

# Shaping the world together

## AGEH in transition from development service to global service

“Either we build the future together or there is no future.” Pope Francis’ statement captures what the transformation of AGEH “from a development service agency to a global service agency” is all about.

Starvation, war, climate change, and the flight and migration which they cause... We face huge global challenges which are bigger than ever. And they are having an impact in Germany too, through people coming here to escape from war and in the form of extreme weather events. We are no longer simply called upon to help people in distant lands, strangers in the South, through so-called development aid. Our own lives and the lives of future generations on this planet are now at stake.

The idea which gained currency after the Second World War, that the rich “North” could develop the poor “South” by providing money, technology, and personnel, is no longer valid. This is because the globalisation of the so-called “Western development model” has created exactly those problems which we now have to solve together. As

a consequence of this, the UN, in Agenda 2030, has declared the rich countries to be “developing countries”, because they also have to “develop into something different”, so that human life can survive on Earth in the future. There has to be dialogue about objectives, the factors which are important, and the paths towards a sustainable global society.

AGEH knows – from 60 years of experience – the strengths of

human cooperation. International professionals observe the work of local organisations with the critical eye of an outsider. Their “productive foreignness” makes it possible for them to question the way things have always been done and to push for change. They foster increased interaction and dialogue within partner organisations and between organisations and the people they work with. And they help to support partnerships between organisations and people from both the South and the North. It is precisely this potential which arises out of the participation of people in development cooperation which ensures that the work of professionals is effective. It is about people actually meeting each other and relating to each other, and about processes which lead – through joint learning, planning, and practical implementation – to effective solutions.

We are convinced that the active participation of people in development cooperation can make an important contribution to the creation of a sustainable global society. How does cooperation involving professional staff need

to change in order for it to serve its purpose better? We believe our vision of a global service programme can be described in four words: “shaping the world together”.

### SHAPING THE WORLD TOGETHER

All the countries of the world are called upon to follow a different path of development, so that human life on Earth will continue to be possible. According to one of the 1992 Rio Principles, all the countries of the world have a shared responsibility, which differs only in proportion to their resources. We need more global communities of learning and solidarity, in which people work together on issues of social and ecological justice. This requires not only that people from the so-called South get involved in other regions of the South, but also that qualified men and women from the South be deployed in the North (including in Germany). For quite some time now, AGEH has been gaining experience in the implementation of South-South and South-North programmes and in building networks of – and with – partners in the South as a complement to traditional North-South relationships.

People who return to their home country after serving abroad have always had a special role. They introduce other people’s perspectives into the society of their home country and they have also learned other ways of doing things. They are therefore able to add to the range of potential solutions.

By “the world” we mean planet Earth, whose carrying capacity has been reached. Climate change, species extinction, and pollution are some of the keywords in this context. The survival of humankind is dependent on the stability of complex ecosystems. So we are all called upon to develop a different relationship with nature. Because we understand the world in this way, we feel committed to a spirituality which has a holistic view of humankind and all the rest of creation.

A global service agency serves as a building block in an entire edifice which enables people and societies to take the future into their own hands – and shape it and look after it. As people who are committed, creative, and courageous, we seek to find and implement sustainable solutions, and to contribute to the development of a peaceful, just, and “grandchild-friendly”, i.e. sustainable, way of life.

Alongside all the many solutions which will be needed, we must also take up the opportunities which arise when people participate in development cooperation. This can be facilitated by an eco-social global service agency which organises exchange between continents in every direction.



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Professionals reinforce interaction and dialogue at various levels. Only by working together will we be able to find the answers to the key questions of our time.

Dr. Claudia Lücking-Michel, managing director, AGEH

Susanne Brenner, management assistant, AGEH

# Working together as equals

## To improve people's prospects in life

I have been working in development service since 2014, deployed by the AGEH (now AGIAMONDO) and the Swiss development agency, COMUNDO, as a professional development worker in Peru. My job is to support Red Muqui, a civil society network which opposes destructive mining projects. Red Muqui is an alliance of 29 Peruvian organisations in 11 regions of the country which work together to defend and promote human rights and protect the environment in parts of Peru affected by mining. The network, which has been in existence for more than 15 years, opposes the ruthless exploitation occurring in Peru and works on developing alternatives together with the rural population which is suffering because of the mining. The mining industry has been growing continually in Peru ever since the 1990s, and the mining activities of national – and above all transnational – companies have been subject to very little regulation by the Peruvian state authorities. On the contrary, this particular economic sector continues to be “made more flexible”. It has become increasingly obvious in recent years that mining companies are interfering in politics to serve their own ends and to maximise their profits. Mineral resources are being mined intensively for immediate export, for example. There is no on-site processing or value-adding activity. This kind of mining is often opposed by the local population.

### DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS, PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

According to official statistics, there are currently more than 70 ongoing mining conflicts in Peru. This is because human rights and environmental standards are being relaxed and undermined by the government under pressure from the corporations. As a result, people are forced off their land and there are serious environmental impacts – such as heavy metals being released into the water supply used for drinking and irrigation. This has a devastating impact on people's health.

I help to make sure that the Red Muqui network in the mining regions is supported by its member organisations, is able to analyse mining conflicts using a variety of geographical methods, and employs participatory methods to empower local communities. In this way, conflicts can be better analysed, documented, and made known and alternative visions of development can be thought out and presented.

### MANUAL OF METHODS PUT TOGETHER

Since 2016, for example, I have used, in cooperation with my colleagues, a participatory process involving various communities in different parts of the country to put together a manual: “Methods for strengthening social



organisations to enable them to create alternative models of development”. So far, grassroots organisations in twelve different places have used this manual to work out, refine, and present plans for future development. They define development priorities and put pressure on their local authorities, so that their proposals are taken into account in land use planning and are allocated funding for implementation.

In this way, we do not simply just oppose the mining model, we also develop alternatives – including concrete proposals for their implementation. We also track all that is happening by conducting studies and analysing water quality and mining pollution. We also conduct economic studies which demonstrate that mining is not as lucrative as it is often made out to be.

### WORKING TOGETHER AS EQUALS

What is it that motivates me to undertake development service? I think the concept of professional cooperation, as put into practice by COMUNDO and AGIAMONDO, is a very good one. Also, it is very important to me that my Peruvian colleagues and I are working together as equals. I enjoy developing and implementing projects together. This is just what I think my role should be as a professional development worker. It is precisely in politically precarious situations, such as the mining conflicts in Peru where external political interests often spoil the prospects of local people, that working together to improve people's prospects in life is crucially important, so that Peru can become a country in which everyone enjoys equal rights.

**Mattes Tempelmann** (left) has been serving in Peru since 2014. After studying geography with a focus on development research, he attended a one-year postgraduate course at the SLE (Centre for Rural Development) at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin.

**Mattes Tempelmann**  
Since 2014: Peru,  
COMUNDO/  
AGIAMONDO  
(until 2019 AGEH)