



## Comments by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on the Report drawn up by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) on: „Weltwärts Volunteers and their Civic Engagement in Germany”

### Background and introductory remarks

Since the *weltwärts* programme was launched in 2008, it has sent more than 34,000 volunteers to more than 80 different countries. This makes *weltwärts* one of the largest development volunteer services for young adults worldwide. The programme was set up and is jointly operated by civil society actors – such as sending organisations, their partner organisations abroad and volunteers – and by state actors – such as the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and "Engagement Global - Service for Development Initiatives".

After eight years, it was important to the BMZ to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, and to update its mission in line with current development agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Germany's Charter for the Future. Another objective was to assess the contribution of *weltwärts* to development education work in Germany. Thus, the evaluation was to look at two specific impacts: (i) the effect of service in *weltwärts* on the young volunteers, and (ii) the impact of the programme on the general public in Germany.

The evaluation was not meant (on this occasion) to consider the impact of the *weltwärts* programme in its partner countries abroad. Accordingly, we have taken note of recommendation No. 3 to "Extend contact opportunities in the host country", but have not commented on it in our official response.

DEval gives a positive assessment of the programme overall, rating it as relevant for development and as a volunteer service that is in parts effective and sustainable. In its nine recommendations, DEval has identified strengths on which the programme should

build, as well as areas where improvements could be made. In the case of a few aspects, such as pursuing greater diversity and refining the programme's development profile, it will be possible to introduce DEval's recommendations into ongoing processes within the organisations and bodies participating in the *weltwärts* Gemeinschaftswerk (joint operation).

The BMZ has divided the remaining eight recommendations into three clusters, on which it would like to make the following comments.

T Cluster 1 covers recommendations nos. 1, 2 and 6: Essentially, these three recommendations form the basis on which the programme can be developed further in terms of its content or mission. Therefore, these recommendations should be given priority and put into practice as one package in the adjustment process that will follow within the Gemeinschaftswerk. The recommendations are:

- Jointly continue to develop the Programme Theory (no. 1)
- Regularly review outcomes (no. 2)
- Jointly continue to refine the programme's development profile (no. 6)

The Programme Theory describes a programme's objectives, activities and expected impacts. Taking the current objectives of the *weltwärts* programme as their starting point, the members of the evaluation team formulated a Programme Theory for *weltwärts* on the basis of existing documents and had the Theory validated by a peer group. It is now up to the programme's actors to work together to develop the Programme Theory further so that stated objectives can be tested for relevance and be backed up by indicators and a monitoring and evaluation system

(M&E system), so that impacts can be regularly assessed using the capacities available.

Developing the Programme Theory further helps to refine, or sharpen up, the programme's development profile at the same time. Seen in the light of current development agendas, there is a definite link between the work of weltwärts as an educative programme and SDG 4 on quality education as well as SDG 12 on responsible consumption. In its capacity as a joint operation, it also fulfils the role of a partnership involving multiple actors, as described in SDG 17. The evaluation acknowledges that the programme is informed by current development agendas. However, greater emphasis must be put on this link in weltwärts' programme and strategy documents.

DEval has identified overlaps at operational level between weltwärts and other volunteer services. Care will be taken to eliminate the overlaps when the development profile of the programme is refined.

The continuing joint development of the Programme Theory can also contribute to more effective implementation of the formulated objectives by all actors. It will serve as a basis for further elaboration of the theory of change and the M&E System.

Cluster 2 covers recommendations nos. 4, 5 and 7: These recommendations are being made with the aim of further improving the already noticeable impacts that the programme is having in Germany. The evaluation report's concrete recommendations for action are to be introduced into the already existing bodies and centres of competence. The recommendations are:

- Strengthen effectiveness in Germany (no. 4)
- Enhance complementarity in BMZ-funded programmes (no. 7)
- Intensify the pursuit of diversity (no. 5)

According to the evaluation, the weltwärts programme has considerable potential for impact within

Germany. For instance, after their return, many volunteers continue to be involved in volunteer work, including in development education work. This high level of willingness to engage in further volunteer work is one of the particular strengths of the programme – a beneficial outcome of which better and broader use can be made in Germany. DEval also suggests extending the binding elements of service into the post-assignment phase back in Germany, after the volunteers have returned from their year abroad. During the follow-up process the organisations involved in the Gemeinschaftswerk will discuss what options might work. Furthermore, they will investigate how returning volunteers can be given more specific information about further engagement opportunities and support schemes available through the BMZ.

This is the first time that an evaluation of weltwärts has examined the positive effect that the volunteers have on the people close to them (e.g. parents and friends) and the associated ripple effect. When considering ways to extend the post-assignment phase, the Gemeinschaftswerk will also look into options for offering volunteers further support in this context. DEval rates the programme as essentially effective in strengthening civil society organisations. And encouraging and promoting effective civil society partnerships and networks are some of the essential activities that will help to achieve SDG 17.

The evaluation also finds that weltwärts is doing admirable work in addressing a diverse target group. By setting up three centres of competence to attract applications from people with disabilities, people with vocational backgrounds and, more recently, people with migrant backgrounds, the organisations operating weltwärts have intensified their joint efforts to address target groups that have so far been under-represented among the young adults volunteering for the programme. This has been done specifically to promote social inclusion and diversity. However, the evaluation finds that the aim of diversity has still to be achieved. In order to lessen the obstacles that may exist for under-represented groups and to continue to appeal to specific target groups as needed, the achievements of all centres of competence will

be assessed and future activities considered. Accordingly, solutions for maintaining and scaling up diversity within the programme will be pursued.

Cluster 3 covers recommendations nos. 8 and 9, which refer primarily to the Gemeinschaftswerk, and its sending organisations. These recommendations describe ongoing or continuous tasks:

- Consolidate the Gemeinschaftswerk (no. 8)
- Publish civil society's contributions (no. 9)

DEval regards the weltwärts Gemeinschaftswerk as a unique feature in contrast to other youth volunteer services. This feature is valued and rated very highly by the BMZ. Since it was founded in 2013, this joint operation has been continuously cemented, its committees and structures consolidated, and the complex decision-making processes within it streamlined. Of particular importance in this respect has been the work done by Engagement Global, which as a result of its professional coordination and management has played a significant role in keeping the Gemeinschaftswerk going. Furthermore, Engagement Global has acted as a link and intermediary between the government and the civil society organisations supporting the programme.

The civil society Interest Alliances (groups with shared interests, referred to as "IAs") have an important role to play in this very diverse network of players – a network made up of 160 active sending organisations – as the representatives of the smaller voluntary organisations, in particular. These IAs represent the civil society organisations in the Programme Steering Committee (PSC). However, membership of an interest alliance is not compulsory; therefore not all organisations are affiliated with an Interest Alliance. As a consequence, it is a difficult task for the IAs to report on the complex debates held at Committee level to all sending organisations involved in the Gemeinschaftswerk. In the follow-up process, the PSC and/or IAs should consider ways of using current structures and resources to ensure that

all sending organisations are represented, without having to set up additional structures for participation.

The sending organisations and volunteers make a major contribution to the success of the programme with their monetary support and, even more so, with their extensive voluntary work. The BMZ has always valued this contribution. The volunteer service's tenth anniversary in 2018 is an important milestone for the programme as well as for the organisations involved in the Gemeinschaftswerk. To mark the anniversary, the service will specifically highlight the work done by the civil society organisations in its various PR activities and publications, and in particular at its anniversary celebrations in the autumn of 2018.

### Follow-up process in response to the evaluation

In its long-term evaluation, DEval has identified strengths as well as areas which could be developed further in the North-South component of the weltwärts programme. The evaluation results will be discussed and relevant follow-up action planned by the Programme Steering Committee, the central governing body.

The follow-up process will begin in 2018 and is likely to run on into 2019, depending on what adjustments need to be made to the Programme Theory and the programme's operations. Any additional costs arising out of follow-up actions will be subject to parliamentary approval and will of course be tested for cost-effectiveness.

It is a strength of the weltwärts Gemeinschaftswerk that self-reflection is an integral part of its work, and that evaluations are seen as both motivation and motor for the programme's further development.