



Evaluation of the pilot project Country Contact Persons of the weltwärts development volunteer service

Executive Summary

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Object of investigation and evaluation task

The object of investigation is the instrument *Country Contact Persons (CCP)* of the weltwärts development volunteer service which has been introduced as a recommendation of the evaluation of the weltwärts programme carried out in 2010/11. A first pilot phase started in October 2013 in twelve focus countries (India, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Ghana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Philippines). In a second phase, starting from May 2015 onwards, six further countries were included (Argentina, Costa Rica, Ruanda, Malawi, Namibia, Mozambique). The pilot phase was first programmed for two years (10/2013 to 12/2015) and then extended by another year (until 12/2016). According to the CCP-concept, the instrument pursued the following three objectives:

- The security of the volunteers is enhanced by assessing the security situation and the safety, security and crisis management of the sending organisations (SO) is improved.
- The coordination between relevant stakeholders of the weltwärts programme at country level is improved by providing relevant information.
- The sending organisations are supported regarding the application for visa and residence permits (i.e. if necessary and agreed, by CCP collecting necessary documents for the application and verifying their completeness).

The evaluation took place from December 2015 to August 2016 and pursues the following objectives:

- Support decisions regarding the suitability and continuation of the instrument
- Assessment of alternatives to the existing CCP instrument
- Provision of information for an effective and efficient implementation in case of continuation, further development or expansion of the CCP instrument

Evaluation design

The design combines different qualitative and quantitative methods. A **documentary analysis** considers the existing documentation regarding the implementation process and actual functioning of the CCP instrument. Semi-structured guideline-based interviews (n=68) were conducted with representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups, i.e. with CCPs, quality associations/QA, German Embassies in CCP countries (census), sending organisations/SO (stratified sample), partner organisations/PO, Federal Ministry of Development and Economic Cooperation/BMZ, Engagement Global and other volunteer services (criteria-led sample) and volunteers (stratified sample). Representatives of SOs further participated in group discussions (n=14). Staff members of sending organisations (n=132), German Embassies (n=14) and volunteers (n=2208) participated in **standardised online-surveys** (census).

The evaluation approaches the effectiveness of the CCP instrument from a comparative perspective which covers the target-actual-difference as well as comparisons by stakeholders of countries with and without CCP and the situation before and after the implementation of the instrument. Additionally, country-specific CCP profiles are compared.

Assessment of relevance

The **needs for support services by CCP** are different depending on the specific work field with a noticeable concentration of the expressed needs on the work area *visa and resident permits*. Whereas in some cases visa and work permit support is nearly the only function of the CCP, in most countries it is weighted as the most important core function. The range of expressed needs encompasses mere information procurement, interventions in problem cases and, in rare cases, routine involvement in visa procedures. Only in exceptional cases a similar or higher importance is attributed to the work area *support to the security management* (particularly in Mexico, South Africa), however, the general tendency was that the German Embassies attach greater importance to this work area (particularly to the aspect of management support in crisis or other dangerous situations) than the SO. The routine activities of the CCP usually remain limited to information gathering and sharing. Explicit demand beyond the information management support has only been expressed in countries with particularly sensible security situations. The subordinate classification of the work area is noticeable since the introduction of the CCP instrument reacted, among other factors, to the specific security events and deficiencies of the security management in the weltwärts system as perceived by German Embassies. Accordingly, the necessity of a “security-backup” in crisis and emergency events is emphasised primarily by state actors (BMZ, Embassies). The third targeted area, i.e. *improvement of the coordination between involved actors*, is usually limited on information exchange in relation to the visa/residence permit and security issues so that it is usually not functioning as an independent work area but as a support function to the previously explained two work areas.

In general, the **country-specific CCP profiles** do not include any functions that would exceed the objectives formulated in the overall CCP concept. Different configurations reflect different requirements and needs by the target groups due to country-specific challenges. Nevertheless, especially representatives of civil society organisations (CSO) suggest that the scope of the CCP functions should be further limited to visa and work permit support whereas the added value to existing security management structures of the SOs and POs is frequently questioned. Representatives of German Embassies tend to an opposite position. Some Embassies even suggest that CCP should play a more active role and acquire more substantial functions in relation to the security management support (e.g. as a contact person to volunteers and PO with a more proactive involvement in the solution of problematic situations not limited to the so-called “emergency-option”).

The **selection criteria for CCP countries** (e.g. number of volunteers and SO, workload for visa and work permit applications, coordination needs related to security) are generally well accepted. The only criterion that was occasionally questioned was the number of volunteers in a country. However, several SO representatives made critical remarks regarding the stringency and transparency of the actual application of the selection criteria. On the other hand, staff members of BMZ and Engagement Global assure that the country selection was consistently based on surveys of demand, thus suggesting that variations in the present relevance of CCP would depend on context-related changes over time rather than on the quality of the selection process.

Assessment of effectiveness

The actual **exertions of CCP functions in practice** are fully congruent with the underlying specifications of the CCP concept by country and with the country-specific demands expressed by weltwärts stakeholders. The varying extent of demand is mirrored by the temporal expenditure for

each work area (average for all countries: 69% for the work area *visa and resident permits*, 18% for the *support to the security management*, including crisis management, and 13% as *contact persons for weltwärts-related questions*). From one country to another, temporal expenditures vary per country-specific contexts and demands.

Regarding the **quality of services delivered by the CCP** particularly the visa and work permit related support is positively assessed by the target groups while evaluations of the security related services differ. Whereas QA observe a comparatively higher workload for the quality assurance of information products, some SOs criticise that information is not sufficiently detailed and doesn't add value to other available sources (or occasionally even leads to contradictive security assessments). However, opinions regarding the quality of security related services differ and do not show a clear tendency. For example, direct advisory services for SO or security briefings for PO and volunteers, as provided by several CCP (e.g. Mexico, South Africa) have been positively valued by all respective interviewees (considering low case numbers: 4 PO and 2 SO).

The results of the standardised online surveys provide evidence of an **extensive use of CCP visa support services by the SO** considering that the extent of direct inquiries by the SO significantly varies depending on the country-specific regulations for visa und residence permits and the complexity of the corresponding requirements.

43% of SO and 58% of Embassy representatives strongly or very strongly agree with the statement that the CCP contribute to the **reduction of visa and residence permit related problems** which means i.e. that less volunteers stay with inadequate residence status or that residence permits are acquired more efficiently. Since the last weltwärts evaluation, however, SO and PO have also paid more attention to improving the visa management and in some cases, external factors have also entailed positive changes (e.g. clarification of the resident status of weltwärts volunteers, simplification of procedures). Among the Embassies, 37% of the surveyed representatives strongly or very strongly agree with the statement, that the CCP support helps to reduce the frequency of interventions due to infringements of visa regulations. This effect is most evident in those countries where CCP are actively involved in the standard procedures for residence permit applications.

Security management support service are not utilised to the same degree. Only one-third of the surveyed SO representatives (33%) strongly or very strongly agree to the statement that **they use information provided by the CCP for the security and crisis management of their organisation**. The data suggests that many SO don't make use of the security information since they rely on information channels which they consider faster and/or more reliable. Only smaller or new SO attribute a higher value to the security information generated by the CCP. Direct security inquiries of SO cumulate in the few countries that face pronounced security challenges. Consequently, the **effect on the crisis and security management** of the SO is minimal. Only 11% of the surveyed SO strongly or very strongly agree to the statement that the CCP have contributed to improving their crisis and security management. In few cases, SO report situations where CCP contributed to a **swifter response to immediate security threats for volunteers** (direct contact with a volunteer to inform about an immediate security threat, communication with volunteers in a flood area, support for a volunteer after a traffic accident with personal injuries). The so-called "emergency-option" in the strict sense, however, has so far not been activated.

The positioning of the CCP as **focal points for weltwärts-related inquiries** varies. CCP are not in direct contact with the Embassies in approximately one-third of the countries. In contrast, one-

third of the Embassies do proactively maintain contact with the CCP and demand information. Cooperation or continuous information exchange on more specific subjects takes place in exceptional cases only. The intensity of contacts between CCP and local actors in the partner countries (i.e. public administration) normally depends on context factors such as the frequency and extent of regulatory changes and the degree of regional heterogeneity. In general, the CCP have achieved to establish the contacts which they require to fulfil their task.

Asked for **factors which hinder the goal-achievement**, several interviewees referred to the delineation of the CCP mandate which is considered too narrow by representatives of BMZ, Engagement Global, Embassies and some CCP. The most highlighted aspect was the strong restriction for direct contacts with PO and volunteers (inhibiting a possible “backup-function” in cases of dysfunctional standard support structures, or direct advisory services for PO). On the other hand, this position is opposed by most of the SO which strictly reject any extension of the CCP mandate.

Nevertheless, **direct contacts with indirect target groups** (POs and volunteers) are already happening, though by a varying degree in each country. Most CCP report occasional inquiries by PO. Only few CCP state that they have dealt with PO inquiries on their own account while referral of PO inquiries to the responsible actor within the weltwärts-system has been the standard procedure applied by all CCP. Occasional inquiries by volunteers have also taken place in a few countries (e.g. due to problems with the visa application, due to workplace related problems not resolved by the standard support structures), but have never accumulated to a relevant number.

There is no consensus among the interviewees regarding the **functionality of the integration of the CCP into the weltwärts system**. QA and SO strongly insist that the primary responsibility for CCP must be assumed by the civil society since other options (e.g. integration in Embassies, GIZ) are considered inconsistent with the system logic of weltwärts. From that point of view the QA are adequate carriers that can assure the acceptance of the CCP instrument among involved civil society organisations. However, there also disadvantages tied to the role of the QA. They are mostly unknown and therefore cannot provide an “official” status to the CCP. Occasionally, CCP report that national stakeholders don’t perceive them as officially recognised actors within the weltwärts system (e.g. mentioned by CCP in Kenya, Ghana, Mexiko, Namibia). Furthermore, the QA are not conformed based on regional criteria which means that they do not directly represent the SO in their respective CCP countries. Thus, the QA themselves can communicate only indirectly with those SO (through another QA).

BMZ representatives mentioned other disadvantages, critically assessing the efficiency of the instrument under the current setting and lack of flexibility for country-specific responses to the needs of state actors such as BMZ and Embassies.

Assessment of efficiency

Regarding the **cost-benefit relationship of the CCP instrument**, the different stakeholder groups express divergent views. Critical assessments are particularly made by civil society representatives (more regarding security management support than for the work area *visa and resident permits*), and some interviewees (SO) even consider the instrument unnecessary due to their negative cost-benefit-assessment. State actors (EG, BMZ, Embassies) and the CCP themselves, on the other hand, perceive a positive cost-benefit relationship.

At the **service or output level**, costs (expenditures for personnel) and the performance of CCP is well in accordance. Only sporadically, the agreed working time has not been sufficient for the fulfilment of agreed tasks whereas in a few cases actual working times fell below the agreed quantities and/or the amount of time required for exercising the CCP functions decreased over time. This leads to the general conclusion, that the **financial endowment** of the CCP instrument is generally adequate. According to the interviewees only two aspects should be further clarified in the future. These issues are the budgeting of social security contributions for CCP with a higher number of contractual working hours and a review of personnel input required of the QA for the technical supervision of the CCP.

Criticism regarding the **efficiency of the organizational structure (i.e. the delegation of the CCP steering function to the QA)** was mainly expressed by representatives of the BMZ. From the point of view of the BMZ, the integration of the CCP into the civil society structure has led to a certain neglect of the needs of state and even some civil society stakeholders (e.g. regarding the needs of Embassies and local PO for information and advice). On the other hand, other stakeholder groups conclude that the present configuration is probably the only suitable, though not necessarily the most efficient, solution – particularly under the aspect of its acceptability by all involved stakeholders. Other options for the allocation of the steering function are not considered realistic (e.g. German Embassies, GIZ, well-established SO).

Regarding the efficiency of communication processes and structures, the perceptions are more positive. This is the case for the communication between CCP und QA, between CCP and Embassies as well as between the different stakeholders and Engagement Global. Some efficiency losses occur due to the binding and multi-stage communication chains for information sharing with the SO. From the point of view of the CCP, feedback mechanisms regarding to the actual usage of their inputs are not yet sufficient. On the other hand, they highly appreciate the induction processes and technical supervision by the QA.

Assessment of overarching development objectives

Most interviewees in all stakeholder groups agree that the CCP have a (very) limited influence on the overall goal attainment of the weltwärts programme and that benefits of the CCP instrument are located at a lower level, particularly regarding the simplification of processes based on the information gathered and shared by the CCP. This is also the case for the work area *visa and resident permits* where positive results are most visible (see the *effectiveness* section), nevertheless, most interviewees would not expect substantial interferences in a scenario without CCP.

Impact estimations regarding the security of volunteers are highly divergent. Most SO do not perceive a relevant contribution of the instrument. Many SO suggest that the work area *support of the security management* shouldn't even be part of the CCP functions since very little value is added to the already existing security structures of the SO and PO. On the other hand, every second Embassy representative assumes that CCP positively contribute to the security of the volunteers though most Embassy interviewees also relativize their assumption emphasising that it is not experience based since there are too few cases of CCP being involved in security events.

Assessment of sustainability

In each interviewed stakeholder-group a majority supports a **continuation of the CCP instrument**. Although several representatives of the SO consider the instrument as dispensable, the majority of

the civil society representatives assumes that – at least in the medium term – a further use of the CCP in several countries makes sense.

In contrast to the QA and SO representatives of the federal institutions stress the continuing relevance of the CCP for the security and crisis management - especially regarding the necessity for a supporting resource in crisis or other dangerous situations which is assumed to be relevant irrespective of the specific number of incidences.

By connecting the CCP to the QA a structure was implemented which is acceptable for the civil society and is favoured as that option which – at least for the time being - is best suited to reach a balance between the different interests of the parties currently involved.

The Pros and Cons of this structural solution are weighted quite different by the different groups of stakeholders. The QA and SO mainly favour a continuation of the instrument in form of the current structure, whereas the representatives of the federal institutions emphasize the necessity for a further optimization of it (see the recommendations in the last section).

The present full financing of the CCP instrument by the BMZ is indisputable among the interviewees. A majority considers alternative Options (e.g. options with a financial participation of the civil society organisations) as not realistic.

The BMZ for his part expresses a basic willingness for a maintenance of its present full financing. However, it feels the need to improve the cost-benefit ratio through an optimization of the CCP instrument (e.g. through an overarching coordination beyond the level of singular QA) as well as through an optional cooperation with other volunteer services which are also financed by the BMZ.

Assessment of coherence, complementarity and coordination

Conflicts of competence among the CCP instrument and responsibilities and tasks of other parties of weltwärts mostly occur because of a divergence between high expectations regarding the instrument in some countries on the one hand and the limited mandate of it on the other.

Conflicts are reported (by singular QA, SO and CCP) especially when the CCP interprets its role in the security field in a more independent way. Examples are the forwarding of information to the QA, SO or the German Embassy without a prior coordination with the Embassy or SO, the expectation of a PO that the CCP could be used by it as a consulting resource or an instrument for an enhanced networking with other on site parties, or cases when – according to several CCP - supporting structures on site prove inadequate and CCP are confronted with requests to support weltwärts volunteers in a specific way.

There is no **cooperation with other volunteer services** in any of the CCP countries. However, there are indirect consequences (as well positive as negative ones). Especially SO which are sending volunteers through other programs than weltwärts too, report on synergy effects through the activities of the CCP.

They essentially consist of a program overarching usage of the information service activities of the CCP. Another side effect is – according to the QA – that through the activities of the CCP volunteer services can get more visible and improve their standing across the board in the CCP countries.

Some of the interviewees suspect that there are also some negative effects for other volunteer services due to a privileged handling of weltwärts volunteers concerning visa related questions.

But, even when the availability of the CCP support is a real advantage for weltwärts volunteers in comparison to volunteers of other services, there are no hints that there are furthermore negative effects for them.

Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions focus on the key findings of the analysis (based on the evaluation criteria) and how they contribute to answering the guiding questions of the evaluation. Based on the evidence-based conclusions, recommendations for the continuation, further development or modifications of the CCP instrument are formulated. Preferences and needs which have been expressed by the interviewees are very divergent, as are the respective value judgments on possible solutions. Therefore, specific recommendations will not be equally acceptable für all stakeholder groups at once. They consider stakeholder opinions which have been expressed not only by one individual, but at least several interviewees. They have been further processed to develop suitable options for the future design of the instrument and will serve as a starting point for the follow-up process of the evaluation.

Thus, the recommendations are formulated as alternative options which are subdivided into **options for the continuation and conceptual adjustment** of the CCP instrument, **options for the entire or partial substitution of the instrument by other alternatives** as well as more general **process related recommendations**. The options are analysed considering their respective advantages and disadvantages.

The **conclusions** mainly focus on the **divergent assessments of the stakeholder groups regarding the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency** of the instrument in the work areas visa/resident permits, support to security management and support to the coordination between weltwärts stakeholders. The least divergent opinions have been encountered regarding for the work area visa/resident permits, therefore, consensus could most probably be achieved regarding solutions for the continuation of this CCP function.

The **divergent opinions regarding the work areas support of the security management and improvement of coordination between weltwärts-related stakeholders** leave to the conclusion that a significantly more intense discussion and negotiation process among the stakeholders will be required to continue and/or adjust this CCP function.

Divergent opinions are based on (in part, fundamentally) different, but equally legitimate, interests of state versus civil society stakeholders. Possibly, those interests have not been fully transparent and sufficiently considered for the conceptualisation and implementation of the CCP instrument.

Another central issue is related to the scope of the CCP mandate. Particularly from the perspective of stakeholders in the partner countries (e.g. German Embassies) the mandate is too restrictive and therefore, communicational competences of the CCP are considered **conceptually inflexible** and **not sufficiently needs-oriented**. Civil society stakeholder, however, oppose a flexibilisation of the instrument since they emphasise the risk of a dilution and/or overburdening of the CCP functions. Instead, civil society representatives plead for a sharper CCP profile focusing on the most essential CCP functions only. For the follow-up process, both perspectives must be considered.

As recommendations, several alternative options are proposed, considering the fundamentally different perspective of state and civil society stakeholders which must be balanced during the

follow-up process. Furthermore, actual needs for CCP support may differ significantly by country due to country-specific surrounding factors.

A first option for the continuation and conceptual adjustment of the instrument is the **‘continuation of the present goal definition as a frame concept with country specific prioritisations and concretisation according to country-specific needs’**.

A second option is to consider the **‘general limitation or reduction of the CCP function to the work area visa/resident permits’**. It should be noted that risks regarding the general acceptability of this option have to be considered, since particularly state actors (including several Embassies considering country-specific situations and needs) emphasise the imperative of maintaining support to the security management of the SO and PO and are, therefore, sceptical about this option. It would require to “out-source” the security-support function and complement the reduced CCP instrument with the respective solution.

Options for alternative instruments/concepts which could partially or entirely substitute the CCP instrument could offer the advantage of facilitating more customised solutions for specific functions and/or country-specific needs. This would imply, however, to partially or entirely drop an already established element of the weltwärts structure which is – in general terms – positively connoted by many stakeholders.

Proposed options for alternative instruments are: (1) Support in the work area *visa and resident permits* by **visa-information services or local service providers** at country-level; (2) utilisation of the **visa-information department of Engagement Global** which is presently established as a resource for all BMZ-financed related programmes (e.g. ASA-programme); (3) **coverage of support to security management function by commercial/professional service providers** (such as assistance by international insurance companies) not only as optional, but as a binding requirement; (4) **transfer of the CCP instrument into another responsible body** (instead of QA).

General recommendations refer to the **strengthening and intensification of communication and transparency** between civil society stakeholders (QA and SO) and state actors (BMZ, possibly German Embassies); to the **consideration of other volunteer services** during the adjustment/re-orientation of the CCP instrument or the conceptualisation of alternative solutions; to the **implementation of monitoring- and feedback-mechanisms** for the continuous observations of needs and results. Finally, it is recommended to maintain the present (100% public) funding mechanism for the CCP instrument.