

# Inclusive Volunteer Service – “weltwärts alle inklusive!”



Final Report of Three  
**Partner Workshops “weltwärts everyone inclusive!”**  
 (“weltwärts alle inklusive!”)  
in India, Mexico and Ghana

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Remark: For reasons of content and formality, the present document uses the term 'impairment' (instead of 'disability'). You will soon find further information on *bezev's* understanding of 'impairment' and 'disability' on our website.

Thus, the present document uses the terms that are also used in the UN Convention, as they are internationally recognized. We are aware and critical about the discriminatory connotation this term might have, as this does not correspond to the image *bezev* has of human beings.

## I Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities declares social participation in all areas of life as a human right. According to Article 32 (1) a) of the Convention, measures have to be taken in order to ensure that international cooperation - including international development programming - involves persons with impairments and is accessible for them. The weltwärts-program as a volunteer service for development policy has to be inclusive for persons with impairments. However, among the 16.000 volunteers sent abroad, less than 0.1% had an impairment. This number is noticeably low and was therefore a trigger for *bezev* to launch the pilot project “weltwärts all inclusive!” (Engl. “worldwards everyone inclusive!”) in January 2012. With the pilot project *bezev* aims to organize the weltwärts-program in a more inclusive way. In order to achieve this objective, *bezev* is developing a concept for inclusive volunteer services.

Within the framework of the project “weltwärts everyone inclusive!” three partner workshops have been held: in Mexico in October 2012, in India in February in 2013 and in Ghana in February 2014. This report will present the central results of the various presentations and discussions of the three workshops, in order to provide a tool for the further extension of inclusive volunteer services. This version is a shortened summary of all three workshop documentations. Please don't hesitate to request all presentations, as well as the detailed results of the workshops in India, Mexico and Ghana, from *bezev*.

## II What is Inclusion?

All workshops began with the following questions and discussions: What does inclusion mean to you? Are all areas of life in your country inclusive for persons with impairment? Did your country ratify the UN Convention? If yes: Did this contribute to positive changes?

The participants were very interested in the topic of “inclusion”. It was noticeable that the term is understood from the perspective of human rights and social policy across borders and continents. Moreover, all participants understood the content of the term in a very similar way. In general, it can be said that participants understand “inclusion” as the unlimited possibility for people with impairments to participate in all areas of

society. The concrete meaning of “impairment” and “disability” was also discussed (see documentation on Ghana). Furthermore, beyond a narrow definition of inclusion, focused only on persons with impairment, the participants also see a necessity to broaden the term in order to apply to other groups of society. All human beings are different but they all have the same value. The conditions for inclusion are the enabling of autonomy for everybody, as well as an attitude of fairness, tolerance and openness towards all human beings. Inclusion therefore concerns all people within a society. The social reality in the participating countries stands in contrast to the vision and ideal of inclusion reported by participants. Among the countries represented at the workshops, all had signed the UN Convention and all but one had ratified.

Despite the successful ratification of almost all represented countries, numerous cultural and structural barriers have been identified by participants. Access to educational institutions and to the job market is still particularly difficult or impossible for persons with impairments. Through special institutions, such as for example ‘special schools’, persons with impairments are still separated from the majority of society. In some countries, it is culturally enshrined that persons with impairments are excluded from public life. Inclusion therefore requires a process of changing opinions within the population and the whole social system. This change of views should mainly be realized through an emphasis on a person’s capability instead of impairment. Moreover, the implementation of inclusion requires awareness-raising that begins as early as possible, for example within family structures.

Despite numerous barriers, participants confirm that the ratification of the UN Convention has made a demonstrable initial impact with regard to inclusion and that further progress is to come.

### **III Opportunities and Barriers for Volunteers with Impairment**

#### **Opportunities...**

In summary, in all participating organizations, it is in principle possible for all those with and without impairment to volunteer. The main reason for this is the fact that the participants already have positive experience and a great openness towards persons with impairments and to the topic of inclusion. Many of them have a background of working with persons with impairments, or they are organizations of self-representation for persons with impairments or they have made other positive

experiences with persons with impairments. Volunteers with impairments sometimes even bring additional capabilities, which are urgently needed in the volunteer posts (e.g. sign language skills).

### **...and barriers**

Besides the structures of the organizations, there are the structures of receiving countries and of the sending country Germany. Everywhere, people with impairments experience barriers in form of *a lack of physical accessibility and a lack of inclusive programs on offer*. Thus, the realization of inclusion remains dependent on the commitment of individual organizations and the respective state.

In one case, the “type of impairment” was named as excluding category. Accordingly, it would be particularly difficult for persons with multiple impairments, functional autism and mental impairment to volunteer.

Within the weltwärts-program, there are numerous obstacles for young people with impairments. These *barriers* come in *legal, financial, informational and organizational* forms. They are described in detail in the long versions of the partner workshop documentations. The partners highlighted in particular, that the *barrier of age*, caused by the strict age limit for the participation in weltwärts-programs, is sometimes not adapted to the reality of life of persons with impairments.

In general, the groups were of the opinion that all the challenges that occur with volunteers without impairment can also occur with volunteers with impairments. As possible specific challenges related to volunteers with impairments the following issues were presented: sexual abuse, stigmatization/ discrimination at work, positive discrimination due to impairments.

## **IV Development of Guiding Questions and Best Practices for all Aspects of Inclusive Volunteer Service**

### **Choice of methods**

In the course of conducting the workshops, two methods were used in order to identify challenges due to specific impairments on the one hand, and overarching challenges and possibilities for solutions on the other hand. First, specific profiles of applicants for volunteer services have been discussed in groups. Second, fishbowl-discussions were held.

The results of these discussions have been used to extract general guiding questions that organizations can ask themselves if they want to organize their volunteer service inclusively. These were formulated in the form of best practices that can help organizations generally to prepare for volunteers with impairments (irrespective of the specific impairments). Impairment-specific remarks were also included. Both methods and the central guiding questions are described in the following section.

### **Fishbowl-Discussion**

Fishbowl is a method that is similar to a role play. It is particularly suitable for reflecting and discussing a specific topic. In a sort of moderation round, the participants of the workshops will play the roles of all participating actors of the *weltwärts*-program and represent their respective positions. More detailed information can be found in the full workshop documentations. The participants are aware that they play a role and do not have to represent their own opinion. But as they play specific roles, opinions that are certain to exist in the minds of some actors of the *weltwärts*-program become visible, and thus can be subjected to discussion and reflection. Through this method, sensible and critical positions were also mentioned and discussed in the context of the workshop. This is the first step towards more awareness about potential challenges related to the sending of volunteers with impairments and to begin the active process of finding solutions.

### **Profiles of Volunteers with Impairments**

Furthermore, in the course of the workshops, the profiles of four young adults with impairments between 18 and 28 years have been presented and discussed. These four people had applied for a volunteer service *at bezev*. They have impairments in the following areas: seeing, hearing, mobility or learning. On the basis of these profiles, the participants discussed whether and how these specific volunteers and others with similar impairments could work in their volunteer posts.

## **Guiding questions and best practices**

### **Inclusive Cultures**

- Does a common understanding of impairment and inclusion - as well as of the mutual obligation for inclusive action - exist with the volunteer post, and between partner and sending organizations?
- Are all participant actors sufficiently trained on the issue of impairment and inclusion?
- Does cooperation with Disabled Peoples Organisations and other experts exist in other aspects of the receiving organisation's work?
- Are peers (other persons with similar impairments, e. g. Disabled Peoples Organisations) involved as experts?
- Do all participating actors (sending and partner organizations, volunteers, weltwärts-program etc.) work together, and are they willing to compromise? Are external experts involved as well?
- Do guidelines/ manuals exist for the entire process?
- Are all steps of the program organized in an inclusive way, i.e. fully accessible, without barriers, and fair (according to demands) for everybody?

### **Inclusive structures and practices**

The procedural steps of the weltwärts-program include in particular 1) the contacting of volunteers, the application procedure and matching with the volunteer post; 2) the organizational preparation of the volunteer service; 3) pedagogical guidance before, during and after the volunteer service; 4) the evaluation of the volunteering; as well as 5) guiding steps. The inclusive organization of the structures and practices of all program procedures (steps in the volunteer service program), can be made possible by respecting the following best practices.

#### Contacting, Selection and Matching of Volunteers and Volunteer Posts

- Contacting and application procedure should be fully accessible.
- Instead of finding 'special' volunteer posts, there should be an initial examination of all existing posts in order to determine if and how volunteers with specific impairment-related needs can participate in the projects in a positive way.
- The expectations of individual volunteer posts should match with the interests and capabilities of the selected volunteers. For this, it is useful to create profiles of

volunteer posts and volunteers which take into consideration expectations, resources and specific needs.

- The application criteria for volunteers with and without impairment should be equal in principle; if necessary, equality of chances should be created by taking into account impairment-related needs (and if necessary by taking measures to compensate impairment-related disadvantages).

#### Organizational Participation of the Volunteer Service

- The preparation of the whole process will possibly take additional time – in particular in order to find solutions for the specific needs of the volunteers.
- Impairment-related needs and their funding have to be settled at the beginning of the volunteer service. It is also possible to apply for the funding relating to specific needs from the weltwärts secretariat of the Ministry.
- If medicine or aid objects (e.g. batteries for hearing aids) are taken along, customs duties and further traveling conditions (e.g. for flights) have to be taken into consideration.
- Medical needs have to be taken into account. Precautionary measures should be taken for the case of possible emergencies.
- Depending on the impairment, it is necessary to be informed about the system of aid/assistance in the host country in order to enlist these services.
- The accessibility of accommodation and workplace has to be guaranteed.
- Volunteers with and without impairments could be sent as tandem, in order to mutually assist each other. In this case, it has to be guaranteed that there are sufficient workplaces and that the division of the volunteers' tasks is clearly defined.

#### Pedagogical Guidance Before, During and After the Volunteer Service

- Pedagogical and (psycho-) social guidance, advice and communication (e.g. guiding seminars, guidance at the volunteer post, guidance through mentors and tutors) must be guaranteed in an accessible way.
- It would be helpful to have pedagogical personnel (in particular mentors) with impairments or experience in inclusion.
- Volunteers need to have access to a trusted person that understands the impairment, possible challenges and solutions, and in whom they can confide.

- There needs to be communication with volunteers on the conditions in the host country, (e.g. perception of impairment in the country, infrastructure on site), if necessary with participation of a former volunteer.
- Plans for leisure time and holiday of the volunteers with impairment should be supported in terms of their accessibility.

#### Evaluation of the volunteer service

- Reports of partner organizations and mentors should also include information on greater needs, challenges and solutions (which is important for the ongoing evaluation and development of the program).
- The sending organizations should put the final reports of the volunteers at the disposal of partner organizations (which is important for the next volunteer).
- After the volunteer service, all participating actors (sending and partner organizations, volunteers etc.) should evaluate each other and themselves.

#### Guiding steps

- Open and direct communication between all participating actors about expectations and (specific) needs during the entire volunteer service are important. Means of communication should include accessible modern media and creative methods (such as Skype, videos, photos, sign language interpreter, accessible language lessons).
- Transport and mobility also have to be guaranteed in all steps of the volunteer services (in particular on the way to and at seminars, and between the volunteer's accommodation and post).
- Social inclusion is not to be taken for granted in all steps of the volunteer service (in particular in seminars and in the society of the host country) because it requires inclusive cultures. Therefore it is important that volunteers prepare themselves for possible prejudices and discrimination in their environment, e.g. also in the host family and the volunteer post.

#### **Impairment-related results**

For the participants of the workshops it seems most difficult to receive physically impaired volunteers, especially persons in wheel chairs, due to infrastructure and related physical barriers. In the beginning, participants were skeptical concerning

volunteers with visual impairment, although they also mainly considered mobility as main barrier and raised questions about independence. For persons with learning difficulties it seems to be easier to volunteer in many volunteer posts – though insufficient language skills and security issues have been named as potential barriers. A clear majority of participants were not worried about persons with hearing impairment. Here, mainly communicative barriers have to be taken into account. Finally, partners highlighted that barriers and opportunities depend on the specific task at the volunteer post and the severity of the impairment. A principled rejection of volunteers with impairments would not be acceptable. It should rather be the aim of all participant actors, to find possibilities for solutions and to share best practices. The detailed workshop reports contain numerous impairment-related remarks explaining how to make volunteer services for candidates with specific impairments possible.

## **V Open Questions and Suggestions for the German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) in particular the Weltwärts-program**

In the workshop discussions, remarks and suggestions for the BMZ, in particular the *weltwärts* program emerged. These will be described in the following section.

### Age limit

The biological age should not be the decisive criteria – in particular but not only for persons with impairment. For the admission at the *weltwärts*-program, it would be more appropriate, to take into account the emotional and social development of candidates, which, depending on the type of impairment, do not have to correspond to the biological age. This point concerns of course also persons without impairment. But in addition, persons with impairment need often more time to pass through the education system and to achieve independence - which is mainly due to structural reasons, such as numerous barriers that can only be overcome with time and effort). This must not become a disadvantage in the context of an educational and development program.

### Volunteer posts

What role can tandem volunteers play in the support of volunteers? Could another *weltwärts*-volunteer with related preliminary training for example take charge of the

assistance? Could it be possible to apply for a specific volunteer post for this purpose?

Like any other person, volunteers with impairment have preferences for different tasks (in the area of sport, environment etc.). How can these be recorded (for example in the weltwärts coordination center), and how can it be ensured that volunteers with specific needs take over tasks in the existing volunteer posts that match their preferences?

### Funding

Who will cover the additional costs for impairment-related needs and the increased 25% personal contribution for sending the volunteer<sup>1</sup>?

Will the weltwärts-program cover the costs of partner organizations and volunteer posts for changing their infrastructure for specific volunteers with impairment?

Will the weltwärts-program take over the training of sending and partner organizations (including mentors, tutors etc.) on the issue?

### Inclusion in Reverse

When will the weltwärts-program become a mutual exchange, in which young adults with impairment from the South can participate in the context of inclusion?<sup>2</sup> How will this be financed (including higher costs for greater needs and personal contribution)?

## **VI Conclusion**

The three workshops showed that many partner organizations of the weltwärts-program are already open for inclusion and have experience with persons or even volunteers with impairments. The partners agreed that segregation of people with impairments should be prevented and that inclusion should be a common vision of all human beings.

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<sup>1</sup> See guidelines for the implication of the development volunteer service *weltwärts* (1.1.2014). Information is available online under: [http://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCMQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.weltwaerts.de%2FAntrag-stellen.html%3Ffile%3Dfiles%2F\\_media%2Fcontent%2FDokumente%2F3\\_EO%2FInfomaterial-EO%2FFoerderleitlinie\\_weltwaerts\\_01.01.2014.pdf&ei=no4qVMvTNKfnygOe1ILoCQ&usg=AFQjCNGud9-3CD2ELksZjnCMAPTYyy8VXg&bvm=bv.76477589,d.bGQ](http://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCMQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.weltwaerts.de%2FAntrag-stellen.html%3Ffile%3Dfiles%2F_media%2Fcontent%2FDokumente%2F3_EO%2FInfomaterial-EO%2FFoerderleitlinie_weltwaerts_01.01.2014.pdf&ei=no4qVMvTNKfnygOe1ILoCQ&usg=AFQjCNGud9-3CD2ELksZjnCMAPTYyy8VXg&bvm=bv.76477589,d.bGQ)

<sup>2</sup> See pilot phase of the North-South Component (which is not yet conceived in an inclusive way). Information is available online under: <http://www.weltwaerts.de/sued-nord-plaetze-anbieten.html>

The partners underlined that the stereotypical ideas - for example that persons with impairment are dependent and incapable – can be changed worldwide by sending volunteers with impairments as role models. Thus, an image change can be put in train. A resource-oriented approach has been kept all the way through the workshops. The message from partners for interested persons with impairment is: “What counts, is what you can do, and not what you cannot do!”

A lively discussion about challenges and opportunities took place in all workshops. In the beginning, some volunteer posts have been very skeptical with regard to individual profiles of specific impairments. But during the discussion with participants with impairments and organizations with experience, this skepticism has been reduced. The participants became aware that isolated strong negative opinions on inclusion of volunteers with specific impairments existed up to now mainly because of a lack of knowledge on the issue (in particular regarding specific impairments). The partner organizations underlined the need to prepare well for the volunteer service and to be aware of the challenges right from the beginning. Thus, good preparation should be based on detailed information concerning the project environment and the needs of the volunteers through very good communication. In the preparation process, partner organizations placed a high responsibility on themselves. At the same time, it was highlighted that all participating actors, in particular the volunteers and volunteer posts, have to be equally open to each other. They further have to be ready to lower their expectations and to accept that everything will not be perfect. As next step on the path towards an inclusive volunteer service it is necessary that sending and partner organizations discuss whether partner organizations are interested in volunteers with impairments and have experience with impairment.

Please don't hesitate to contact *bezev* if you have any questions about the results of the workshops or about inclusive volunteer service in general.

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>>Your contact persons:

Stéphanie Fritz ([kontakt@bezev.de](mailto:kontakt@bezev.de))

Rebecca Daniel ([alleinklusive@bezev.de](mailto:alleinklusive@bezev.de))

Kathrin Hölscher ([freiwilligendienst@bezev.de](mailto:freiwilligendienst@bezev.de))

Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e.V. (bezev)

Wandastraße 9 // 45136 Essen // phone: 0201-1788963 // [www.bezev.de](http://www.bezev.de)



## Annex

At the partner workshops representatives of the following organizations were present:

### India

Partner organization	Country	German sending organization
Action on Disability and Development (ADD)	India	<i>bezev</i>
Asha Niketan Asansol	India	<i>bezev</i>
Jabez Christian School	Philippines	Co-Workers International in Germany
Chit Aree Welfare School	Thailand	Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners
Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP)	Nepal	Kurve Wustrow
Disabled People´s International Asia-Pacific (DPI – AP)	Thailand	<i>bezev</i>
Ecumenical Sangam/ Rainbow Guesthouse	India	GIZ
Gualandi Volunteer Service Programme Inc. (GVSP)	Philippines	ICJA
Human Wave	India	SCI
Samarpan Village	India	Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners
Samuha India	India	SCI
Shanti Samaj Kendra	Nepal	Kurve Wustrow
United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), Southern	Philippines	VEM
Vietnam and Friends	Vietnam	Kolpingwerk
Volunteers for Peace Vietnam (VPV)	Vietnam	ICJA

## Mexico

<b>Partner organization</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>German sending organization</b>
Asociación Cristiana La Luz	Nicaragua	<i>bezev</i>
Asociación de padres con hijos discapacitados "Los Pipitos". Capítulo San Rafael del Sur	Nicaragua	IJGD
Asociación de Programas Integrales de Educación Comunitaria Astrid Delleman/ ASOCIEPAD	Nicaragua	<i>bezev</i>
Colegio San Christoferus	Peru	Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners
Centro de Desarrollo Rural de San Rafael del Sur/ CEDRU	Nicaragua	IJGD
Centro Ecológico Juvenil – Tarabuco Chuquisaca	Bolivia	DRK/ Volunta
Hogar Comunitario	Mexico	Welthaus Bielefeld
Fundación Proyecto Ecologico Chiriboga	Ecuador	IJGD
Fundación El Arenal/ Feria Libre	Ecuador	<i>Bezev</i>
Fundación Hostelling Internacional Bolivia	Bolivia	DRK/ Volunta
La Pirinola Actividades culturales, educativas y de desarrollo para educación especial A.C.	Mexico	<i>Bezev</i>
Voluntarios Internacionales México A.C. (VIMEX)	Mexico	IJGD
Vive México	Mexico	IJGD

## Ghana

<b>Partner organization</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>German sending organization</b>
American Field Service (AFS) Kenya	Kenya	AFS Germany
Astovot	Togo	VIA e.V.
Buea School for the Deaf	Cameroon	<i>bezev</i>
Catholic Diocese of Kumbo	Cameroon	Bistum Limburg
Catholic Diocese of Ndola	Zambia	Bistum Limburg
Centre d'Intégration scolaire et Professionnelle pour Aveugles et	Cameroon	<i>bezev</i>
Children We Care Foundation	Ghana	IJGD
Grace Fellowship School-Kampala	Uganda	VIA e.V.
Kampala School for Physically Handicapped	Uganda	VIA e.V.
Lake Victoria Disability Centre (LVDC)	Tanzania	<i>bezev</i>
Renaissance Education for Development (Red) House	Tanzania	VIA e.V.
Reverend Father John Special School	Ghana	<i>bezev</i>
Sparrow Schools Educational Trust	South Africa	Sagenet
Voice Ghana	Ghana	<i>bezev</i>
Salvation Army School for the Deaf	Ghana	<i>bezev</i>