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Introduction

The Conference “weltwärts” – Ubuntu, Voluntarism and volunteer work” took place from September 2, 2009 until September 3, 2009 at the Andreas-Hermes-Akademie in Bonn, Germany.

SAGE Net e.V. (South African German Network) in cooperation with JUGENTI (Cooperation Youth and Development) had invited sending organizations in Germany, partner organizations from South Africa, representatives of the BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) who are in charge of the weltwärts programme, researchers and twenty former volunteers that went to South Africa sent by thirteen different sending organizations in the first cycle of the weltwärts programme to come and discuss the impacts on and experiences of the “weltwärts” programme using South Africa as an example.

In the course of the weltwärts accompanying measures, the conference was kindly supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The conference is part of the SAGE Net weltwärts accompanying measures. Under the title “Learning Lab SAGE Net within the framework of ‘weltwärts’ – Experiences, systematic intervention, exchange and impact analysis – criteria for a sustainable

learning process”, SAGE Net aims to improve its understanding of how a volunteer programme should be designed in order to enable a sustainable sending and learning process for all persons and parties involved (volunteers, sending organizations, partner organizations in SA, sending and partner societies). Through research, capacity building and the improvement in practice, SAGE Net tries to facilitate the development of the SAGE Net weltwärts programme on the one hand and on the other hand also supports the development of the weltwärts programme in general and specifically the weltwärts programme in South Africa, this being the country with the most weltwärts volunteers so far.

A pre-conference for the returning volunteers was held between August 31, 2009 and September 1, 2009, giving them a platform to discuss their experiences. Similar ideas were exchanged thoroughly and were then presented to the plenum, also preparing the pre-conference participants for the main conference.

During the main conference questions, challenges and experiences that all participants dealt with in the course of the weltwärts programme in general and especially in South Africa were covered in panel discussions, speeches and workshops. These led to the formulation of various suggestions as to how

the programme can be improved even further. Additionally to weltwärts sending organizations' input, that of organizations that send volunteers through other programmes were also involved. The guiding question throughout the conference was: "How should the "weltwärts" volunteer programme be organized, in order to create a sustainable learning experiences for all involved?"

The documentation is structured chronologically and contains summaries of the various speeches and their main points as well as the results of the workshops. Similarly, abstracts of the speakers and of the participants of the panel discussion will be presented.

The closing section of the documentation features all relevant results accomplished throughout the conference. The annex comprises the PowerPoint presentations of all speakers, as well as a list of all participants.

All documents regarding the results of conferences, meetings and research results can be found on the SAGE Net homepage (www.sage-net.org). A second conference will be held in South Africa in November 2010.

We thank everybody who made this conference possible: the BMZ for the kind funding of the conference; JUGENTI for the cooperation in setting up of the conference; transfer e.V. for their logistical support; SAGE Net South Africa and especially Birgit Schweizer for their input and logistical support; all speakers from South Africa and Germany for their greatly appreciated input; all former weltwärts volunteers for sharing their experiences in South Africa; all participants for their active involvement in the discussions; Julia Meissner and Stefan Bubenzer for their help with this documentation; Baba Zide, Werner Müller, Matthias Gestrich and Donald Vogel for their help in the facilitation of the conference.

Bonn March 2010

Claus-Bernhard Pakleppa on behalf of SAGE Net Germany

DAY I

Sunday, 6 Dec 2009

Arrival

5:30pm : Welcome at The Homestead by Ingrid Daniels

6:30pm : Braai at The Homestead



DAY 2

Monday, 7 Dec 2009

9am : Welcome by Head Facilitator Birgit

9:15am : Project Presentations

1. Sparrow Schools (Melanie) – presentation 1
2. Masifunde Learner Development (Lubabalo) – presentation 2
3. Makgatho Primary School (Jane) – presentation 3
4. Thusong Children's Centre (Rebecca) – presentation 4
5. Pula Difate Primary School (Mirriam) – presentation 5
6. Integration Company Siyakwazi (Denzil) – presentation 6
7. Volunteer Centre (Chantel) – presentation 7
8. Fountain House (Andrea) – presentation 8
9. Special Care Centres (Gadija) – presentation 9
10. COPESSA (Nobs) – presentation not available

Projects SEED and Abalimi were not represented, but a project tour to Abalimi was arranged for day 2.

2 – 3pm : SAGE Net Presentation by Ingrid Daniels and Donald Vogel

History of SAGE Net was explained and different activities introduced.
(See presentation No.10)



Questions and comments around the SAGE Net presentation:

- SAGE Net South Africa, question of how do we grow – vision of Ingrid: tentacle organizations in each of the SA provinces to take the lead
- Reciprocity of weltwaerts was requested; request for this conference to take a step in this regard – Donald explained how SAGE Net approached the BMZ about this but they have postponed the issue until at least April 2010
- Since ww is a governmental programme for the benefit of Germany, the task would be to



During the presentations which focused on the work with volunteers in each of the projects, we wrote down challenges, benefits and needs that were mentioned. The facilitators compressed and grouped the issues and made photocopies for use in group work later today.

- show German government there is benefit for Germany in reciprocity
- Reciprocity can happen on smaller/individual basis
- Donald said the number of SAGE Net weltwaerts volunteers in SA would be limited to 30 maximum

3 – 4pm : weltwaerts presentation by Stefan Bubenzer

(See presentation No. 11)

- Despite the election in Germany and the change in government, ww is designed to continue
- 5910 volunteers have left Germany for 80 countries (Africa 38%, Latin America 45%)
- South Africa receives most volunteers in terms of countries

- In SA there are 38 sending organizations, 324 placements (1 placement = 1 volunteer), average age is 21.1 years
- Guidelines ww - English text can be viewed on the internet
 - Clearly one-sided service for Germany
 - Ww is supposed to trigger a contribution to development policy in Germany
 - Work of volunteer is educational
 - Paid positions in host countries must not be replaced by volunteers

Comments:

- Discussion around mentor (role and position)
- Personnel structure differ in NGOs and schools
- Some NGOs have volunteer coordinators who do not work directly with the volunteer
- Older age is easier to manage – more time and capacity needed for younger volunteers

- Development agenda should be determined by receiving countries – SAGE Net can play a role in voicing African agenda
- SAGE Net
- Needs to look at ratio of staff and volunteers carefully
- Needs to write up public business and financial reports
- Quarterly reports by volunteers are mandatory
- New contracts between SAGE Net, Partner Organisation and volunteer(s) need to be done

Questions raised:

- What is the unemployment rate in Germany in the ww age group (18-29yrs)? There was no immediate answer to that question.
- Political motivation of Germany behind sending 10000 volunteers? There is international pressure to spend certain amount on developmental activities; military service will be cut and change into professional army – this means a lot of placements of social service are lost to German civil society (instead of military service one could opt for social service) and volunteers are needed to fill those



4:15 – 5pm : volunteer presentation by Julian and Katharina

(See presentation No. 12)

Part of the motivation to do ww programme for the volunteers was career planning.

Some motivation to go to work comes from the certainty to do sth sustainable.

Volunteers requested for partner organizations to have a job description for the volunteer in place.

They see this necessary to match skills of volunteers to organizational needs, and they wish for that for

peace of mind. They also requested to have the mission statement of the organisation beforehand so that they can more easily identify with the organisation they will work for.

The volunteers realized they often had idealistic approach and had to adapt their expectations.

Volunteers want to be appreciated like a staff member.

Qualifications of the volunteer should be used by organisation.

Statistics of a volunteer questionnaire revealed that the volunteers feel their skills are sufficient for the work they do, and they reported back on an overall positive experience.

They discussed stereotypes of Germans and of South Africans.

Culture Shock phases: Honeymoon, Crisis, Recovery, Adjustment.

Volunteers felt they could make a comparison and a judgment about their life in SA as opposed to their life in Germany.

Comments:

- Community members from the township saw international volunteers interested in their life – built self esteem for themselves (“they are coming here and are willing to live the life that we have – it must be worth something”)
- Question was raised how much responsibility can be given to volunteers



5 – 6pm : issues from project presentations were grouped and discussed in small groups

Challenges

International volunteers in South Africa:

- Intercultural misunderstandings
- Cultural arrogance
- Race (dealing with the fact of being white)
- Intercultural intimate relationships
- Naivety
- Dealing with poverty
- Safety
- Transport
- Accommodation

Managing international volunteers in the NGO:

- Wanting to be treated like staff
- Staff fear for their jobs
- Balance of responsibility
- Handling lack of knowledge
- Missing work experience / immaturity
- Ensure sustainability
- Selection of volunteers
- sufficient preparations
- Limited language skills
- Lack of cooperation with staff

To be added:

- define mentor role
- emergency procedures
- accountability

Most important:

- naivety
- safety
- transport
- accommodation
- intercultural understanding
- race and poverty

Take out:

- intimate relationship: the challenge is not that the relationship is intercultural

Needs

Of volunteers:

- Detailed job and role description suitable to age and talents
- Exploration of country
- Privacy
- Rewards
- Network with other volunteers
- Realistic expectation
- Realistic picture of South Africa
- transport

NGOs:

- Volunteer policy / safety policy
- Local as gateway to community
- Realistic expectations
- Resources to provide intense monitoring
- Coaching of staff how to handle volunteers
- Guidelines of SAGE Net's and 'weltwärts' expectations

To be added:

- Feedback
- open communication and reflection
- "gateway" to volunteers for community
- infrastructure in place

Most important:

- Feedback
- realistic expectations
- accommodation and transport

Benefits

For NGOs:

- Boost HR capacity at low costs
- Financial benefits
- Networking benefits
- Creative input / new skills
- Intercultural learnings
- High motivation -> motivation transfer into the organisation

DAY 2

Tuesday, 8 Dec 2009

8:30am – 12:00 : project tour Abalimi



2pm – 6pm : work shop by the Volunteer Centre, Julie and Chantel

1. Handling volunteers as opposed to staff
2. Job descriptions
3. Appraisals

Discussion:

- What is volunteering? → volunteer who wants to be integrated into society; retired person who does few hours of charity work
- Benefits of volunteering? → non-financial rewards
- Myths around volunteering? → for rich people, boring, no accountability
- Rights of volunteers? → to receive feedback, to be treated fairly
- Responsibilities of volunteers? → be committed, be accountable, be honest, to perform
- Local volunteers need to be supported financially by organisation whereas int. Volunteers usually come with a sponsored programme



- Local volunteers sometimes seen as unreliable
- Local volunteers do not want to commit because they see int volunteers receive (a lot of) money in comparison to NGO salary
- Perception that local volunteers do not have skills whereas int. Volunteers come with skills
→ Communication/transparency is important
- Idea to pair a local and an international volunteer to work alongside each other
→ Challenge regarding remuneration
→ Local volunteer needs to receive stipend

Planning (needs assessment, task description, skills needed, volunteer policy, volunteer agreement, cost evaluation) → Recruit (screening and selection)
→ Orientation and Training (task related training)
→ Supervision and Support (scheduled times)
→ Recognition (should be included in policy; certificates, criteria etc) → Evaluation volunteer programme

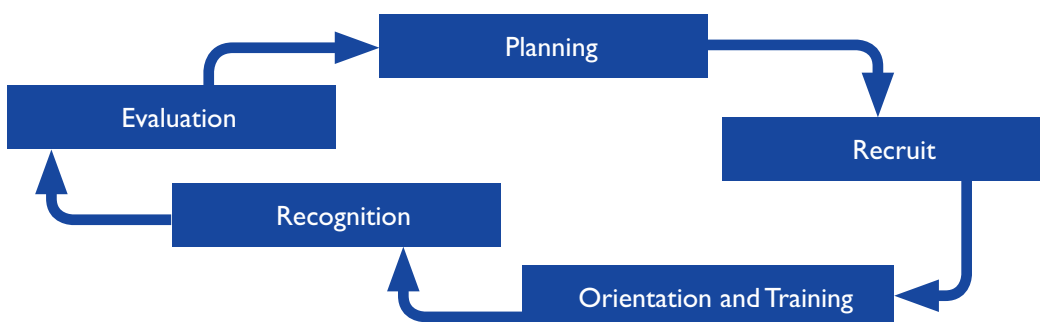
Handling volunteers as opposed to staff:

- Problem of overuse or underuse of volunteers
- Importance of working together with staff
→ making them see the benefits of having volunteers → monetary value
- Problem of seeing volunteers as “cash cows”
- Importance of ensuring sustainability by passing on skills of volunteers to local staff
- Importance of documentation and hand-over (reports on experiences, what worked, what didn't work)
- How to do effective appraisals for volunteers (without spending too much time and no money)
- Practical tips:
- Keep certified copy of passport, visa and emergency number and insurance contact of volunteer
- Explain office culture and dress code to volunteer
- Good idea to invite someone like a poet or a musician to talk about a certain culture or about cultural diversity in SA
- Talk about HIV/Aids with volunteers (one in 5 people are HIV positive)
- In appraisal interview praise the volunteer, praise again and then talk about sth that needs to be improved

Job Descriptions:

3 groups created detailed job descriptions for volunteers in fictitious NGOs, looking at the need of the organization, the purpose of having a volunteer, a list of tasks for the volunteer, time commitment, skills requirements, training needed, decision on supervision personnel, at supporting policies, working conditions and benefits/outcomes.

Volunteer Management Cycle:



DAY 3

Wednesday, 9 Dec 2009



9am – 10:30am : group work

4 Areas of Focus:

1. Volunteer policy
Rob (Abalimi), Stefan (SAGE Net), Alfredo (Youth Unlimited), Mirriam (Pula Difate)
2. Security policy
Lubabalo (Masifunde), Nobs (COPESSA), Santie (TWU), Donald (SAGE Net)
3. Intercultural understanding & protocol
Clementine (Magkatho), Andrea (Fountain House), Chantel (Volunteer Centre), Leah (SEED)
4. Mentor, supervisor & “gateway”
Gadija (CMHS), Jane (Magkatho), Rebecca (Thusong)

11am – 1pm : Finance by Donald Vogel

(see presentation No.13)

Weltwaerts has several formal requirements that need to be adhered to.

Challenge for volunteers to raise money for ww – they have to find arguments for going to SA and for doing a volunteer year.

Question about how much the volunteers need to disclose to the sending organisation – eg bipolar condition.

Personal background should determine which project the volunteer is placed in.

Question how to deal with “mismatches” → as a last option and after a slow process a swap of placements is possible.



Donald explained the new contracts that were handed out to all Partner Organisations. In future there will be a model contract of weltwaerts that will be signed between SAGE Net and the Partner Organisation. The present contract needs to be signed between the Partner Organisation and the volunteers. The volunteers and SAGE Net have already signed the identical (German) version of the contract in Germany.

Presentation on weltwaerts regulations by Donald.



2pm : back into morning groups

3pm : presentations of results of group work

Volunteer Policy

Main Components: job description, line of communication and protocol, supervision, role, orientation and induction, hours and time frame, mentorship, security framework, leave policy

Differentiate between V.P. for schools, small NGOs, large NGOs: Differences exist between pioneer and established NGOs/ schools and other organisations. We found more similarities, though. A need for a volunteer must be identified before hand and a mentor is needed to cover all areas where misunderstandings or conflicts could occur.

Resources must be in place.

The policy must state that the volunteer is not taking away a job of somebody else. Volunteer must do something unique in the organisation.



Question about unique job description for volunteer (so as not to take a job from local staff)

- risk in sustaining a programme with volunteers
- what if NGO cannot afford employing a local person but work needs to be done?
- Policy of one NGO might not match another and SAGE Net policy might not match some NGOs policy
- agreement that the policy of the NGO will be used but SAGE Net should provide guidelines
 - Volunteer policy needs to speak to organisation's policy on all levels
 - Request for one volunteer policy – tweaked for different organisations

Security Policy

Main components should take into consideration laws of the country, rules of the Partner Organisation, and rules of SAGE Net.

Main components: drugs (alcohol in public, illegal drugs, smoking policies), penalties and consequences of disobedience, crime (prevention advice, consequences, insurance measures), boundaries (respect, disrespect), personal liability, transport (formal regulations, informal regulation and advice, rules and regulations, consequences of disobedience).

Different sets of rules apply for cities as opposed to rural areas. For towns as opposed to townships. Take into consideration how people deal with criminals (for example in a township).

Implementation needs to be insured through peers reporting (also peers in the country), through written sets of rules of behaviour, better insurance, penalties and consequences, circulating written rules among partner organisations.

Insurance discussion → volunteers need extra insurance for private property (travel insurance)
SAGE Net will seek legal advice about claims made against NGO because volunteer caused damage while at work.

What if volunteer does sth that damages image of NGO – e.g. journalism (reports about abuse etc.)
→ Policy about information disclosure needed

Crisis situation:

→ Most urgent now is to decide on the line of communication – lawyer is needed

Intercultural Understanding and Protocol



Fields where intercultural misunderstandings can happen include social, family life and working life of the volunteer.

Main reasons are age and naivety of volunteer, or a lack of knowledge. Unrealistic expectations play a role, as well as cultural differences between SA and Germany and within SA.

Examples are crime (being seen as a target), intercultural relationships (“traders”), and tidiness and privacy issues in a living situation.

Handbook for volunteers need to be worked on – including common principles (overview of different cultures), pictures of how people live, street wise training, some understanding of consequences of apartheid, some do’s and don’t’s

Wanting to belong → attachment to a certain group (not known very well) → sell out by same group of people possible

We have to differentiate between young/elder rules and rules between cultures

We also have a responsibility to sensitise locals to other cultures

Looking at cultural differences → risk of rigid rules!
→ We should try and move on from the differentiation between black and white etc.
→ Behavioural rules can only be rough guidelines

Mentor, Supervisor & “gateway”

Central question:

→ Who does weltwaerts see as ultimately liable for the volunteer?

Most important:

→ Mentor and supervisor should not be the same person

It is important to differentiate between school, small NGOs and larger NGOs as it relates directly to the staffing structure.

The Mentor should be the supporter of the volunteer who will liaise with SAGE Net. They will make accommodation arrangements, conduct the induction to the organisation in the country, and liaise between the supervisor the volunteer. They should also be exposed to German and SA cultures and possess the necessary maturity.

The Supervisor has a professional relationship with the volunteer. They will give job and task descriptions, do the orientation in the project, do the supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of the volunteer.

The Gateway initially needs to be in place short term, same age group and at the discretion of the mentor/supervisor.

There should be ongoing meetings from the time of selection of the volunteers between the mentor and the supervisor. Understanding about the volunteer policy, personnel policy and exit opportunities need to be established.



Concerns/further discussion

- How to define boundaries in respect of the personal situation of volunteers and the professional/job status

4pm – 8pm : outing Shopping and Waterfront trip

8pm : Braai and Social at The Homestead

DAY 4

Thursday, 10 Dec 2009

9am : Preliminary Research Results presentation by Lena

Preliminary results of the research project conducted by Dr Brigitte Schwinge were presented. Results will be presented in more detail by the researchers themselves at the SAGE Net conference in November 2010.

9:45am : Outlook - SAGE Net 2010

JAN:

Start of new projects – questionnaire study; planning of seminars “mentoring and good governance” (Ingrid + CB)

FEB:

SAGE Net Soccer Cup 14 Feb (Kalle + SAGENet office)

Intermediate seminar 21 – 26 Feb (Jonas, Lena, Birgit)

Preparation new proposal (reciprocity) (CB)

MAR:

ASA north/south project “Eagles” at CMHS (Ingrid)

End of selection new weltwaerts cycle (SAGENet office Berlin)

Interview/research study ongoing (SAGENet office Berlin)

APR:

AGM (concept of regions, new ww placements and increase to 30 sent volunteers)

(SAGENet Germany)

Meeting in Germany similar to this conference (SAGENet office Berlin)

MAY:

Concert: It-Man in Berlin

Choir Sparrow School tour (Sparrow Schools)

JUN:

Preparation seminar in Germany for new ww cycle (Juliane)

JUL:

Start second phase questionnaire study (Brigitte + Co)

AUG:

New ww volunteers are leaving Germany – orientation starts in SA (Lena, Jonas, Birgit)

NOV:

Conference 2010 in Cape Town (conference planning team)

OCT:

Meeting of the volunteer support circles in Germany (SAGENet Germany)

10:45am : Evaluation

How can we as a network continue to use the work done here effectively?

- Open communication: share experiences in future
- Improve relationship between volunteers and staff
- Clear guidelines for policy documents to be done in partner organisations (including volunteers and staff)
- Talk more
- Regular feedback between network members

How do you suggest we should run the orientation days in 2010 in SA (POs and SAGE Net)

- Issues from orientation → information flow should continue during the year
- Projects need to have more/more detailed info what to cover in orientation
- CMHS offers SAGE Net to make use of their guidelines for orientation and to modify them to suit all partner organisations
- Project specific induction
- Together we can do it
- Detailed informative session on social matters, work matters, community matters

What worked well on the conference?

- Networking, info sharing, open discussion
- Good atmosphere, strengthening of network, developing trust

- Logistics well planned
- Group size and dynamics were good
- Good overview of placements of volunteers
- Interesting to hear volunteers' input in their presentation
- Common understanding of SAGE Net network was created
- Good to hear that SAGE Net not just sending organisation
- Vibrant discussions
- Agreements on problematic issues and on solutions

What did not work so well?

- Would have liked more fun activities
- Participation of Cape Town organisations not continuous
- Some repetition on certain infos
- Volunteer presentation gave a limited view
- Could have had more input from volunteers

Film of the Bonn Conference (September 2009) was shown.

Thanks was given to Ingrid Daniels and to Donald Vogel.

Closure of conference.

