



Evaluation of the pilot phase of the funding line „weltwärts – extracurricular exchange projects in the context of Agenda 2030“

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Object of investigation and evaluation task

The object of evaluation is the funding line "weltwärts – extracurricular exchange projects in the context of Agenda 2030" (wwB). The funding line wwB promotes and supports extracurricular, reciprocal and partnership-based youth group exchanges between countries of the Global South and Global North, which are based on diversity education. It enables youth groups from Germany and countries of the Global South to exchange ideas and carry out joint projects on one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030. According to the funding guidelines, the funding line pursues the following objectives for the direct target groups:

- for the implementing organisations, the aim is to: 1. establish and strengthen global partnerships in the sense of reciprocity, 2. strengthen structures of extracurricular youth exchange, 3. strengthen and qualify civil society disseminators of youth exchange, 4. establish and expand participation structures in youth work, youth education and development policy;
- for the participants, the aim is to 1. stimulate knowledge and learning processes, 2. enable face-to-face encounters and insights into the other side's way of life and society, 3. build up and expand networks and their incorporation into global processes, 4. to contribute to the acquisition of abilities and skills in the sense of global citizenship, 5. to enable them to develop an awareness as acting actors on a global level and to identify their own options for action to promote SDGs, 6. to encourage them to a longer-term engagement on development-related, global and future-oriented issues.

The evaluation was carried out between October 2019 and April 2020 with the aim of providing a sound basis of knowledge for the strategic decision on the further continuation and institutionalisation of the funding line. In addition, it was intended to identify needs for optimisation and development potentials for a possible continuation and expansion of the funding line. A further focus was the assessment of the cooperation with strategic partners with regard to the appropriateness of the division of labour with the wwB team at Engagement Global (EG) and the achievement of objectives.

Evaluation Design

The methodology combines qualitative and quantitative methods. A document analysis is based on documents for the implementation and realisation of the funding line. Guideline-based interviews (n=40) were conducted with representatives of almost all relevant stakeholder groups, i.e. with the wwB team, other EG actors (Kww, KDAJ), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the strategic partners (SP) dsj and BKJ, members of the reference group (RFG) and staff of implementing organisations of the youth exchange projects (non-random selection guided by criteria). Employees of the implementing organisations in Germany (n=33) and the Global South (n=25) and participants of the youth exchange projects (138, 70 of them from partner countries) took part in standardized online surveys.

The evaluation approaches the effectiveness of the funding line from a comparative perspective which covers the target-performance comparison with regard to the achievement of objectives and stakeholders were (retrospectively) asked to compare the situation before and after the implementation of the instrument. Due to the lack of concrete target values, the target-performance comparison is only possible to a limited extent.

Assessment of relevance

From the point of view of the implementing organisations, the funding line is an attractive and welcome support instrument for the implementation of youth exchange projects. The implementing organisations name as most important reasons for this the intended equal footing between the partners as well as between participants, the project design (above all: outward and return encounters and the consideration of the phases before and after the encounters) and better financial resources as in other funding alternatives. With regard to the intended **closing of a funding gap in non-formal youth group exchanges**, the interviewed programme actors (wwB team, Kww, KDAJ, BMZ, SP and RFG) refer to the increasing application numbers which indicate that there is a need for funding. The programme actors name the principle of partnership (including the innovative possibility of transferring funds to the organisations of the global South) and the focus on global learning and the topic of the SDGs/Agenda 2030 as unique features in the funding landscape.

The objectives of the funding line are generally regarded as relevant by all stakeholders (with different weightings for each). A **broad acceptance of the objectives** can be stated. Even if the focus of the implementing organisations is mainly on the goals on the level of the participants, cooperation on equal footing is seen as an important part of the youth exchange projects. The implementing organisation mention more strongly the goals of intercultural learning, while the programme actors (above all the wwB team, BMZ, RFG) consider the discussion of the SDGs to be particularly relevant. The strategic partners differ in weighting of the programme objectives in so far as the BKJ considers changes of participant behaviour to be unrealistic and not primarily intended, and the dsj places the emphasis not only on an intended change of attitude but also on personality strengthening (sense of responsibility and values). The implementing organisations of the Global South more often express the wish to offer their participants opportunities for professional development and an improvement of their life situation.

The instrument of youth exchange projects is seen by all stakeholders as a suitable approach to achieving the objectives. However, there is a lot of feedback regarding the **coherence between activities and objectives** in terms of the plausibility of the basic concept of the funding line. These relate to the character of a short-term exchange format (in terms of exchange time), the funding requirements, which are considered to be high, and the lack of being a low-threshold funding format, the assumption of an impact on the actions of participants, the challenge of reconciling different educational concepts, the expectation of a practical contribution to the SDGs, and finally the consideration of the needs of the Global South implementing organisations.

Assessment of effectiveness

With regard to the **implementation of the funding line in practice** the wwB team and the BMZ state that the wwB team was fully occupied with the core business of advising for and examining applications and (administrative) project support. Other service areas, in which all programme actors see great potential (analysis of reporting documents like interim proof/final proof of use, public relations and networking, exchange and qualification), could not be pursued sufficiently. All program actors see an urgent need for optimization in the processing time of the application review. The long duration of the process leads to problems on the part of the implementing organisations. The programme actors have different views on the approval process of the applications. While the wwB team emphasises the importance of an in-depth review for quality assurance (especially in the area

of education about the SDGs in the projects), the BMZ and the SP - within the scope of what is permissible under the funding provisions - envisage the use of a greater scope for decision-making relating to compliance with funding requirements in order to gain experience with different exchange project concepts and to lower the hurdles for the submission of applications.

Organisations make **intensive use of the wwB funding line** (87 projects exist, as of March 2020). The number of applications is continuously increasing. The **quality of the services provided by the wwB team** is assessed predominantly (very) positive by the implementing organisations. The advice and support is mostly seen as helpful and in line with needs of the organisations. The most frequently cited point of criticism is that the application approval process takes too long and the communication on the processing status and the (expected) time of the funding decision is not transparent. Among other areas in need of improvement, the desire for a support on conceptual level and activities for exchange and knowledge sharing between implementing organisations, networking and qualification stand out.

According to the evaluation results, the funded youth exchange projects are largely implemented according to the **funding principles**. The interviewed project participants are satisfied with participation opportunities in the exchange projects and the consideration of their needs. The division of labour between the implementing partners is often characterised as rather equal. In most areas of work both partners are involved, whereby the German organisations usually take on a larger part of the tasks and responsibilities (especially in terms of financial responsibility). The conceptualization and management of the exchange phases are usually the responsibility of the respective implementing partner. The cooperation between the partners is often described as problem-free and good. However, there are also individual cases with strong conflicts up to the point of project cancellation.

With regard to the **goal of building and strengthening global reciprocal partnerships**, the majority of the surveyed implementing organisations characterizes the cooperation as a partnership on equal footing (Yes: 24%, More likely Yes: 49%). In cases in which a cooperation already existed, a strengthened equality in the distribution of tasks and responsibilities is stated by the majority (above all in terms of a joint application and increased mutual understanding). The Global South organisations here emphasise the allocation of financial resources. The requirement of an application partnership is seen as an important step towards more equality between the implementing partners. However, the concrete concept of this instrument poses some challenges (e.g. high requirements for the application process, no direct communication of the Global South implementing organisations with EG). The sole responsibility of the German implementing partner for the administration of the financial resources in terms of the funding provisions is seen as the biggest sticking point in realising a reciprocal partnership and is associated with a number of problems. Mutual knowledge and trustful cooperation between the implementing partners is mentioned as the most important condition for success of the partnership (or, in the case of a new partnership, the promotion of the same). With regard to other effects at the level of the implementing organisations, a majority indicates that competences in educating the SDGs and the topic of sustainability / SDGs have been strengthened. Networking of actors in non-formal youth exchange was only in part successful.

The evaluation of **effectiveness at the level of project participants** is only possible to a limited extent, since the results of the online survey (as a central data source) cannot be generalised due to methodological reasons of a too small survey sample. With regard to the achievement of the **intended target group**, it can be seen that both genders were reached (nearly) equally, disadvantaged

social groups in part, but the participants still consisted of many young people with a higher educational level. The majority of the surveyed participants had a prior interest in the SDGs or the concrete SDG topic and a large part of them had previous experience in international encounters. The interviewed participants are mainly (very) satisfied with their youth exchange projects. The indicators on impact assessment in the online survey gained high approval ratings: the participants were given opportunities for face-to-face encounters, insights into the other side's way of life and society were gained, learning effects on SDGs / global learning topics are rated high, competencies and skills in the sense of global citizenship were successfully acquired and options for action to support SDGs were communicated. Altogether the impression is (also with reference to the interviews with the implementing organisations) that the goal of changes in attitude and perspective has been achieved, especially in the area of intercultural learning. Often the SDGs have also been successfully dealt with in a fruitful way, which made it possible for the participants to experience and reflect on the different general conditions of the two countries involved as well as on their varying perspectives on an SDG problem and thus develop an awareness of global challenges. According to the vast majority of participants, the engagement with SDG issues continued after the youth encounter and there are some cases where activities and projects started in the exchange project continued afterwards. On behavioural level, according to the participants' statements, changes in everyday activities occur (especially dealing with waste and consumption) and in some cases involvement in SDGs can be seen (especially in being a multiplier of SDG topics, but also voluntary work).

Through the **strategic partnership** with the dsj and the BKJ, 18 youth exchange projects (23% of all exchange projects; BKJ: 15, dsj: 3) have so far been created in the pilot phase. The strategic partners (in addition to advising for project applications and pre-checking application documents) carry out activities of knowledge sharing, networking and qualification of the implementing organisations to a greater extent than the wwB team. The majority of the surveyed implementing organisations are (very) satisfied with the services. The greatest need for optimisation is seen in the distribution of tasks between the strategic partners and the wwB team (because of associated effects on the application review). From the point of view of the wwB team, the need to support the strategic partners in their tasks of advising for project applications and pre-checking project applications creates significant additional work for the team and the quality of the application review of the strategic partners is rated as not sufficient. The strategic partners on their part consider their professional proximity to the applying organisations to be advantageous for their consulting activities and in general would like to see the use of a greater scope for decision-making relating to compliance with funding requirements. All programme actors continue to see potential added value in the strategic partnership for reaching out to new target groups. However, the compatibility of different educational concepts in the different fields is clearly a fundamental challenge. In addition, all actors have identified challenges and role conflicts in the current distribution of tasks and responsibilities, which they see as requiring urgent action.

The interviewed respondents of the implementing organisations consider the **design of the wwB exchange format** to be appropriate for achieving the intended objectives. The explicit consideration of the phases before, between and after the actual encounters, the occurrence of exchanges in both countries involved and the requirement of a practical part are regarded as central conditions for success. The duration of the whole project (including all phases) is seen as demanding for participant commitment and therefore as a challenging aspect of the youth projects. The implementing organisations consider the requirements of the application process to be high. In the view of the strategic

partners this is a barrier for the achievement of reaching new target groups. The scope of financial support is considered appropriate by the implementing organisations. Need for optimisation is seen (in part also by programme actors) in the eligibility of individual line items (e.g. personnel costs).

Assessment of efficiency

While the **working conditions and distribution of responsibilities and tasks** within the wwB team are assessed as good by programme actors, the adequacy of the wwB team's **personnel resources** is assessed more critically. Insufficient personnel resources (partly due to vacancies) are cited as one reason why the core business of the department could not be optimally managed and further activities could not be tackled. The **cost-benefit ratio** in the processes of advising for project application and application review is being rated as problematic because it takes too long and requires too many work resources.

The **human resources of the strategic partners** are considered sufficient by all programme actors. From the point of view of the wwB team, the number of exchange projects generated by the strategic partners does not meet expectations when considering the resources allocated. In addition, dissatisfaction with the cost-benefit ratio of the strategic partnership is noted regarding the lack of simplification of work that was hoped for by the division of labour.

Assessment of overarching development objectives

The intended developmental result of a contribution to SDG achievement concerns a level of impact that can only be influenced to a limited extent and not directly by the wwB funding line. The evaluation only approximates this impact level by looking at preconditions on the achievement of the objectives and thus only allows related plausibility statements. Due to the changes in participant behaviour (according to the survey of participants) and ongoing activities after the project end, a (albeit small) contribution of the youth exchange projects in terms of the SDGs is conceivable in principle. In view of the diversity of topics of the youth exchange projects from the entire spectrum of all SDGs, however, a contribution seems more plausible in those areas that all exchange projects have in common: the implementation of the partnership principle in the sense of SDG 17.16/17.17 and the focus on global learning and education for sustainable development in the sense of SDG 4.7.

Assessment of sustainability

In the vast majority of cases, the **partnership of implementing organisations continued** beyond the end of the project (though most partnerships existed in advance). Currently, there are **seven wwB follow-up projects** (as of March 2020) and the large majority of respondents of the implementing organisations can imagine a follow-up project, or this is already being planned or applied for. The survey results also show a **continuation of the participant contact** (essentially informal and mediated via social media).

Assessment of coherence, complementarity and coordination

The wwB funding line is seen by programme actors (wwB team, Kww, BMZ, RFG) as **complementary to the "weltwärts" programme** (ww). The entry effect for young participants through the wwB funding line hoped for at the conceptual level, due to the character of a short-term stay, seems less plausible in view of the evaluation results. **Synergies between the wwB and ww programmes** arise mainly from the joint exchange of expertise. The aspects of partnership principle and focus on global

learning / SDGs are considered relevant for the further development of the ww programme. The interviewed program actors see potential in an increased **cooperation with the KDAJ**, especially in the context of partnership initiation through matching formats.

Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions take up and focus on the central results of the analysis of the evaluation criteria and questions. Recommendations are derived from them, which are intended to serve as impulses or support for the actors in the follow-up process of the evaluation as they discuss joint decision-making.

The results of the evaluation clearly confirm that the wwB funding line meets a need not previously covered by existing funding offers. For this reason, **the funding line should generally be continued while retaining its specific unique features**. The objectives of the funding line also meet with broad approval from stakeholders. However, certain nuances are discernible with regard to priorities or the prioritisation of objectives. For this reason, **further clarification and a more precise definition of the objectives** should take place within the framework of stakeholder participation - also with the participation of the partners from the South. This would give all actors greater conceptual clarity and certainty (in the processes of consulting and application review).

The evaluation shows that the wwB funding line achieves desired effects at all levels of outcome. An intended extension of the target group can (only) be realised in part. In order to optimize the effects of the wwB funding line, a number of conditions were identified that are conducive and obstructive. At the **level of the services and activities of the wwB team**, measures should be taken to deal more efficiently with the review of project applications and reporting documents (interim proof, final proof of use): project applications should be more standardised using a basis of a detailed system of activities and objectives as well as impact models; the current approach in application review that every application should be made eligible for funding should be abandoned; an increase in the staff of the wwB team should be considered. Important areas of need that should be served more intensively by the wwB team are, among other things, the expansion of offers for exchange and knowledge sharing, networking and qualification of the implementing organisations (including matching formats), greater use of the interim proof and final proof of use documents as an instrument of steering as well as a knowledge and learning instrument, and prompt communication in the application review process that is oriented to the needs of the implementing organisations.

For the goal of **establishing and strengthening global reciprocal partnerships**, mutual knowledge and trustful cooperation between implementing organisations has proven to be the most important condition for success. In order to support a sustainable achievement of objectives, support should be offered to promote mutual knowledge and confidence building, especially in new partnerships. With regard to the unequally distributed responsibility in terms of funding provision, the implementing organisations should be given more support through better information on the challenges involved. In the future, a more fundamental structural change to strengthen the reciprocity of partnerships and thus one of the relevant unique features of the funding line seems to make sense here.

Following measures would appear to make sense for improvements relating to the objective of **reaching target groups** that have not yet been reached with other funding programmes for development-related youth and educational work: a more precise definition of the intended target group, including a more precise and realistic formulation of the intended degree of goal attainment, as well

as the active identification and targeting of organisations that focus on young people who correspond to the defined target group characteristics.

The data collected during the evaluation on the **achievement of the strategic partnership's objectives** reveal strengths and weaknesses of this cooperation model. With the strategic partnership it is possible to generate youth exchange projects from the areas of sports and cultural education, but not or only in the lower range of the target expectations. The added value of the strategic partnership lies in activities in the areas of exchange, knowledge sharing, networking and qualification of implementing organisations and in the conceptual development of the funding line. The distribution of tasks and responsibilities should be revised for a possible further cooperation - whose potential for achieving new target groups in general is seen by many programme actors. The current distribution of roles contains a number of ambiguities which, against the background of different expectations, lead to frictions between the partners, to irritations on the part of the implementing organisations and to an obstruction of the achievement of objectives.