

## Ventao Partner Newsletter – No. 2

Welcome to the second issue of the ventao partner newsletter!

This time we would like to introduce you to the weltwaerts quality system and give you some background information what it is all about.

Please feel free, to ask additional questions to us or to your partner organization in Germany. As always we welcome your feedback on any content of this newsletter.

With best regards from Berlin

Jan Wenzel, Nathalie Bambalinkenga and Anette Schwitzke

### 1. The weltwaerts quality system

When the weltwaerts program was evaluated in 2010/11, one of the recommendations were “the joint assurance of quality in the program”. Quality assurance is part of quality management and focuses on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled.

*How has the recommendation of a joint quality assurance been implemented?*

The **quality** in the program rests on **four main columns**:

- The **sending organizations** and their respective **quality associations** (like us)
- The **working group quality**, which consists of representatives from the quality associations, sending organizations, the Ministry and weltwaerts coordination unit and former volunteers.
- Regular **quality control by external institutions**, namely “QUIFD”:  
<http://www.quifd.de/> (some information in English) and “Guetegemeinschaft Internationaler Freiwilligendienst e.V.”: <http://ral-freiwilligendienst.de/> (only in German).
- The **annual volunteer survey**

Even though the sending organization carries the main responsibility for the quality of its volunteer services, it is obvious, that you as a partner organization play a crucial role in this process.

The role and services of the quality associations have been explained already in the first edition of this newsletter.

*What are the quality requirements or standards in the weltwaerts program?*

The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has developed a list of quality standards, which you find attached. It is also accessible on the weltwaerts website under: <http://www.weltwaerts.de/en/detail.html?id=136>

If you have a look at the weltwaerts quality standards, you will see, that quite a few of them directly relate to you and your relationship with the sending organizations.

- 1.1 The partner and sending organizations work in close partnership.
- 1.3 Agreements are made between the sending and the partner organization regarding funding policy.
- 1.4 The sending organization has a specific strategy for mentoring development volunteers which it implements together with its partner organizations.
- 2.1 A The place of assignment is suited for development learning, exposing volunteers to development issues, i.e. the staff at the place of assignment
  - 1. works with marginalized target groups
  - 2. seeks to promote ecological sustainability, or
  - 3. is explicitly engaged in other development-related areas.
- 2.1 B The place of assignment is basically suited for volunteer work. It is clear from the start that neither too much nor too little will be expected of the volunteers. Any specific requirements that volunteers must fulfil will be clearly stated as part of the selection process. There is a reasonable ratio between the number of volunteer posts in a partner project and the number of staff employed by the partner organization.
- 2.1 C A profile of the place of assignment (goals, tasks) is provided in written form, including an explanation why volunteers are needed. The partner organization and place of assignment are involved.
- 2.2 A Volunteers must not be used to fill paid positions.
- 2.3 A A common understanding of the role of volunteers exists (between the partner and sending organization) / is in the process of being framed.
- 2.3 B The sending and partner organization conclude a written agreement.
- 2.5 A The selection criteria, mutually agreed by the sending and partner organizations and the place of assignment, are clearly defined.
- 2.5 B The partner organization and place of assignment are involved in selecting the volunteers.
- 3.1 A written crisis management and contingency plan is in place.
- 3.3 A Partner and sending organizations are in regular contact.
- 3.3 B The partner organizations are familiar with the weltwaerts program.

- 3.4 Together with the partner organization / place of assignment the sending organization ensures that volunteers are given proper instruction, induction and support at their place of assignment.
- 3.5 The sending organization allocates a mentor / supervisor to the volunteers to ensure proper support.
- 4.2 Upon completion of their service, volunteers receive a certificate that is issued jointly by the partner organization and the place of assignment.
- 4.4 The sending organization evaluates the volunteering experience together with the volunteer and the partner ...

## 2. Introduction to QUIFD – “Quality in volunteer services”

Let us have a closer look at the **external quality control** institutions. For the sending organizations it is mandatory to have their quality controlled in 2015 (or 2016, if they are a small voluntary organization). The sending organizations can choose one of the two external quality control institutions. As all of our members have opted for QUIFD, we will focus on this institution only.

### *What is QUIFD?*

Quifd - the Agency for Quality in Voluntary Services has drawn up quality standards for voluntary services in co-operation with representatives from science and the field. The purpose of these standards is to help organizations providing voluntary placements to review and improve their performance. In recognition for meeting these standards, Quifd awards a Quality Certificate.

### *How does the external quality control work?*

QUIFD has issued a handbook containing all necessary quality standards, which by the way closely relate to the quality standards by BMZ mentioned above. The task of the sending organization is to describe their processes with regard to all standards and provide written supporting documents, such as reports, concepts, budgets etc..

These documents will be evaluated by independent consultants, who meet the sending organizations for a so-called audit of several hours duration. During the audit, the sending organization has to explain its processes and answer additional questions of the consultants. The consultants assess in how far the standards have been met and if the result is satisfactory award the quality certificate.

This process is repeated every two years to monitor the quality development.

We as a quality association do provide support to our members with regard to the external quality control, e.g. by a handbook that we have developed and by individual advice.

### 3. The annual volunteer survey

In 2013 all returning volunteers have for the first time been asked to participate in an online survey commissioned by BMZ. The survey was conducted anonymously by an external specialist agency called uzBonn. About 62% of all volunteers participated. The main aim of the survey is to assess the satisfaction of the volunteers with the program.

A summary of the results has been published by BMZ, but so far only in German.

<http://www.weltwaerts.de/de/publikation-detail.html?id=124>

Therefore we would like to give you an idea about the kind of questions asked and the main results.

*The survey asks questions regarding the following topics:*

- \* The application process and preparation in Germany
- \* The volunteer service in the place of assignment

*Examples of questions asked:*

- Did you have a mentor / contact person in your place of assignment?
- Did you have a valid visa?
- How satisfied have you been with the support provided by your mentor / contact person?
- How satisfied have you been with the tasks assigned to you?
- How satisfied have you been with the social interaction with your colleagues?
- Have you experienced situations in which you have felt in danger, threatened or at concrete risk of violence?

- \* The return and follow-up activities
- \* The overall satisfaction with the volunteer experience
- \* Demographic data (such as age, gender, educational background, etc.)

*Summary of the main results:*

The overall satisfaction with the weltwaerts program is very high. Two third of all volunteers were overall “very satisfied” with their volunteering experience. 74% would recommend volunteering to a friend with a high degree of probability. An equally strong 73% would recommend volunteering in his/her host country.

The satisfaction with the host organization and place of assignment was less strong. 39% would strongly recommend their own hosting organization and 40% their place of assignment.

Please keep in mind, that these are overall results of the program. The results for your

partner organization may vary considerably. If you want to learn more about the survey and the results, please get in touch with your German partner organization.

The survey will definitely continue in its present form until 2016.

There has been a lot of criticism though from sending organizations, who considered the survey one-sided, leaving out the perspectives of partners and sending organizations. We as quality association are working on a proposal for an alternative survey, including both partners and sending organizations.

## News

### **Partner engagement – the main topic of our member meeting of April 2015**

The inclusion of partner organizations on the program as well as the implementation level, has been the main topic of the ventao member meeting in April 2015.

Our member organizations shared with us the partner perspectives they derived from their partner conferences in South Africa, Columbia, Bolivia and India.

The member organizations have collected a number of factors which they consider relevant for successful partner relations. Among them were long-term relationships, accompanying measures, regular partner meetings, financial support for enabling partner visits in Germany, information, communication and joint decision making, joint evaluations, mutual learning and joint topics of interest.

Being aware, that the process of partner engagement has just started to gather pace, we agreed on the following positions, which we will put forth into the Program Steering Committee:

- A key point for enabling partner involvement at program level is a sound information policy. Therefore we recommend the prompt translation of relevant documents and reports into the main partner languages.
- We welcome the idea of supporting partner networks financially. Further discussion is needed, how this might be implemented.

### **Evaluation of the South-North program about to start in July**

The call for proposal for consultants for doing an evaluation of the South-North component of the weltwaerts program is currently open. In July work is expected to start. In the process the working group South-North will invite all partner organizations involved to participate in consultations. The results of the evaluation are expected for the end of 2016. Executive summaries will be provided in the main languages of the partner organizations.