

STRATEGY PAPER

Volunteers Service Programme of NETZ Bangladesh

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I. Introduction

The NETZ volunteers programme is engaging since 1991 with young people who are willing to live their commitment to the ideal of an interdependent and peaceful world. These volunteers contributed and still contribute significantly to shape and develop the vision and mission of NETZ. By acquainting themselves with environments and people so far inaccessible to them, the volunteers undergo an intensive individual learning process covering diverse aspects of their life. Having furthermore the opportunity to participate genuinely in activities of organisations and the civil society and thus to contribute to the objectives of the deprived in Bangladesh, the volunteers humbly live the spirit of solidarity and eventually identify their individual aims with the perspectives of the poor.

The volunteers support the strive of NETZ and of its Partners for human dignity and against hunger. They work in general in the areas of 1. self-help for sufficient nutrition, e.g. compiling case studies and conducting research, 2. education, e.g. writing reports for the school partnership programme of NETZ ("WeltKlasse!") and offering extra-curricular activities for students, and 3. human rights, e.g. taking part in workshops, collecting case studies for fundraising and research on specific topics. NETZ supports the ongoing reflection necessary for this deep intercultural and individual learning process. By this the volunteers' motivation as agents of change is encouraged and strengthened, which enables them to continue living up to that vision after their service.

II. Objectives of the Volunteers Service Programme

- Promotion of the volunteers' individual learning and intercultural understanding in order to raise their awareness as humble agents of change in favour of the deprived in Bangladesh.
- Contribution to different working areas of the Partner-NGOs, civil society actors and NETZ while the volunteers are in Bangladesh: 1. Integration of the volunteers into the host organisation and support of its work, so that the volunteers can contribute directly to the strive for justice and against hunger in Bangladesh, and 2. Contributions to development information and education of NETZ.
- The volunteers continue contributing to development information and education of NETZ and other civil society initiatives after the end of their service and stay humble agents of change in favour of the deprived.

III. Status quo and Perspectives

At present NETZ is sending up to eight young people from Germany as a group to Bangladesh to support the work of NETZ and its Partners for one year. The number of volunteers reflects the present demand and capacity of NETZ and its Partners.

In future further options shall be considered in cooperation with the participating Partners for the development of the Volunteers Service Programme, e.g. to elicit possibilities to provide more flexibility to the time frame of the volunteers service in Bangladesh and to include volunteers from Bangladesh as well.

IV. Organisational Structure for the NETZ Volunteers

NETZ perceives the facilitation of the Volunteers Service Programme as a demanding task that requires manifold personal and organisational efforts to achieve its objectives. Therefore professional staff and voluntary supporters are included in Germany as well as Bangladesh and the

programme is supported and regularly supervised from different organisational levels of NETZ and the participating Partner-NGOs. Main Actors are:

- The *Programme Officer, Volunteers* at the Head Office of NETZ is the main reference person for the volunteers in Germany. She/he is visiting each volunteers' group at least once in Bangladesh and is in charge of the organisational matters, coordination of the entire programme and the regular information of the Executive Director and one person of the Executive Committee of NETZ.
- The *Programme Officer, Dialogue and Exchange* at the Country Office of NETZ is the main reference person and mentor for the volunteers in Bangladesh and contact person for the Partner-NGOs. She/he actively supports the integration of the volunteers at the Partner-NGOs and into the Bangladeshi society.
- The *Executive Director* of NETZ and one person from the *Executive Committee* are regularly informed about developments in the programme in order to ensure its cohesiveness, back its structural development and provide support in critical questions.
- The *Programme Officers* responsible at the NETZ Head Office and Country Office for the NETZ supported development projects exchange regularly on the concerned projects with the volunteers.
- The *Executive Director* of the Partner-NGOs, or any other person appointed by her/him, is the main responsible contact person for the volunteers at the respective Partner-NGO. She/he is actively supporting and supervising the volunteers introduction with the social and professional environment of the NGO. She/he identifies, in consultation with the volunteer, a *Volunteers Mentor* for each volunteer from the staff members of the NGO.
- The *Volunteers Technical Advisor at the Partner-NGOs*, to whom each volunteer is individually assigned, helps them in coping with the local situation and in integrating into the social and professional environment of the respective organisation.
- The *Members of the Working Group Volunteers* work voluntarily. This group mainly consists of former volunteers from different groups and is essential to support the selection and preparation period as well as the integration of the volunteers into NETZ work after the end of their service. The responsibilities of the Working Group Volunteers is documented in specific terms of reference.

A contract between NETZ and the volunteers determines the cooperation, e.g. responsibilities, security guidelines, financial matters and the withdrawal regulation from the contract for either side. The cooperation between NETZ and its Partner-NGOs is regulated by a contract and in a memorandum of understanding; latter determines the major framework of the cooperation and responsibilities of NETZ and the participating Partners, e.g. organisational matters and the mentoring of the volunteers. Terms of reference for each volunteer are jointly developed, regularly reviewed and if necessary adjusted by NETZ, the Partner-NGOs and each individual volunteer.

V. Sequence of Volunteers Service Programme

Over the years of successful implementation of the programme and steady improvement the following elements have proven to be essential:

- A) A comprehensive selection process of volunteers through NETZ staff and members of the Working Group Volunteers.
- B) A comprehensive preparation period with seminars covering especially the following topics: serving spirit of volunteerism, country and cultural information on Bangladesh, development work, intercultural dynamics, development of above mentioned terms of reference and all other organisational matters related to the programme.
- C) The mentoring of the volunteers by the respective Partner-NGOs and NETZ throughout their service, e.g. through regular (generally every 4-6 weeks) team meetings for reflection and

planning, in which all volunteers and the Programme Officer, Dialogue and Exchange of the NETZ Country Office participate.

- D) An introductory week after the volunteers' arrival in Bangladesh that enables them to get acquainted with the new environment.
- E) A language introduction in Bengali during the beginning of the service.
- F) An introduction period, about two months, at the respective Partner-NGOs designed for each volunteer individually. This time is crucial for the acquaintance of the volunteers with the Partner-NGOs and the Bangladeshi society. Therefore NETZ accompanies this process closely.
- G) A midterm seminar in Bangladesh for reflection, midterm evaluation and planning of the second part of the volunteers service.
- H) An evaluation seminar after the end of the volunteers service.
- I) Further voluntary contributions of returned volunteers to different working areas of NETZ, e.g. development information and education, and other civil society initiatives.

VI. Financing

At present the facilitation of the Volunteers Service Programme is financed through:

1. "Weltwärts", i.e. funding for volunteers through the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development: maximum 75% of total cost.
2. Each volunteer is invited to establish a supporting group that donates money for each month of their service. NETZ will utilise this money to cover its 25% share in the "weltwärts" funding. Own resources of NETZ, e.g. membership fees and donations.

From 2010 onwards the utilisation of NETZ' own resources should be maximum 10% of total costs of the programme. The objective is to select about eight volunteers for each group, since this allows to cover the salary of the involved NETZ staff solely through the funding of "weltwärts". However, interested and qualified applicants will not be excluded from participation in the volunteers programme, if they solely do not fulfil the criteria for the "weltwärts" funding. Together with the volunteer, NETZ can decide about other funding opportunities.