

## IB VAP NEWSLETTER 2023

An exciting and turbulent year is coming to an end. There was the weltwärts anniversary, more on this in an article. The first post-corona weltwärts year was successfully completed. We were able to find new partners in new countries. More on this in an article below. The South-North program has been expanded and we have also been able to establish new partnerships. Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to other partners. The two VAP teams have stabilized again after the personnel turbulence of recent years and are working daily to support and advance the global volunteer movement. Unfortunately, the federal government is planning to drastically cut funding for volunteer services. This plan will affect us, our colleagues, and our colleagues at other civil society organizations, but it will not stop us. We will carry on. Even the terrible war in Israel and Palestine will not prevent us from continuing to uphold the idea of voluntary services. As soon as it will be possible again, IB VAP volunteers will go to Israel again and experience encounters and exchanges at eye level. We wish everyone in the world a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024.

Bernhard Marien, VAP Kassel



### INDIAN WELTWÄRTS VOLUNTEERS SAY GOODBYE WITH THE DIWALI LIGHTS FESTIVAL AT STUDIO LEV

15 months as a weltwärts South-North volunteer in Kassel. For our Indian volunteers Nikhil, Sae, Jared and Daizy (in the photo), it was the documenta summer 2022, the colleagues and children at the Alexander-Schmorell-Schule, the residents and colleagues in the residential communities at Heinbach, the group of South-North volunteers from Tanzania, Nepal, Ethiopia, India and Ecuador, the accompanying seminars in Kassel, Berlin, Hamburg and the weltwärts anniversary festival in Göttingen as well as many private trips and encounters and so much more. The four volunteers said goodbye with an impressive celebration of Diwali, the Indian festival of lights at Studio Lev, where all the unity shone through and became tangible once again.

Team Süd-Nord

## RONDA REICHE AT VAP FRANKEN



Hello everyone! I'm Ronda and a new colleague in the VAP Team Franconia. Voluntary service has accompanied and inspired me for several years now. After completing my Bachelor's degree in business administration and gaining my first professional experience in personnel selection and development, I went to Nairobi, Kenya, for six months with UNESCO's kulturweit program in 2018. In addition to the formative time in Kenya, the accompanying seminars left a lasting impression on me, so that I returned from my voluntary service with a completely new career aspiration! So I decided to study for a master's degree in adult education and at the same time began to provide educational support to groups of national and international volunteers from various organizations. At the same time, I was able to spend some time in Bolivia (ASA program in La Paz) and Colombia

(internships in Medellín and Bogotá) during my studies, which sparked my passion for Latin America. Since October 2023, the VAP team has given me a very warm welcome, so the recent move to Franconia was easy for me. I am looking forward to a time full of exciting people and stories as part of the weltwärts volunteer service at the IB and beyond!

[Ronda Reiche - VAP Franken](#)

## WELCOME TO THE CARIBBEAN - NEW PARTNERORGANISATION AND NEW MENTOR IN TULUM, MEXICO

For many years, we have been sending volunteers to various projects in Mexico - and since 2023 also to the Caribbean region, to Tulum and Chemuyil. The volunteers are involved in various projects, which are active in environmental protection and environmental education. Since August 2023 our volunteers took part in the EcuLudoteca, among other things, a kind of kindergarten with an environmental education mission. The EcuLudoteca belongs to the NGO Flora Fauna y Cultura based in Tulum. Flora Fauna y Cultura was founded in 2002 and, in addition to the EcuLudoteca, brings together numerous projects, including projects for the reforestation of mangroves and the largest project in the Mexican Caribbean region for the protection of sea turtles. The NGO formulates its mission as follows: "We make a contribution to improving the quality of life of our society by showing love, appreciation and respect for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage of Mexico."



Our current volunteer describes her placement:

"I work at the Ecoludoteca, this is a daycare center, which is open from 2 to 6 pm. The children who use the Ecoludoteca change every day. The workplace itself has, as the name suggests, an ecological background so that waste separation, recycling and nature conservation are taught at an early age. The usual activities vary every day with the focus on the children who are there at the time. We do crafts, read, play games and occasionally watch a movie, while the children's wishes are of course taken into. I have two colleges and the target group we work with varies between children from 4-8 years on average."



The new workplaces also include a new mentor: Mario Alberto, volunteer coordinator at Flora Fauna y Cultura. We were particularly pleased by Mario's invitation to the weltwärts partner conference in October in Berlin. Afterwards, he came to Nuremberg for a personal visit to get to know the office.

Lynn is made up for Dia de muertos. The Día de Muertos is a celebration of life and death. It has its origins in Mexico, but is now celebrated throughout Latin America. Typical are the colorful calaveras (skulls) and calacas (skeletons). The Día de Muertos, the Day of the Dead, is not a Mexican version of Halloween. Although the two holidays are related, they are very different in their traditions and atmosphere. Halloween is traditionally seen as a dark night of terror and mischief, while on Día de los Muertos love and respect is shown for deceased family members.

Related links: [florafauyacultura.org](http://florafauyacultura.org)  
Instagram: [florafauyacultura](https://www.instagram.com/florafauyacultura)



Wiebke Borschlegl



From left to right: new mentor Mario Alberto from Tulum, Mexico, Wiebke, Ronda and Corinna in the VAP office in Nuremberg



### ON THE DEATH OF CHRIS CANADY, LONGTIME DIRECTOR OF THE "OMAERE" NATURE PARK, PUYO, ECUADOR

The Omaere Nature Park has been one of our regular cooperation partners in Ecuador for many years. The name "Omaere" means "nature of the jungle" in the Waorani. The park was founded in 1993 by a Shuar and two French women. They bought 15 hectares of land on the outskirts of Puyo and began to establish the most important crops for the indigenous cultures of the Amazon region. The way the Shuar and Waorani live together with the Amazonian nature is shown in a typical hut today. The aim is to preserve the Amazonian plants and knowledge about their use, spreading the knowledge of Amazonian cultures, supporting sustainable development in the indigenous communities and in society in general. In addition, contact with the Amazonian vision of nature should be made possible: A world in which everyone can live healthily and in harmony with nature. Health imbalances are remedied with the help of plants and traditional knowledge. We are very sad about the death of Chris Canday, the longtime director of Omaere. We look back with gratitude on many years of cooperation in which many volunteers were able to benefit from his incredible knowledge about the ecology of the Amazon region.



Our thoughts are with his family. Also here, on the other side of the world, you will be missed!

For moving pictures from the Omaere we recommend to take a look at the video of our volunteer Muriel: [Muriels Freiwilligendienst im Ethnobotanischen Park OMAERE \(Ecuador\) \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Elena Gröpel und Wiebke Bornschlegl



## MAINTENANCE OF STATE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

High-quality voluntary service abroad only works with appropriate funding - In fact, the current financial resources of state programs is already a challenge, and regularly puts many organizations in a tight spot. For example, the pandemic has made work at home and abroad considerably more difficult, while inflation and the energy crisis the costs for secondments, admissions and accompanying pedagogical seminars went up and the war in Ukraine is increasing the security risks. The planned cuts to the IJFD program threaten the quality, planning security and the availability of international voluntary services, and in extreme cases even the existence of supporting organizations. In the weltwärts program, we as sponsors are also facing major challenges. Even if there are no concrete cuts being planned for the time, adjustments to the funding rates for secondments, which are based on the reality of increased costs, but have not been raised since 2016, are needed urgently. The prevention of these planned funding cuts in the federal budget for international voluntary services, Maintaining, strengthening and expanding international volunteer services, and a stronger visibility and positioning of international voluntary services in German politics - these are the clear goals and visions of the current campaign "mein FIJ stärken", initiated by our umbrella organization for volunteer services abroad (AKLHÜ). To achieve these goals, there are various strategies coordinated by the campaign office in Berlin: Information letters to MPs, meetings with MPs, activities on social media, public appearances and talks in the constituencies.

VAP Franken is involved in public relations work as well as in the context of discussions in the constituency on site and so we had an appointment with Andreas Schwarz (SPD) in Bamberg on October 27. We were accompanied by former foreign volunteer Magnus Meier (Magnus was in Ghana in 2017-2018). Formerly an FDP voter and now even working for the SPD, Magnus presented numerous valuable arguments in favor of maintaining the state support programs. In a one-hour meeting we were able to highlight the relevance of adequate financial support for voluntary services abroad and discuss the value of social work with Mr. Schwarz.



Wiebke Borschlegl, VAP Franken

## NOTES FROM AUSTRALIA

Australia is one of the host countries of the VAP team from Franconia - in the current year 2023/2024 a total of nine volunteers in three different retirement homes in Melbourne and the surrounding area. We would like to share some impressions from the daily work of our volunteers!

Amelie is in Glengollan Village. The retirement home is located in the "Ferntree Gully" district of Melbourne and was founded in 1956. Today it comprises 130 residential units with around 150 pensioners who live as independently as possible. There is also a nursing home for the elderly with 90 beds. One part is specially equipped for senior citizens with dementia. The goal is to support all residents in their well-being, to respect their dignity and to maintain their independence and safety as far as possible. Amelie particularly likes the fact that many different and constantly new activities are implemented with the senior citizens. So there are regular visits to the local kindergarten, for example. Yannick is also a volunteer in Glengollan Village. His area of responsibility is varied and, among other things he is spending time with the GlenGoldies - a group that is involved in musical artistic activities: They sing together, dancing or drumming together. Drumming takes place with drumsticks on a chair. Yannick writes: "I look forward to Tuesday afternoons every week because the group gives me so much positive energy & it makes me happy that they are so happy to see me and have me there... Thank you Glengoldies, I look forward to spending more months with you."

Wiebke Bornschlegl



Yannick among the GlenGoldies with the so-called "Drumming" - with sticks on the table.

"We got the rabbits when they were just two days old, and they've been here for a month in total. At the beginning they didn't have any fur, but now they have grown quite a bit and are really cute. The senior citizens can watch the bunnies grow up, and when the bunnies finally opened their eyes, they were allowed to pick them up and pet them. Some of the residents visit the rabbits every day to see how they are doing, or simply just to watch them." (Amelie, October 2023)



"There are also regular VR trips here. The VR glasses allow the seniors to travel and see different places in the world that they otherwise most probably could not see. These are special VR glasses, developed specifically for senior citizens, and the programs include different places around the world. It's particularly sweet when some seniors have already been to certain places and are transported back to that time." (Amelie, October 2023)

### WELTWÄRTS PARTNER CONFERENCE IN BERLIN AND VISITS FROM PARTNERS IN KASSEL AND NUREMBERG

A weltwärts partner conference was held in Berlin in October. The weltwärts volunteer program also includes so-called "accompanying measures". These resources can for example be used for exchange and networking meetings with those responsible at the partner organizations or mentors can be financed and organized. This year, the one-week partner conference in Germany was organized by the "Deutsch Indischen Zusammenarbeit e.V., or DIZ for short. We were lucky that not only our new partners from Madagascar and Botswana (Kassel) and Mexico (Franconia) were given a place at the conference but also that the Kassel team got a place as well, which was shared by Bernhard and Pauline.

The topic of "exchange and communication at eye level" was present during the conference, but also topics such as the South-North Voluntary Service, rising costs for accommodation and meals, falling volunteer numbers, evaluation of cooperation and the strengthening of togetherness have found space.

The 15th anniversary of weltwärts and the 10th anniversary of the South-North program were celebrated with a ceremony and there was enough time and space to get to know Berlin get to know Berlin from the water.

Following the conference, Kingston Mmolawa from our new cooperation Foodbank Botswana came to Kassel with us and was able to visit the IB office in Kassel and taste "African" (actually Eritrean) food in Kassel - in combination with a freshly tapped Pils ;).

In October, our first volunteer traveled to Botswana and supports the Foodbank in Gaborone with food distribution and work in the office for a year.

Miarintsoa Razanakiniaina, the director of our new partner organization new partner organization MANDA in Antananarivo (Madagascar), paid us a visit in Kassel the following week. So far, unfortunately we have not yet been able to send any volunteers to Madagascar, as there is a travel warning from the Foreign Office.







Whether a secondment will be possible in the coming year will depend on the domestic political situation and the extent to which the government will be formed after the recent elections. We very much hope that we will soon be able to start our secondment to this super exciting and diverse placement. You can find more information about MANDA here: [zazafaly.de/ueber-uns/was-wir-machen](https://zazafaly.de/ueber-uns/was-wir-machen)



The exchange during the partner conference, but also the visits from our partners to our office were real highlights of this year. The personal exchange and the joint further development cooperation are the cornerstones for successful collaboration and good support for the volunteers. We are already looking forward to the next personal encounters with our partners worldwide!

Pauline Windler

## 15 AÑOS DE WELTWÄRTS Y DIEZ AÑOS COMPONENTE SUR-NORTE

The BMZ's weltwärts program celebrated a double anniversary this year. In January 2008, the first 50 weltwärts volunteers were personally welcomed into their weltwärts voluntary service by the then Federal Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul. Even then, four volunteers from IB VAP were among them. After a few years of persistent work of the civil society organizations and the first major evaluation of the weltwärts program it became very clear that weltwärts is not remain a one-way street from Germany to the global South.

In 2014, we were able to welcome the first three volunteers from India and Cameroon to Kassel. The South-North component has since then enabled an even better and more intensive exchange with our partner organizations in the Global South. In the current year, we have achieved a balanced ratio between sending and receiving volunteers in the weltwärts program for the first time. Another reason to celebrate this anniversary. Three weltwärts anniversary events took place this year. In March, at the open sponsors' conference in Bonn, representatives of civil society not only looked back on the past successful years of weltwärts, but also looked ahead to an uncertain future. In view of the threat of funding cuts and austerity measures by the German government, crises, natural disasters and wars in many countries, the weltwärts program is also likely to face painful cuts and changes in the coming years.

This makes it all the more important to celebrate it appropriately. In early June, the weltwärts Festival for former and current volunteers took place in Göttingen. We used this opportunity to hold a seminar week for the South-volunteers in Göttingen with a festival program.

In October, the third major anniversary event, the weltwärts Partner Conference, took place in Berlin. Among the approximately 80 participants were representatives of organizations from 38 countries in the Global South. For an anniversary celebration during the partner conference, politicians and country representatives were invited. On this occasion the South African ambassador gave a much-noticed and praised speech.

Bernhard Marien, VAP Kassel



If you want to find out more about the history of the weltwärts program, we recommend the weltwärts website:



Weltwärtsfestival in Göttingen

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60389 Frankfurt am Main

Responsible:

IB VAP Franken  
Schanzäcker Str. 10, 90443 Nuremberg  
Telephone 0911 9453632  
VAP-Franken@ib.de  
[www.facebook.com/ib.vap](https://www.facebook.com/ib.vap)  
Instagram: ib\_volunteer



IB VAP Kassel  
Königsplatz 57, 34117 Kassel  
Phone 0561 574637-0  
VAP-Kassel@ib.de

Volunteers' Abroad Programs  
[www.ib-freiwilligendienste.de](http://www.ib-freiwilligendienste.de)

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