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Swiss association for
the exchange of
personnel in development
cooperation

Association suisse pour
l'échange de personnes
dans la coopération
internationale

Asociación Suiza para el
intercambio de personas
en la cooperación
internacional

Associazione Svizzera per lo
scambio di persone
nella cooperazione
internazionale

Associação Suíça para o
intercâmbio de pessoas
na cooperação
internacional

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION - contemporary and independent

1) Introduction - Retrospection

Worldwide, voluntary services are permanently questioned on their development policy's relevance. In this respect, Switzerland is not an exception. The objective of this strategy document is to confirm the independent and contemporary contribution of the Personnel Development Co-operation - which is based on professional and social commitment, on effectiveness orientation, partnership and innovation - in the spectrum of international co-operation. The orientation on quality and profiling of the Personnel Development Co-operation in the past years is producing fruit. The Swiss Personnel Development Co-operation is experiencing increased acknowledgement in Switzerland as well as at international level (International FORUM on Development Services) – as a concrete contribution to the international co-operation. The use of the previous strategy and criteria has led to the qualitative development of the member organisations. This is evident in the professionalization of many of the association members' programme approach and profiling in public. In addition, on various occasions the impact relevance of the Personnel Development Co-operation was documented, as for example in the presentation of "*7 Examples of lived Partnership North-South-North*", in the highlighting of the broad awareness raising spectrum in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, in various analyses (two Unité member organisations and the development worker assignments with a Nicaraguan partner) or the distribution of a Capacity-Development-Concept for Personnel Development Co-operation (elaborated by a Unité member organisation). In particular, the interpersonal dimension enables aspects of the international co-operation to be made accessible to the public. Moreover the material status of the development workers, particularly the social insurance, was better secured.

2) Evolution of the Swiss Personnel Development Co-operation

One general tendency relevant for Switzerland is the substitution of the traditional voluntary service by a partnership exchange between the North and South (civil) societies, where the Southern and Northern partners (including their development workers

and coordinating offices) intervene as mediators of a vaster social commitment¹. This leads to the development of “social capital”². Personnel Development Co-operation³ is to be understood as a form of international co-operation where the emphasis is not placed on money or technology but rather on encounter, exchange and common learning between people in the North and South (as well as in the East).

Three dimensions of the exchange of knowledge and skills are focused on:

- *Inter-professional*: Technical methods such as program logic are not the aim but rather serve as a means for a qualitatively improved partnership co-operation between North and South.
- *Interpersonal*: The centre of attention here is the conscious experiencing and designing of an interpersonal approximation.
- *Intercultural*: the development of a mutual understanding between civil societies, cultures and worldviews in the sense of respect and dialogue is understood here.

Central is the commitment for a world where

- the number of people living in poverty is reduced
- peace, justice and a sustainable handling of resources is possible
- human rights are respected.

A further primary concern is to turn the diversity of the 25 Unité member organisations into a strength (context oriented impact).

3) Differentiated International Panorama

The international Personnel Development Co-operation is experiencing a fundamental differentiation. The Swiss approach positions itself in the domain of “development service” where professional and social commitment in the South and North is materially secured by a basic wage as well as basic social security benefits. Alongside this, tendencies of an “Expertize light” exist (task of technical consultation within the framework of bilateral programmes) as well as various forms of volunteer services with limited material compensation (awareness raising task through socio-cultural learning services as well as professional and social commitments, mainly for young adults).

¹ Specifically Swiss differentiation: annex 1

² In their research, Development Initiatives and the International FORUM on Development Service understand “social capital” as: social networks as the basis of any collective activity, flow of information for awareness raising and empowerment as well as reciprocity as fundamental intentionality (“International volunteering. Trends, added value and social capital”; London / Oslo 2004; p. 11).

³ According to the Unité mission statement 2007: <http://www.unite-ch.org/ressource/UNITE%20D%20Leitbild%202007r.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL PANORAMA OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION



TRADITIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

- “Development Aid”: often a paternalistic perspective from the North, limited to a transfer from North to South
- Traditional Mission (“converting to Christianity”)
- “Alternative (militant) style” (dreams not realised in the North transferred to the South)
- Individual approach and adventure - personnel or professional change : "mystical transfiguration of the volunteer"

4) 12 principles of the added value in Personnel Development Co-operation

4.1 CONTRIBUTION TO SWISS DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

① INDEPENDENT AND COMPLEMENTARY TO OTHER APPROACHES IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

- **Added Value**

The development worker assignments within the framework of Personnel Development Co-operation form an independent and complementary instrument of the Swiss development co-operation as a whole. The relevance for development policy and the professional dimension of this North-South-North exchange of personnel (complementary to financial assistance!) is combined with the willingness to support very diverse target populations, to adapt to very diverse surroundings and to carry out an assignment under voluntary service conditions (limited financial and social services). The Personnel Development Co-operation organisations have often functioned as pioneers for innovative approaches and topics (for example partnership, strengthening of civil society / empowerment, religion and spirituality).

- **Perspectives**

This independent and complementary nature, in comparison with other approaches and methods of the Swiss Development Co-operation, needs to be used and further developed in order to guarantee development policy relevance and professional standards. The objective and impact must be better communicated. At the same time, the coherence, at national and international level, with the international development guidelines and initiatives (for example, with the Millennium Development Goals, World Social Forum and interreligious dialogue) must increasingly emerge. The current panorama of international development co-operation is marked by an increasing tendency to create synergies through complementarity and to mutually adapt approaches and instruments, in order to benefit optimally from the various efforts of co-operation. Thereby, the efforts with various Swiss stakeholders and in certain cases those of other countries, to increasingly achieve dialogue and agreement should be promoted in the North and South.

② QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- **Added value**

In the Personnel Development Co-operation, current instruments for quality orientation and quality control are used, particularly in organisations with programme approaches where increased attention is placed on impact orientation. In regard to this, relevant further education, exchange and also institutional support possibilities exist at association level. The professionalization and profiling of Unité as an association are to be positioned in this context.

- **Perspectives**

Within the association, the common efforts towards securing and further developing the Personnel Development Co-operation

through common learning should be given more room⁴, for example by means of a funds for institutional analyses and learning processes. Externally, the impact orientation of the Personnel Development Co-operation should be more clearly communicated to the decision-makers, development policy allies and the broader public.

③ RELATIONSHIP AT GRASS ROOTS LEVEL, EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES AND DIVERSITY OF ASSIGNMENT FORMS

- **Added Value**

Personnel Development Co-operation assignments, marked by exchange and transfer, include a human (interpersonal) dimension. In this perspective, the relationships with grass roots level groups (micro and meso level) at work as well as in everyday life, the exemplary, emancipatory and participative learning as well as an efficient and effective use of resources, are important. The long-term assignments are the core activity of the Personnel Development Co-operation. Complementary to this core activity, other forms of assignments are being implemented: South-North assignments, South-South exchanges, specific short-term assignments, support to local personnel, practical training (promoting young people / learning services), training courses and repatriate assignments⁵.

- **Perspectives**

This added value of the Personnel Development Co-operation is to be increasingly accommodated in communication and lobbying. The meaning and coherence of the complementary forms of assignments in the framework of partnerships and programmes must be enhanced and increasingly communicated⁶.

④ FROM INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS TO PARTNERSHIP

- **Added Value**

The institutional context of assignments in Personnel Development Co-operation is characterised by a qualitative redefinition process of partnership in the spirit of exchange and social change. In this perspective, it is no longer only about establishing an isolated assignment but more about a long-term perspective with exchange, awareness raising, elaboration and evaluation of joint programmes and strategies as well as their financing. The inclusion of local skills and knowledge in the South plays, thereby, a central role.

- **Perspectives**

The UNITE study on partnerships and relevant instruments⁷ is currently being applied and evaluated on its relevance and feasibility. The contextual differentiation (region, culture, type of institution) is essential in the partnership co-operation. Within the framework of a commitment between North and South societies, more extended forms of South-North as well as South-South exchanges must be in-

⁴ Topics such as: Deepening of the programme and impact approach, development policy, differentiation of the function of Personnel Development Co-operation and context oriented discussion on partnership, religion and spirituality, peace work, institution development etc.

⁵ Typology of the assignments and exchanges: annex 2 – Model of “Capacity Development” in the framework of Personnel Development Co-operation: annex 3 – Development worker in the context of the Personnel Development Co-operation: annex 4

⁶ Thus more South-North and South-South assignments are to be realized, in the sense of an increase in reciprocity and mutual learning.

⁷ cf. “Partnership: Basic Values, Parameters, Diversity, Context and Level of Implementation” (Unité 2008)

creasingly taken into account. The South partners must be adequately integrated into the North structures and processes: when planning common projects, elaborating the strategy and programme and with common concerns in exchange and awareness raising.

5 NETWORKS AND SYNERGIES

- **Added Value**

Networks and synergies at national and international levels are promoted at three levels:

a) Association level: The reintegration in the International FORUM on Development Services is an important result of the past activities. The international discussions on the added value and trends of the Personnel Development Co-operation are groundbreaking for Switzerland. The participation in the establishment of the "Swiss NGO platform" is a further important commitment which contributes to the profiling and representation of interests.

b) Swiss member's level: The members benefit from the Unité training courses that are taking place. In addition, increased networking with other NGOs and various church movements as well as with the "Fédérations Cantonales de Développement" in the French and Italian speaking Switzerland, exist.

c) Members in the field level: Conferences and meetings (i.e. coordination seminars) in connection with various initiatives such as the social forums, strengthen the inter-institutional relationships.

- **Perspectives**

The Personnel Development Co-operation commitment in national and international training events and unions is to be further deepened at all three levels.

6 THE HUMAN FACE OF DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION: IMAGE CARE

- **Added Value**

As the focus is placed on sharing daily realities - instead of oversized, anonymous programmes, "strange" multilateral co-operation or disputed budget support - the Personnel Development Co-operation enables a personalisation of the international co-operation thanks to its human proximity and credibility and thus addresses a wider public (i.e. via the local press). This contributes to an improved acceptance of the development co-operation, for example in favour of the justification of international co-operation funds at political level. In this sense, the Personnel Development Co-operation is a partner of the SDC by raising awareness in certain sectors of the population not necessarily reached by the State.

- **Perspectives**

The efforts for the recognition of the Personnel Development Co-operation must be intensified. The setting up of support groups around the development worker is developing (has developed) successfully. A solid anchoring and utilisation of this personalisation in society, State and economy can contribute to improving the acceptance of development co-operation as a whole. Thus, synergies between the awareness raising potential of the Personnel Development Co-operation and other development co-operation institutions are used as, for example, in the 0.7% objective (as before in the European Union cohesion funds campaign).

4.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SWISS SOCIETY

⑦ BRIDGE BUILDING AND AWARENESS RAISING IN SWITZERLAND

- ***Added Value***

The Personnel Development Co-operation assignments guarantee a significant bridge building function between the North and South societies. This is clearly expressed in the diversified social anchorage (e.g. support groups) and in the variety of awareness raising activities before, during and after the assignment (circulars, repatriate and furlough engagements, media information, publications from the organisations, education courses, public events etc.) in the broad thematic field of North-South partnerships where the professional as well as personal areas of life are included in the long-term. Accordingly, the assignment must be embedded in a course of life that is deeply rooted in Swiss reality and must, therefore, include the prospect of a return.

- ***Perspectives***

The presence in media, public and politics has clearly intensified during the last years. It has thus been possible to communicate more deeply the professional as well as social, intercultural and political commitments. The future task is, therefore, to emphasize more clearly the impact of the Personnel Development Co-operation.

⑧ ADDED VALUE ON SPECIFIC SKILLS: PROFESSIONAL, SOCIAL, INTERCULTURAL AND POLITICAL

- ***Added Value***

The assignments of development workers in the framework of the Personnel Development Co-operation are characterized by the ability of exchange and mutual learning in the intercultural and social field: This means a professional and mediating implementation of cultural and social sensitivity in an environment which is characterized by progressive globalization and an increasing sociocultural mixture of the western societies. Thus, a positive impact across society develops in Switzerland through the valorisation of the following newly acquired skills in the South: professional, social and political skills in the areas of democracy, economy, education and, in particular, interculturalism (foreigners, migration - integration, religion)⁸. This goes along with the political consensus in Switzerland to qualitatively expand the integration efforts. Several repatriates use their new skills in varied occupations and areas of life, in particular in education, health and social welfare or in the integration of foreign population groups but also in social and civil society commitments. The South-experiences can also stimulate a critical and constructive questioning of the Swiss identity, State and citizen awareness.

⁸ According to the sociological study from Ch. Furrer / E-Changer (*Echanger et changer ... ici et maintenant: L'impact d'engagement des volontaires E-CH (FSF) de retour 1982 - 1996 sur la société Suisse*, Fribourg 1999, p. 37) these are: decisiveness and initiative, distancing, interpersonal communication, negotiations with decision-makers, crisis management, situation analysis, human resources, adaptability, adult education, conflict resolution, group management and dynamic, working in a disorganized environment, media and public relations, knowledge of the culture, specific techniques of the South, foreign languages, self-analysis

- **Perspectives**

More emphasis needs to be placed on the skills in the intercultural and social area as well as in mediation during the selection process and (further) training before, during and after an assignment. At the same time, particularly, the development policy potential of the assignments should be promoted. The valorisation of the repatriate's experiences should be used and more broadly communicated. (Further) training before, during and after the assignment should be critically examined for its adequacy so that the Personnel Development Co-operation can display a recognised, independent and an appropriate (further) training system which corresponds to its assignment strategy. This utilisation for civil society, State and economy must still be improved and made more transparent. For this purpose, a solid, general socio-professional acknowledgment of the assignments in the Personnel Development Co-operation (work experience and education) is appropriate which, at the same time, increases the attractiveness of the assignments for socio-professionally qualified and socio-politically committed specialists.

9 CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND IMPROVEMENT OF SWITZERLAND'S IMAGE ABROAD

- **Added Value**

Not only are solidarity and international co-operation reinforced but the development workers who are in direct contact with the population in the South also act as "Ambassadors for a Switzerland showing solidarity", in contributing and acting as experienced, intercultural communicators and thus diffusing a differentiated image of Switzerland to countries overseas. They show authentically their exemplary socio-professional and civil society commitment by being active as specialists in volunteer status and, thus, clearly accepting material losses.

- **Perspectives**

In the framework of the Personnel Development Co-operation, approximately 300 development worker assignments⁹ through the 25 Unité members, co-financed by the State, are implemented. This embodies, in a special way, a different picture of Switzerland and promotes civil society responsibility and openness to the world. Considering the current social and political trends in the North as in the South, this acquires increased significance and is made increasingly visible.

⁹ When the independently financed assignments are added, the number rises to more than double.

4.3 INTEREST AND ADDED VALUE FOR THE SOUTHERN PARTNER

⑩ „INSTITUTION BUILDING“, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIATION

- ***Added Value***

The Personnel Development Co-operation provides an added value, in particular, for small or medium-sized partners in the South¹⁰ working close to the grass roots, mainly in institution building, grass roots exchange and transfer of technologies¹¹, which in the sense of a „Global Knowledge Management“ have not lost topicality. The partner in the South has a particular interest in a different perspective and support from outside (facilitation and mediation with the advantage of a different cultural background). The Personnel Development Co-operation opens a door to the outside world for the Southern partner and contributes to broadening its horizons (e.g. access to networks, education, further training and resources). The exchange and transfer do not only mean the socialization of professional resources ("savoir faire": shared technical skills and methods) but more importantly of social and personal resources ("savoir être": a different way of thinking and acting). This type of contribution is important at the time of the complementary combination of financial and human support.

- ***Perspectives***

The elementary basis of this is to find the right partner and to construct a sustainable (mutual) partnership. In this context, an environment characterized by political, social and economic problems can rapidly limit the co-operation and exchange. During the selection and preparation, the profile of the specialists (education and work experience: professional and social skills) becomes more and more important in view of the rising professional level. Nevertheless, basic functions are necessary, in particular in areas with latent conflicts or large social disparities¹². During the selection and training of specialists, more attention needs to be paid to specific skills in institution building, communication, facilitation and mediation.

① ① SPECIFICALLY EFFECTIVE AREAS OF APPLICATION OF THE PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION: advocacy and empowerment – “peace building” und interreligious dialogue

- ***Added Value***

Personnel Development Co-operation and its partnerships also implicate support from the international community in latent and manifested conflict situations. Where force and repression prevail, the strengths of this development co-operation approach come particularly into effect through direct presence and international networking:

- a) “Advocacy- empowerment”: Clear and public socio-political standpoints and mobilisation in favour of human rights and against the causes of injustice and violence

¹⁰ Mainly church and other non-governmental and grassroots organisations as well as State institutions, rarely private sector

¹¹ Primarily projects in the area of health, social services, agriculture, education as well as organisation and SME development

¹² In Africa the “Human-Resources” problem is intensified by AIDS and “brain drain”.

- b) "Peace building": Clear and public identification with non-violence as an alternative to repressive conflict solving strategies and with social peace
- c) Interreligious dialogue: advocate mutual worldview respect as well as promotion of ecumenical and interreligious oriented theological exchange and education

Perspectives

Risk management as well as political and religious sensitivity are indispensable in these spheres of activity and require specific skills, preparation and networking.

① ② CONTINUITY OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENT

- ***Added Value***

One of the elements recognised and valued by partners in the South is the continuity of assignments and partnerships in the Personnel Development Co-operation, i.e. not an orientation caused by economic factors according to disasters, socio-political or socio-economical desirability. This results in a reliable and permanent support of large population groups, even in long lasting crises or indifference of the international community. Here, in terms of an "international social welfare system", a long-term social reconciliation between North and South can be continued, whereby this primarily applies in context to development relevance and effectiveness¹³.

- ***Perspectives***

The accumulated knowledge and the constant and sustainable presence enable a valued contribution to the management of the crises in such situations. The Personnel Development Co-operation is, in this sense, complementary to the transitory support of the humanitarian aid and counteracts mediatised and "populist-spectacular" projects.

Berne April 2008

¹³ A categorisation "Development" – "Social work" – "Humanitarian aid / reconstruction" does not embrace the context where latent or manifest conflicts prevail, although this may partly contradict established development policy approaches.