



Integrated Guidelines for the volunteer programme of the Norddeutsche Mission (NM)

November 25

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Introduction

This document has been revised in joint effort by the Officers of the headquarter of NM (coordinator and general secretary) of South–North volunteer programmes and the Programme Officers in Togo and Ghana who have integrated the volunteer programme into their work field. The North south volunteer programme is guided by the partner organization VEM. Especially for the North–South and South–North volunteer programmes, it is based on the quality standards for international volunteer programmes by ‘weltwärts’ (German Ministry of Economic Cooperation, by efef1 and by NM itself.

The paper provides the institutional and practical framework of the NM volunteer programmes, mit the main focus on the South–North programme, and the North–South programme. It describes the background, aims & objectives, details of programme implementation and roles and responsibilities of all involved parties, as well as financial and insurance matters. The aim is to provide all people involved in the implementation of the volunteer programmes, be it as professionals, mentors, receiving Members or other. Hosting institutions and churches will be referred to as ‘Members’ throughout the document. There also are reference frameworks and guidelines for action.

The NM strives to continuously develop and increase the quality of the volunteer programme. Through acknowledging differences between the three countries (Togo, Ghana, Germany) involved, and placements, practical implications and details in implementation, the quality standard of the programme shall be equalised and thereby comparable. This is why an integrated approach to this policy was chosen.

The respective responsible officers for the volunteer programmes are:

South–North: the Officer for the South–North Volunteer Programme, based in the NM Office in Bremen/Germany.

North–South: Officer for the North–South Volunteer Programme, based in the UEM Office in Wuppertal/Germany. The general secretary of the NM based in Bremen is involved in the selection seminar and is contact person during the volunteer service. The guidelines will be

1) The Genesis of volunteer programmes

The Bremen Mission (NM) is an international church-based cooperative organisation comprising four German Protestant churches – the Evangelical Church of Bremen, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Oldenburg, the Evangelical Reformed Church and the Lippe Regional Church – as well as two West African Presbyterian churches: the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana (EPCG) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo (EEPT). Spiritual and financial matters – scarcity and abundance – are shared in ecumenical fellowship. Gender and diversity guidelines promote an equal community.

The NM is not itself a 'weltwärts' sending organisation, Since 2010, the NM is cooperating with VEM in the framework of their North-South volunteer programme. It is contracted in a cooperation agreement that VEM is responsible for the administration of four German volunteers annually for the NM. Though working hours of the general secretary of the NM is used to participate in the selection process of north-south volunteers, for preparation, support during their service in Togo and Ghana etc.

After sending german young adults to Ghana and Togo the board of the NM started to express a desire to explore whether it would also be possible to also send volunteers from Togo and Ghana to Germany. They've decided that an introduction of a South-North component would be welcomed, as it would help to fulfil the aim of mutual engagement on an equal footing and further expand the scope of intercultural learning. Strengthening the exchange and international learning of young people between churches in both ways- to the global south and to the global north- has mattered for the NM ever since.

The South-North volunteer program of the NM was planned, decided and was able to start in 2017. In both volunteer programmes the NM and the VEM decided to cooperate in giving pedagogical seminars together throughout the year. As the number of german volunteers sent per year to Togo and Ghana amounts to four all partner churches agreed to establish eight places for voluntary service in Germany for four young adults from each country. Since then the NM offers eight placements in the south-north volunteer programme- sending 12 young people each year to the other continent. All partners- in Germany, in Ghana, in Togo -since then- host and send.

The NM also offers a senior expert programme for short-term placements called Sichtwechsel. Cooperation on overlapping issues is desired and striven for wherever possible.

2. The importance of volunteer programmes for NM

The NM views the south-north volunteer programme as an integral part of its work, especially in the areas of intercultural learning, training and empowerment. It's a means to strengthen existing partnerships and fill them with life through mutual exchange and sharing of experiences.

The volunteers shall provide assistance to social institutions of the hosting member church, where support is desired and needed. This shall include the areas of education, healthcare, environmentalism, culture or human rights. Promotion of global learning, engagement in development issues and international solidarity are core aims based on the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The south-north volunteer programme aims to empower and encourage the young generation to take action for a socio-ecological transformation in their communities. The focus is on learning from each other and developing global awareness by providing equitable intercultural exchange in partnership.

Volunteers have the chance to grow personally during their volunteer year in an informal learning process establish cross-cultural competence and intercultural leadership skills by working alongside those with a different background and viewpoints. They can learn about and contribute to existing partnerships, build up new ones and gain an understanding of what development cooperation is.

After their voluntary service, returnees can share what they have learned during their services with their own communities and networks at home. Host institutions in Germany, on the other hand, get the chance to receive highly motivated volunteers that may bring in a new, different understanding, perspectives and insights. The teams are becoming more diverse.

Moreover, the chance of volunteering forms also one of the major gateways through which young people become aware of the NM and its aims and activities. It's very often the beginning of a long lasting bond that often lasts over many years beyond the volunteer service. Above all, young adults in Germany lack access to civil society structures, which are provided by the voluntary service in a very practical way.

Volunteering plays a vital role for the NM in fostering intergenerational dialogue and building relationships between the young generation and adults (“the old”).

The aim of the NM is that south–north volunteers and north–south volunteers will be joining a Network of Young Adults of the NM (YAN) after their return and stay connected– online or in real life. The exchange promotes a shared understanding of how the two continents– Europe and Africa– are connected. For the future, it is important to act together and, for example, take on the role of ambassador for a change of perspective (e.g. with regard to the colonial era and colonial continuities).

Through the volunteering service, North–South and South–North, young adults should recognise their shared interest in sustainability and commit to it.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the volunteer programme is mainly intercultural learning and learn about sustainable development and partnership. The personal development of a young person is the main focus.

In particular, the volunteers shall get opportunities to

- Get insights in the commitment of the Members to strive for justice, peace and environment
- Contribute to the work of social institutions of NM member churches
- Learn about and contribute to existing partnerships;
- Establish cross–cultural competences by working with people with different cultural backgrounds and diverse viewpoints
- Gain intercultural knowledge on sustainability and global responsibility
- Develop and strengthen personal and language skills;
- Share their gained experiences with their own communities and networks back home.

In order to reach these aims, volunteers are encouraged to also establish contacts outside their place of work in order to get to know life and culture in their hosting country and within the activities of the Member. By this exposure, volunteers can act as multipliers of sustainable development: their enthusiasm and commitment may enrich not only their own lives, but also the lives around them. They take their new insights back to their home churches and communities, relatives and friends to spur

them on to greater understanding and support for NM's work in Ghana, Togo and Germany.

4. Quality Standards

The NM is aware of the fact that all local contexts differ and flexibility and preparedness for unforeseen events and changes are important assets in implementing volunteer programmes. All involved parties should strive for the implementation of the quality standards defined in this document at any time. Difficulties in implementation that cannot be handled at local level between the receiving Member, the mentor and volunteer itself, should be reported to the respective Officer.

General Standards

The south north volunteer service lasts 12 months counting from the regular time cycle. A delayed arrival due to visa issues will not result in a change to the departure date. The timeframe agreed upon by all parties in the BFD contract remains in force. An extension of the stay beyond this period is not possible. An earlier return is only possible in particular cases such as family emergencies, unforeseen events or work/study related obligations. All exceptions are to be discussed with Member churches, the placement and the respective Officer, who takes the final decision.

The NM Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment apply fully.

In cases of serious misconduct of a volunteer which makes a continuation of the stay and contract impossible, the Officers for Volunteer Programmes or the NM Programme Officer can order an earlier return on the basis of termination of contract. All cases of serious misconduct should be reported immediately to the responsible Officer for volunteer programmes.

Standards for Placements

The nature and kind of a volunteer placement may vary significantly according to local conditions and the work areas of the respective NM members. However, all volunteer placements should be defined and selected along the following criteria:

- The work area(s) is/are clearly defined in the field of education, healthcare, environment, culture or human rights. Possible placements could be youth centres, schools, kindergardens or in organizations with a focus on people with disabilities, adult education, working with elderly people or refugees, within civil society organizations doing secular community based work, sustainable and environmental initiatives).
- The orientation of the activities of the volunteers in the field should not serve to convey a certain worldview, but to enrich the different perspectives and enable them to develop their own point of view, based on global learning.
- The nature of the placement / the work the volunteer will do is conducive to a common weal and overall social good, following the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- The volunteer shall be of added value to the institution(s), where he/she is expected to work; i.e. the deployment of volunteers in this placement does not interfere with the local job market.
- The workload to be carried out by the volunteer shall not be more than 39 hours per week and is of regular nature (e.g. daily or weekly repeating tasks). Thus, neither an overload nor an underload of work is expected for the volunteer. Specific requirements to the volunteer will be clearly be stated. Volunteers are entitled to 30 days' vacation per year.
- The receiving institution wants to involve a volunteer in its activities for a specific period of time.
- The total number of volunteers per placement is in an appropriate balance to total number of employees in the project (placement).
- The volunteer is appropriately being accompanied personally, e.g. by a mentor, and also professionally, e.g. by a supervisor or an instructor to enable smooth adaptation in her/his duties. Guidelines for this work of a mentor are provided by NM.

All proposals for placements need to be discussed with and approved by the respective Officer. In the definition and selection of all volunteer placements, the respective Member plays an important advisory role. In order to enable a learning process for all institutions and parties involved a placement should be selected and used for ideally 2–3 years in a row. Exceptions are possible and sometimes required, for instance because of a significant change of quality in terms of Mentorship, care for the volunteer, changes in leadership, or other unforeseen events.

Also, receiving Members can abstain from receiving more volunteers at any time. The placements should undergo a periodic review regarding its suitability of above mentioned criteria.

Standards for South–north Volunteers

Volunteers should fulfil the following criteria in order to qualify for participation in the volunteer programmes:

- 18–28 years old during the volunteer service
- be an active member of a congregation of the westafrican partner churches EEPT, EPCG
- be interested in society by contributing to community life or other social activities, depending on the context of origin;
- Have a high level of flexibility and willingness for adaptation to another cultural surrounding and to work with diverse teams;
- Openness to other cultures and forms of religious expression;
- Basic knowledge of English (for the seminars) and Willingness to learn german–attendance of minimum one german language course before coming;
- Be proactive in given work field;
- Proven mental and physical ability to spend a year in a foreign country;
- Readiness to perform as Ambassador of the culture of origin;

5. Target Group

The NM strives for equal opportunities for youth from various cultural, social and educational backgrounds. The applications from people with disabilities are also highly encouraged.

They should have finished their secondary education or their tertiary education. Practice shows that some work experience can also be of high benefit to a smooth adaptation process and the work itself. A university degree is not needed.

The applicants should ideally be engaged in at least one area of activity of the sending church (e.g. youth work, Sunday school or other) They should get the full support of their sending Member and congregation, proven through a document of reference by

a pastor or another church leader, and the submission of the application by the sending church's leadership/head office.

Gender balance should be aimed at, 2 male, 2 female from each country, and available placements should be distributed equally among male and female candidates. An unequal number of male/female volunteers from one country is possible in two cases: 1) In case of a proven lack of qualified participants of one sex, 2) If the selection process has taken place and a place needs to be filled due to a withdrawal of a candidate, the programme coordinator can fill the place based on a person's performance not considering gender balance as first priority.

6. Selection Process of volunteers

The selection of candidates should be based on the criteria for selection as defined in this document. Also, the specific requirements of the respective placement should be taken into account (e.g. with regard to required age, specific knowledge and skills, language abilities etc.–sometimes placements also have gender preferences according to target group or accommodation).

In May of each year a call for application is distributed to the youth department of EEPT/EPCG. The call for applications includes a description of the programme a timeline and the relevant application forms. The call is sent to the different presbyteries who announce the programme during church service.

The youth desk of each country holds interviews and organizes oral and written tests. After the selection they send a list with the application forms of the four candidates to the NM.

During the preparatory seminar in the beginning of year (January/February) after being selected the NM volunteer officer matches the young adults with the placements taking into consideration the 1) interests, competences, characters of future volunteers and 2) informations and guidelines of the placements (gender, language, specialties). The future volunteers get various informations about the placements (from the placement and possibly material from former volunteers). The decision where to go is handed over via the team of the seminar in 1 to 1 talk.

After the seminar the volunteers and the organizer of the various placements are asked to get in contact. The placement has the right to deny the proposal if they have the impression that it doesn't match.

7. Contracts

Every NM Member that participates in the volunteer programme signs a partnership agreement. The official approval of a voluntary service placement by the Federal Office for Family and Civic Education implies recognition by the authority that labour market neutrality is ensured.

Every volunteer placement is legally embedded by a volunteer contract that defines all rights and duties of the volunteer, and NM as the sending institution, signed by both parties.

In addition, every South–North placement is legally embedded by a volunteer contract that defines all rights and duties of the volunteer, NM as the sending institution, and the hosting congregation/placement signed by all three parties.

All mentioned documents are based on the legal standards of the ‘weltwärts’ funding scheme;

8. Division of Tasks

The tasks that need to be carried out in order to ensure the smooth organisation and implementation of a volunteer year are numerous and diverse. Some matters need to be decided on an individual case–to–case basis depending on the specifics of the placement and context. In the following an overview of the division of the major tasks is provided:

The NM Office in Bremen is responsible for:

- Organisation and implementation of the South–North programme;
- Financing the placement, coverage of all major expenses and pocket money;
- Visa and insurance;
- Flights to and from the placement;
- Emergency management;
- Coordinate & guide mentors for South–North volunteers;
- Providing all relevant practical information to the volunteer and the hosting placement;
- Providing support and advise to the hosting organization and mentors;
- Providing a pedagogical framework in the form of seminars for South–North volunteers;
- Bringing relevant NM events in the region to the attention of the volunteers;

- Public relations and media work.

The Programme Officers in Togo/ Ghana are responsible for:

- Distributing the call for application to the various congregations
- public relations around the south north volunteer programme in Togo and Ghana
- Organization of assessment center and selection of candidates
- Assisting in visa matters;
- Assisting in organising travel (travel expenses and accomodation)
- Assisting in the realization of a preparatory seminar
- Support to sign in for german language course
- Striving as far as possible to enable the returning volunteers to share their gained experiences with their churches/congregations and networks.

The Members are responsible for:

- Providing suitable placements for volunteers;
- Providing a support structure consisting of a member of the church leadership and a suitable mentor;
- Providing accommodation (including GEZ) and food and, if possible, contribute to cover these costs;

9 Definition of Roles

Each counterpart involved in the implementation of any of the volunteer programmes has a specific role to perform, which in some areas may overlap, naturally. NM bears the contractual responsibility for every volunteer as defined in the volunteer contract.

The Role of the respective Officer

The Officer is responsible for the preparation of every volunteer, and for pedagogical guidance of all volunteers. He/She liaises with the relevant partners, communicates all relevant information to the volunteer and provides mental empowerment and support prior to the volunteer's departure. During the volunteer's stay abroad the

volunteer desk can be contacted in case of major problems, questions or crisis, when all local means of support (e.g. mentor) could not provide the required help.

Also, the Officer can mediate in case of conflict between the hosts and the volunteer.

The Role of the Member

The hosting NM member makes sure that the local support structure functions, i.e. by selecting, preparing and briefing a suitable mentor, by welcoming the volunteer and introducing him/her to all relevant stakeholders and by functioning as a reference point for serious problems, such as visa issues, travel permits, security issues, medical treatment and emergencies etc.

The hosting church bears the major practical responsibility for the practical, physical and mental well-being of the volunteer. This includes the monitoring of the placement, liaising with the mentor on a regular basis and – ideally – a brief mid- and end-term evaluation. It is appreciated if the hosting member church is open to feedback expressed by the volunteer, and helps him/her to create a mutual benefit within their volunteer year for themselves as well as the hosting institution/church.

The Role of the Mentor

For every volunteer the receiving Member should appoint a Mentor, whose name and contact details shall be forwarded to the respective Officer for further distribution prior to departure, according to the following criteria:

- Mature personality;
- If possible of the same sex as the volunteer;
- Familiar with the context the volunteer is supposed to live and work in;
- Be in close contact with the volunteer, dedicated and impartial;
- Not a direct colleague and/or superior, (preferably not be a member of the respective church governing bodies);
- If possible familiar with the situation of travelling/living abroad through personal experience;
- Fluent in at least one of the languages that the volunteer speaks.

The respective Officer bears the right to accept or oppose the suggested Mentor in close communication with the Member according to the mentioned criteria. The

mentor supports the adaptation process of the volunteer, functions as a reference point for any needed information, assistance and mental support during the duration of the volunteers stay. Ideally, regular meetings should take place to provide support to the volunteer in his/her individual reflection processes.

Each nominated Mentor will receive a copy of the mentorship manual. Prior to arrival, after the first half of the volunteer's stay and prior to departure, the mentor shall be contacted by the respective Officer to exchange information on the performance of the volunteer and arising concerns, problems etc.

Each Mentor in Togo/ Ghana is entitled to an allowance of 25 Euro/ every 3 months per volunteer. The allowance is sent by the programme officer desk of the NM to the PO.

10 Seminars

For the success of a volunteer programme the pedagogical support and guidance provided to every volunteer is of utmost importance. The pedagogical support structure consists of two major components: the seminar programme, and the mentoring through a local mentor and the volunteer desk in the head office in Bremen.

NM is responsible for appropriate pedagogical guidance and support of all volunteers during their service, as well as their preparation and in provision of opportunities for reflection after their return. The details of seminars in terms of length, location and content may vary according to context, available infrastructure and geographic condition.

The following main topics are usually covered: inclusion, racism, post-colonialism, critical whiteness, socio-political issues (global poverty and inequality), culture shock and adaptation, SDGs and sustainability, crisis management, sexuality, biographical work.

All seminar activities should follow the following principles:

- Stimulate personal reflection on the volunteer-role, the cultural setting and differences, culture shock;
- Focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: help build a framework that aims to value individual differences, ensure fair treatment, and foster belonging.
- Encourage global learning, sustainability and social engagement;

- Support the development of personal skills such as constructive conflict resolution,
- Improve intercultural competences
- Provide the volunteer with relevant information about the hosting country/context as well as tools and strategies to sort out challenges;

Currently, NM provides the following seminars to South–North volunteers based in Germany, also according to the ‘weltwärts’ and ‘Bundesfreiwilligendienst’ standards:

- Intensive German course;
- 5 days introduction seminar;(in cooperation with VEM)
- 5 days mid–term reflection seminar; (in cooperation with VEM)
- 5 days political education seminar;
- 3 days development political seminar;
- 2 days UEM Young Adult’s seminar.
- 5 days final reflection seminar;
- Additionally: exchange seminar for mentors, host families and placements (in cooperation with other organisations)

11. Quality Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

Volunteers are obliged to write four reflection reports. The officer of the NM holds contact via email/ phone calls with the placements to share the developments of the volunteer with each other and guide through difficult times and share positive aspects as well.

Before the officer of NM leaves for the next preparatory seminar the south north volunteers are asked what has been missing as a topic in their preparation.

During the 12 month service a visit of the placement by the officer of the NM should be organized.

At the end of the volunteer year Volunteers as well as mentors and Members are encouraged to provide open feedback to any aspect of organisation and implementation. In the end of every volunteer term, an evaluation form will be send to the receiving partner. The mentor will also be invited to provide feedback. The volunteer is asked for evaluation during it the end of the stay.

Reports of partner organizations and mentors should include information on greater needs, challenges and solutions which is important for the ongoing evaluation and development of the program.

12. Insurance

All volunteers are insured by the NM. The insurance covers health and accident insurance, as well as damage insurance. Insurance protection will start at the date of departure and will automatically end at the date of arrival in the volunteer's home country. The volunteer can ask for a copy of all relevant insurance policy documents.

13. Visa

All volunteers are obliged to have a valid visa for volunteers for the duration of their stay. The volunteers need to get help to obtain their visa. Any visa related difficulties should be reported immediately to the Officer for Volunteer Programmes.

14. Emergencies and Crisis Situations

The NM selects both volunteers and placements with care and tries to ensure a good match between both sides. Close communication and cooperation between all counterparts, including the volunteer himself/herself, institutions of placement, leadership of the hosting NM member, mentor and regional offices as well as supporting institutions are also an integral part of quality management. However, even with the best possible preparation emergencies and crisis situations of different kind cannot be fully avoided.

The volunteer programmes fall under the conditions of the official NM crisis plan, as long as no other agreements are made. The volunteers receive a handout of the crisis plan by arrival. It contains a definition of different crisis, guidelines and various emergency call numbers.

Political crisis

In case of serious political crisis and eventual evacuation, the hosting church shall take all required decisions in close communication with the respective Officer.

Medical emergencies

Prior to departure every volunteer is obliged to get a full medical check-up and to provide a signed clarification by any registered medical doctor that states an excellent physical and mental condition. Every volunteer also has to sign a "Release medical confidentiality" in case of a serious medical emergency to authorize the Bremen Mission to notify people in the home country.

In case of medical emergency the volunteer shall report to the mentor immediately, who in cooperation with the hosting church helps the volunteer to get the required medical care. If local health care facilities do not suffice, the volunteer can be brought to the next bigger town or the capital. Only in cases where local and national health care facilities are not in state of providing sufficient care, an emergency return to the country of origin can be considered.

All medical emergencies should be reported immediately to the respective Officer, who will then liaise with the insurance company.

Personal Emergencies

Naturally, personal crisis situations can cover a broad range of symptoms, such as culture shock, home sickness and stress symptoms such as sleeping problems, anxiousness and mood instability, as well as severe sicknesses such as eating disorders, depressions and panic attacks. All psychological disorders should be taken seriously, and closely monitored.

The first person for the volunteer to contact in case of personal crisis situations should be the local mentor. Also, the volunteer can contact the responsible Officer for Volunteer Programmes in the NM head office if the mentor is not in state to provide the required support. During periods of psychological crisis the guidance of the volunteer should be increased through personal meetings with the mentor, telephone calls and emails by the responsible officer etc. In order to ensure transparent communication also the contact between the responsible officer and the local mentor should be increased during crisis situations.

Earlier return in Crisis Situations

A break of contract at an earlier point of time than stated in the volunteer contract is the last mean for solving a crisis situation and shall only be considered in cases where all other means of support have not shown any signs of improvement over an extended period of time, or in cases where the mental state of the volunteer is so severe, that a longer stay in the hosting country would be irresponsible.

15. Finances and Funding

Generally, UEM covers all expenses for the volunteer programmes, including:

- Flight;
- Insurances;
- Visa costs;
- Pocket money;
- Language preparation;
- Seminar participation;

The number of available placements is based on a fixed annual budget. Though NM considers the volunteer programme as a substantial and important component of its mission and programmes, and therefore consequently invests a substantial amount of its annual overall budget, there is a need for additional sources of funding. These include contributions through government funding as well as the growing need for contributions by the receiving churches, e.g. in the form of free accommodation, food, local transport ticket and a german language course.

16. Network of Supporters

Within the South north volunteer programme, the volunteers are not asked to build up a network of supporters due to the lack of financial background of families in Togo and Ghana. Money of the support groups of the North–south volunteer programme in partnership with the VEM supports financially the South–North volunteer programme.

17. Cooperation Partners

In order to ensure the quality of its programmes, to use and contribute synergy effects and mutual learning, as well as joint advocacy for volunteer programme concerns on governmental level, NM works closely together with VEM. The NM is a member of a network of German Mission societies and a member of the association of Protestant volunteer services (KEF), and the association of Protestant organisations receiving 'weltwärts' funds.