds
(according to the definition of the Federal Statistical Office)
is not under-represented in weltwärts per se. It is much more
the case that its low representation is associated with other
factors (which do indeed also relate to migration) such as
religion or education. The results of the evaluation likewise
demonstrate that the goal of diversification is a worthwhile
one: volunteers benefit from participation in weltwärts,
irrespective of the particular societal groups they belong to.
The positive effects are manifested in equal measure for
volunteers both with and without so-called migrant
backgrounds and both with and without vocational
qualifications.

The result that certain population groups participate with
above-average frequency in weltwärts must be contextualised
against the background of other volunteer services’ experiences.
It then becomes clear that the same is true of Germany-based
volunteer services, i.e. participants are not evenly distributed
across all population groups, as the German Survey on
Volunteering 2014 (Simonson et al., 2017) reveals. However,
the same report points out that participation in volunteering
can provide an impetus for later civic engagement, particularly
for people with low educational attainment (Vogel et al., 2017).
This again supports more vigorous pursuit of the path taken
by weltwärts towards inclusion of diverse population groups.

Factors that currently hinder participation of the three
population groups that weltwärts makes special efforts to
address are stated to be deficits in information, e.g. about the
existence of weltwärts itself or about whom it is open to.
Non-participation of these groups is further abetted by
certain, mainly structural, peculiarities of the programme
design (from the application process to the format of the
education programme to the length of assignments and
contributions to financing). In addition, individuals’ life plans
and societal structures can render participation more difficult
or make it seem unappealing.

Efficiency
Civil society organisations make a significant contribution to
the implementation of weltwärts. In the Presentation of Costs
section, the evaluation makes approximations of the monetary
and non-monetary contributions of the sending organisations.
In 2015 they contributed a monetary amount of approximately
9.0 million euros through contributions from their own funds
alone. Beyond this, sending organisations incur additional
costs which are not covered by the programme and often go
unseen. This also comprises a significant share of work done in
an honorary capacity, which is not quantified in monetary
terms. Honorary work is therefore mentioned expressly under
this heading as a non-monetary resource contributed by
sending organisations.

Recommendations
Overall, weltwärts is a relevant and in some respects effective
and sustainable international volunteer service. The
recommendations pick out identified strengths which should
be built upon and potentials for improvement which should be
utilised. The recommendations listed at this juncture are of a
superordinate and general nature. In Section 7.5 of the
evaluation report, all recommendations including concrete
implementation recommendations are presented exhaustively.

1. Jointly continue to develop the Programme Theory:
After the first evaluation of the programme, collectively
upheld objectives of weltwärts were formulated as part of the
follow-up process and documented in strategy
documents and funding guidelines.

The present evaluation results show that outcomes chosen
for analysis do not occur on all the selected dimensions,
objectives may have been formulated too ambitiously, and
outcomes that are actually intended (e.g. the stabilisation
of attitudes) are not incorporated in the Programme
Theory. Therefore the objectives of weltwärts should
continue to be developed collaboratively, underpinned with indicators and collectively upheld by all the actors involved in the programme. The continuing joint development of the Programme Theory can also contribute to more effective implementation of the formulated objectives by all actors. The Programme Theory to be drafted should contain the collectively upheld and overarching principles of the programme which guide the actions to be taken by sending organisations in implementing the programme. At the same time, within this framework it should remain possible for sending organisations to choose their own focuses in terms of content.

2. **Regularly review outcomes**: Currently, programme progress and outcomes achieved by Weltwärts are recorded in the course of a regular process-oriented survey of volunteers and regular cross-cutting evaluations and component-specific evaluations. Sending organisations can also set up their own independent instruments to record programme progress.

Since the evaluation results indicate that outcomes are not being achieved on all the areas investigated, and that objectives should be reformulated (see Recommendation 1), it is recommended that steering and implementation processes and outcomes of Weltwärts be reviewed regularly with the help of a collectively upheld monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. This represents an opportunity for volunteers as well as sending and partner organisations to contribute their view of the volunteer service to the Programme Steering Committee’s discussions.

The M&E system should be tailored to the needs of the programme, respect the principle of data economy, minimise workload by building on existing instruments, and not overload the limited resources for programme steering. At the same time, international standards demand that the M&E system does not remain on the process level but also permits the review of outcomes.

3. **Extend contact opportunities in the host country**: Current Weltwärts strategy documents refer to the fact that encounters between volunteers and people the host country are an important factor for volunteers’ learning. The evaluation results show that contact at eye-level is the most significant conducive factor for the learning and personal changes that volunteers experience. Therefore Weltwärts should go further in emphasising the significance of contact, and systematically enable volunteers to have encounters at eye-level with people in their host country.

4. **Strengthen effectiveness in Germany**: The focus of Weltwärts on outcomes in Germany represents a unique feature in comparison with other German international volunteer services for young adults. Despite the central programmatic significance of this phase and the high potential resulting from the returnees’ above-average levels of engagement, however, as yet there is a comparatively low level of structuring to reflect this in practice. There is barely any take-up by volunteers of existing instruments to finance engagement in line with the overarching outcomes envisaged by the programme.

Weltwärts can make even better use of returnees’ strong engagement by conceptually extending the post-assignment phase, developing systematic and overarching offers and making participation more binding. For example, binding offers and promotion of seminars or workshops during the post-assignment phase could lead to greater take-up of such offers than in the past. The overarching aim should be to empower an even larger share of volunteers for effective engagement, thus enabling programme outcomes within Germany to be achieved in a more targeted way.

5. **Intensify the pursuit of diversity**: Weltwärts endeavours more than almost any other international youth volunteer service to address a diverse target group and to enable participation in the programme for all. This aim should be carried forward and pursued with intensified effort.
The evaluation results show that different population groups continue to be under-represented in the programme. Although the diversity of participants in other international volunteer services is similarly limited, the focus on development education in Germany in particular requires the programme to be broadly anchored in the population. This aside, it is important to exclude any discrimination caused by weltwärts’s structures and to continue to remedy information deficits as far as possible. The aim should be to make it possible for all persons in the target group to make an informed decision on participation, unaffected by disabling structures. At the same time, numerical targets for certain population groups in weltwärts should be avoided and volunteers should not be selected exclusively on the basis of belonging to particular groups. The Gemeinschaftswerk should vigorously and steadfastly persevere with the efforts it has already embarked upon to diversify the participants in weltwärts.

6. Jointly continue to refine the programme’s development profile: The development profile of weltwärts was further refined after the first evaluation, at which time a focus was placed on the volunteers’ learning and the transmission of their knowledge and their changed attitudes and competences in Germany.

In setting this objective, weltwärts is in keeping with current development agendas. The evaluation results also show, however, that continuing development of the programme proceeded largely independently of international discussions and that relevant links have not yet been made explicit in programme documents. Since development issues contribute to the relevance of the programme for volunteers, weltwärts should continue to refine its development profile and apply it more consistently in the assignment of volunteers. The aim of more precisely defining the development orientation should likewise be to enhance the complementarity between weltwärts and other international volunteer services, particularly the IJFD.

7. Enhance complementarity in BMZ-funded programmes: Within Engagement Global there are a series of intersection points of different but related programmes of development education work. Several funding programmes exist which exhibit great similarities to the financing of post-assignment activities within the scope of the Post-Assignment fund and the weltwärts Small-Scale Measures. The evaluation recommends the harnessing of synergies between the programmes in order to address the shortfall in complementarity.

8. Consolidate the Gemeinschaftswerk: The evaluation results show that the steering structure of the Gemeinschaftswerk represents a unique feature in contrast to other international youth volunteer services. It opens up a space in which civil society and governmental organisations, volunteers and partner organisations can collectively define how a development volunteer service can be designed and supported in the era of the SDGs. The Gemeinschaftswerk should therefore be retained.

Although even now it amounts to a unique and complex participation structure, the evaluation results identify potential for improvement with regard to its significance for sending organisations. On the one hand, the sending organisations’ perception of the Gemeinschaftswerk can be improved. Results show that some sending organisations perceive the Gemeinschaftswerk as a control structure and express the desire for more equality in the steering of the programme. Furthermore, not all sending organisations are familiar with all the Gemeinschaftswerk’s committees. On the other hand, the structural integration of sending organisations can be improved. Not all sending organisations have equal representation on the Programme Steering Committee, since membership of advocacy networks is not obligatory. Thus, certain organisations do not currently have any say in steering via the mandated representative bodies.

Accordingly, the Gemeinschaftswerk should be strengthened to the effect that all actors involved in weltwärts collectively shape and support it. The prerequisite for this is to organise cooperation within the steering committee in such a way that sending organisations can contribute their experiences equitably.
and that decisions are made and upheld collectively. At the same time, it also implies a commitment on the part of all actors to contribute to this joint further development. Moreover, the participation structure should facilitate participation or representation of all interested organisations. Consideration must be given here to maintaining capacity for action and not building up new participation structures, but rather, deepening equitable cooperation within the existing structures.

9. **Publish civil society's contributions:** To support common identification with the Gemeinschaftswerk by all actors involved in the programme, it is important to acknowledge and appreciate their monetary and non-monetary contributions, and likewise to be able to communicate them publicly.