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INFORMATION FOR RETURNING DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

Development Professionals and Climate Change



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Working at the IKI Office
for International Climate
and Environmental Pro-
tection

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Climate Protection Mana-
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International Volunteer
Year: Interview with
Sandra Koch, United
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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Climate protection and climate justice are the responsibility of us all. The organizations that provide development services are also taking on this challenge and are working together with partners in the Global South to develop solutions and practical knowledge. Numerous professionals are already involved in climate-related projects. One of them is Mirko Klein, who works as a consultant at the Climate Change and Resource Conservation Dialogue Center for Brot für die Welt's partners in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia. "Every time I visit a partner organization, I see that climate change has long since arrived in the countries of the Global South," says Klein.



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Returnees Zandra Martinez, Kolja Stang, and Paul Melichar have also established themselves professionally in the fields of environmental and climate protection following their service. They discuss their work as Global Lead for Social Sustainability at an international NGO, as a program officer for the German government's International Climate Initiative (IKI), and as a climate protection manager at a social enterprise in the city of Hamburg.

In light of global challenges such as the climate crisis, international engagement in sustainable development is gaining importance—a topic that will be the focus of the International Year of Volunteers, coordinated by United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in Bonn. In an interview, Sandra Koch, Team Lead of the Secretariat for the International Year of Volunteers (IVY), discusses the importance of volunteer work in international cooperation and the need to strengthen structures and secure funding.

Development service providers also want to expand their efforts toward climate justice and have developed a new program concept, the "International Climate Service." The task now is to secure funding for an initial development phase.

Happy reading!

Silke Westmann

Staff Member at the IKI Office

Working for International Climate and Environmental Protection



Kolja Stang (second from the right) in Bolivia: A deep understanding of partner structures and project work in the Global South is invaluable for his current work at the IKI

Kolja Stang gained firsthand experience of the impacts of socio-ecological conflicts while working as a development aid specialist in Bolivia. Today, he is a program officer with the International Climate Initiative (IKI) in Berlin. There, he works to strengthen climate protection worldwide and improve the quality of life for people affected by climate change.

In January 2020, I began my development service with the local Bolivian NGO ISALP as part of the K'acha Kausakunapaq project (Quechua for "Living in Harmony") in Potosí. Our project team focused on facilitating and mediating various local conflicts. These included boundary disputes between different indigenous communities, socio-ecological conflicts, and internal organizational disputes. At the same time, we trained volunteers—the "Voluntarios de Paz"—to become advocates for mediation and nonviolent, constructive conflict transformation. At the time, I didn't expect to be working on coordinating an international grant program so soon afterward. But today, I am a program officer at the IKI Office of the International Climate Protection Initiative in Berlin. My work takes place less in the field and more at the intersection of policy, strategy, and selection processes.

MY PATH AFTER MY SERVICE

After returning to Germany, I first completed further training to become a systemic consultant. Drawing on my project experience in Bolivia, I then sought a more strategic and coordinating role in the field of environmental and climate protection or in human rights and peace policy. That's when I came across the IKI.

The International Climate Initiative is a funding program of the German federal government, primarily supported by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN) and the Federal Foreign Office. Since 2008, it has been funding climate protection and biodiversity projects in countries of the Global South.

The goal is to advance the international implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthen adaptation measures. This also involves promoting the protection and restoration of carbon sinks such as rainforests and peatlands, as well as integrating approaches that promote biodiversity.

The IKI has various funding instruments at its disposal. I work in the newly designed IKI Large Grants program. Each year, we publish several calls for proposals in the areas of climate protection, adaptation to climate change, and biodiversity conservation, each with thematic and country-specific priorities. Interested organizations can apply with their own project outlines as part of idea competitions.

MY RESPONSIBILITIES

As a program officer, I work at the heart of the selection process where decisions are made regarding which projects will receive funding under the International Climate Initiative in the future. Together with the relevant departments within the ministry, I coordinate the technical and administrative implementation of the process to ensure that political objectives, submitted project proposals, and formal and technical requirements result in a struc-

tured and transparent decision-making process. My responsibilities include planning and managing time-lines as well as coordinating the procedural steps among the participating departments, in particular the BMUKN and the Federal Foreign Office. Coordinating external services, such as technical experts, also falls within my area of responsibility.

FROM COORDINATION TO CONSULTING

Especially for thematic funding calls, the number of project proposals received is very high and continues to rise—partly due to declining international funding. To ensure quality and fairness, clear structures, binding deadlines, and effective time management are therefore essential.

A significant part of my work involves cross-team process coordination. When preparing new funding calls—or “calls” for short—we support the relevant departments in defining the calls’ content, drafting the funding announcements, and developing evaluation criteria.

Equally important are realistic timelines for the selection process. These must take political goals and budgetary requirements into account while remaining flexible.

Once the project proposals are received, a key challenge is coordinating the various review steps. Proposals must be evaluated against formal and technical criteria within a short timeframe. Maintaining an overview of the process and compiling the results for the relevant departments was a steep learning curve for me at first.

I am also involved in the further development of our funding program. Together with colleagues, I reflect on experiences from past selection rounds and work to continuously improve procedures, for instance by making processes more efficient.

In addition, I advise applicants—international organizations, NGOs, research institutions, or private-sector companies—on questions related to the selection process, such as criteria, deadlines, or formal requirements. My own experience in international project work helps me here: I understand both the applicants’ perspective and the requirements of the funding side.

STRATEGIC OR OPERATIONAL?

About 30 percent of my work is strategic in nature, particularly in the further development of procedures and the design of new calls for proposals. The remaining roughly 70 percent consists of operational tasks such as coordination, alignment, deadline management, and documentation. It is precisely this mix that makes the job exciting: You work on the “system” and, at the same time, very concretely on the individual procedural steps involved in selecting new projects in climate and environmental protection.

VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

From my time in development cooperation, I brought with me international experience and a deep understanding of partner structures and project work in the

Global South—a solid foundation for my work here at the IKI.

In addition, working in complex and often uncertain contexts has taught me to handle issues of power and governance sensitively while still remaining capable of taking action; a flexibility that continues to shape my work to this day.

Furthermore, the experience gained from hands-on project work helps me assess project proposals more realistically and provide high-quality support during evaluation procedures—for example, when collaborating with ministries in partner countries or addressing practical challenges in project implementation.

On the other hand, I had to familiarize myself with the details of German grant and budgetary law, as well as the procedures for ministerial coordination and formalized decision-making processes. Facilitating political and administrative procedures was also part of my learning process. This transition was challenging, yet very enriching, as it expanded my practical project experience to include a strategic and administrative perspective.

I am particularly motivated by the fact that I am indirectly involved in numerous international climate and environmental protection projects that can contribute in the long term to strengthening climate protection worldwide and improving the quality of life for the people affected. Striking a balance between speed and thoroughness remains a challenge, such as when coordinating complex selection processes at the intersection of political objectives, budget cycles, technical criteria, and international expectations. Intercultural competence, the ability to work in a team, and the ability to handle uncertainty effectively prove to be particularly valuable in this context.



Kolja Stang
MA in International
Studies/Peace and
Conflict Studies
2020 - 2022:
Bolivia, Weltfriedens-
dienst

For more information on the German federal government’s climate protection initiatives, see page 22.

On the Path to Climate Neutrality

Climate Protection Manager at a Social Enterprise in Hamburg

The Hamburg-based social enterprise Fördern & Wohnen, which serves approximately 50,000 people through 2,000 employees at 200 locations, aims to be climate-neutral by 2040. Paul-Friedemann Melichar, who returned to the city, found a position here as a climate protection manager and helped develop the company's climate strategy. He is now overseeing its implementation.

Even back in school, I knew I wanted to get involved in environmental protection. Given a capitalist system based on the exploitation of resources and the increasing rate of species extinction, my dream was to work in animal welfare. A documentary about Pavel Fomenko, who protected tigers from poachers in Siberia—alone with his dog in the tundra—particularly fascinated me back then. To this day, I find his courage and dedication admirable.

My career path then took me through various African countries, where I worked in nature conservation, before leading me to Hamburg to join a social enterprise, where I now work as a climate protection manager.

But let's start at the beginning: After graduating from high school, I traveled to Niger as part of the Weltwärts volunteer program to help protect West Africa's last giraffes in collaboration with the Association pour la Sauvegarde des Girafes du Niger. It was a formative experience for me; I learned firsthand that we can only protect endangered species if people also have a sufficient livelihood. After returning, I decided to study environmental sciences and then agricultural sciences for tropical and subtropical regions.

WORKING IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

After that, I started looking for a job. It was important to me that whatever I found was „meaningful work.“ So in 2016, I found my first position with the Civil Peace Service in Niger, deployed through EIRENE. Even back then, the structures of development cooperation were being critically examined in light of racism and prevailing power imbalances, and great importance was placed on more partnership-based collaboration.

Starting in 2018, I worked as a specialist in development service in Afar, in the lowlands of Ethiopia, where my focus was on erosion control. Due to climate change, the rainy seasons are often shorter, which poses a major challenge for the semi-nomadic population.

Afterward, from 2020 to 2023, I worked for GIZ at the Green Innovation Centers in Togo. There, too, people complained about shorter rainy seasons and irregular rainfall. Together with my partner organization, an agricultural advisory service, my colleagues and I worked to promote good agricultural practices and strengthen trade relations along the cashew value chain.

RETURN

After seven years, I felt drawn back to Germany. I was lucky: I had already found a position as a consultant at the GFA Consulting Group while I was still in Togo. So there was no major disruption for me. I continued to be involved in development cooperation, though, so to speak, on the other—more conceptual—side.

I quickly realized that I missed the hands-on work in the field. I was also bothered by the many kilometers flown that come with such international jobs—which run diametrically counter to the goals of sustainable development. On the one hand, we're trying to combat climate change on the ground; on the other hand, we're unfortunately fueling it through our travel. I find such conflicts particularly hard to bear in value-based jobs. So I started looking for a job again. I found many opportunities, especially in the field of climate protection.

At first, I had reservations about whether I was sufficiently qualified, since I didn't yet have any professional experience in the field of climate protection in Europe. Nevertheless, I applied and got lucky: I found a position as a climate protection manager at Fördern & Wohnen (F&W), a social enterprise run by the City of Hamburg that provides shelter to homeless people and refugees. In total, the company serves approximately 50,000 people at more than 200 locations. As such, together with colleagues, residents, and clients, this work brings about change and has a major impact.

Togo: Entrepreneur Ramatou Tikpi and Paul-Friedemann Melichar present an innovative cashew juice.



NEW STRATEGY

When I started my job as climate protection manager in January 2025, F&W was in the process of developing a strategy for how the company could become climate-neutral by 2040. To do this, we first conducted a greenhouse gas inventory, and I had to familiarize myself with standards such as the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. A certain affinity for numbers is important, since we collect and analyze data from across the entire company every year to calculate emissions.

My team leaders and I first identified emission hot spots. Then, together with colleagues from various departments, we developed measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A network of other public-sector companies was also helpful during this phase, as it fostered a constant, fruitful exchange of experiences. The highlight was the adoption of our climate strategy—featuring 36 measures developed through a participatory process—by the executive team in December 2025: We were able to demonstrate that F&W can become climate-neutral!

NOT JUST AT MY DESK

Although my work is quite desk-bound, it doesn't consist exclusively of office tasks. That was important to me. For example, I really enjoy interacting with residents and staff at the housing facilities during summer festivals or awareness days and raising their awareness about topics such as energy conservation, efficient ventilation, and waste separation.

I also spend a lot of time in meetings where we work together to strengthen the implementation of climate protection within the company and raise awareness of the actions we can take ourselves. Communication is key to getting our more than 2,000 employees on board with our journey toward climate neutrality.

VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

My language skills and experience from the CPS and development service are an asset given the diversity of people at F&W. My knowledge from project work was also helpful in developing the strategy. Participatory creation of documents, designing workshops, and goal-oriented monitoring were also part of my responsibilities in development cooperation.

On the other hand, I also had to learn a lot of new things—for example, about the political framework for climate protection and topics such as greenhouse gas accounting and sustainability reporting in accordance with EU directives. I was fortunate to have the support of a very experienced team leader and a growing team of great colleagues.

Through discussions within my network, I've learned that the situation for climate protection managers in companies can vary greatly. Some work as lone wolves, while others are part of a large team. It's striking that there isn't a single required qualification for this field. Many come from very different backgrounds that are broadly related to environmental protection and sustainability. This also opens up opportunities for career



changers.

Overall, I'm very happy to have found a position in the field of climate protection.

Despite shifting political priorities, climate protection will remain important and prominent. Ultimately, the only question is how severely climate change will affect us. And that depends largely on political and economic will as well as on our own actions. So I believe that my job is future-proof, even though I personally hope to make it obsolete by helping to mitigate climate change.

In addition, this is my first permanent contract, and since F&W is a public company, I'm paid according to the collective bargaining agreement. This allows for long-term planning and prospects. I'm very excited to help implement the climate strategy, and I hope to be able to say in 2040: "We did it—F&W is climate-neutral!"

Paul-Friedemann Melichar
Climate Protection Manager
2016–2017: Niger, EIRENE
2018–2020: Ethiopia, GIZ
2020–2023: Togo, GIZ

Everyday working life
– **Paul-Friedemann Melichar** at the office
in Hamburg

© privat

Interview with Sandra Koch, United Nations Volunteers

Climate action is one of the fastest-growing areas in volunteering



How did the International Volunteer Year come about, what are its goals, and what does the Secretariat you lead actually do?

The IVY is taking place 25 years after the first International Year of Volunteers in 2001. Back then, many countries established volunteer programs. A quarter of a century later, the time has come to shine a spotlight on volunteering once again. The overarching goal of the IVY is to demonstrate how volunteers around the world contribute to the 2030 Agenda. Another aim is to improve structures, legislation and infrastructure. Naturally, that also means greater investment in volunteers and the service they provide.

The IVY Secretariat itself is relatively small – there are four of us here in Bonn. Together with six regional coordinators, we support member states in implementing the IVY in their respective countries, primarily through extensive communications work. Part of our mandate is also to bring together the many different stakeholders involved. Alongside UN organizations, governments in member states are key partners, as are civil society organizations, the private sector, universities and researchers.

What does the International Volunteer Year mean for Germany? Who is responsible here?

Germany has long been – and still is – one of the pioneers of volunteering at the global level. It was one of six member states that actively promoted the resolution for this IVY. When we officially launched the IVY on 5 December 2025 with an event in New York, Germany was one of three hosts, alongside Kazakhstan and UNV. That reflects Germany's global role.

At the national level, member states nominate a focal point for the IVY. In many cases this is a ministry, but it can also be a civil society organization mandated by the government. In Germany, that decision is still pending. Nevertheless, we are already seeing a great deal of activity here: the German Foundation for Civic Engagement and Volunteering (Deutsche Stiftung für Engagement und Ehrenamt) is participating through its funding program "action! Aktiv für eine globale Welt," while German cities and other local actors are planning panel discussions and using the year as an opportunity to recognize volunteers for their contributions.

Volunteerism and civic engagement have long enjoyed positive public and political support in Germany. That now seems to be changing: the planned discontinuation of the Kulturweit program in 2027 (by the

The United Nations declared 2026 the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY 2026). Coordination is being led by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in Bonn. AGdD Executive Director Gabi Waibel spoke with Sandra Koch, who heads the IVY Secretariat at UNV, about the role of volunteering in international cooperation and the need to strengthen structures and secure funding.

What role does volunteering for development play within the United Nations?

We are seeing growing recognition of its importance. Since UNV was founded in 1971, there have been regular UN resolutions supporting and strengthening volunteerism – since 2012, at least every three years. That has had a real impact. In addition, all countries report on how they implement the 2030 Agenda, and many identify volunteerism as a contributing factor. Thanks to this advocacy work within the United Nations system, volunteering has a very different standing globally today – a lot has changed over the past 55 years. Volunteerism itself has evolved as well. Within the UNV program, for example, we now work with a growing number of national volunteers and see increased South-South exchange. Last year alone, we facilitated 17,169 volunteer assignments with United Nations organizations globally. Especially since the COVID pandemic, volunteering has also become more local and more digital. Every four years, UNV publishes the State of the World's Volunteerism Report. The 2026 report provides a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of volunteering today.

AGdD Executive Director Gabi Waibel (left) with Sandra Koch, Team Lead of the Secretariat for the International Year of Volunteers at UN Volunteers

Download the 2026 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: www.t1p.de/Vol_26

Federal Foreign Office), funding cuts to Weltwärts (by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), and stagnant funding for the Civil Peace Service (CPS) are alarming signals. How can the IVY be used strategically to strengthen these international programs again?

The International Volunteer Year explicitly calls for strengthening structures, not dismantling them. It is the exact opposite of that trend. The IVY provides an important opportunity to advocate for programs that support sustainable development globally and to argue that they should be continued and expanded. We should also not forget that the International Year was adopted at the global level. There is a clear commitment by the UN General Assembly to volunteerism. At the same time, it is an opportunity to underline once again that volunteering is not something that comes free of charge. It requires investment.

You yourself served as a development worker in the Civil Peace Service. How would you place development service, including the CPS, within the broader spectrum of volunteering worldwide?

I would place development service very close to the United Nations Volunteers model. It is a very similar approach, with a living allowance intended to cover basic costs. And it is also a qualified, long-term form of service. That is precisely why it is such an important element of international peacebuilding and why it strengthens institutions working on global challenges.

Convinced that development service is a highly effective instrument, we have developed a new program modeled on the CPS: the International Climate Service. Funding has yet to be secured. What role does climate change play in volunteering overall, and how important is this focus from your perspective?

One thing is very clear: climate action is one of the fastest-growing areas in volunteering. We see this across UN organizations worldwide. Volunteers everywhere are supporting climate mitigation measures, adaptation to climate impacts, awareness-raising and the strengthening of local resilience.

At the same time, volunteering combines skills development with collective action. That is why a dedicated climate service would be strategically aligned with global needs and with the priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals. Our UN Campus in Bonn is home to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat, so climate action is also a major priority here locally.

Could you briefly talk about your own experience in development cooperation and how you eventually came to work for the United Nations?

Of course. I spent three years in Sierra Leone with AGEH where I worked as an integrated advisor with a civil society organization. We did a lot of advocacy work on land rights and capacity building with local communities. It was an incredibly exciting time, and I learned an enormous amount from my colleagues, from the local

context, and from working alongside civil society actors. After returning to Germany, it felt very natural to me that the United Nations could be a place where I could build on that experience. In 2018, I joined UNV through the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) program. My experience as a development worker helped me greatly in understanding the realities faced by UN Volunteers on the ground.

Coming back to the IVY: where do you see the greatest challenges?

The biggest challenge is moving from symbolic recognition of volunteering to structural change. I have already mentioned investment. Beyond that, political commitment is essential. An International Year is wonderful for putting a topic on the agenda – but it must also lead to implementation.

Secondly, a global campaign inevitably involves many different national contexts. There is therefore no single message for the entire world, but rather many different messages.

And last but not least, the current global crises and the broader challenges facing development cooperation are not exactly favorable conditions. The IVY is about cross-border thinking and collaboration – unfortunately, current political priorities often point in a different direction.

In 2027, you will be taking stock. From your perspective, what would constitute a truly successful outcome for the International Volunteer Year?

A truly successful outcome would be sustained momentum for volunteering beyond 2026 – for example, if UN member states were to integrate volunteering into their national development plans.

We also need it to be reflected in the strategies of UN organizations, and of course we need budgets. Earlier, I mentioned the 2026 status report, which focused on measuring volunteerism. We are working very closely with member states to develop a global volunteering index and to elevate it to the same level of recognition as the Human Development Index.

That would mean member states continuously measuring and reporting the contribution of volunteering to their national development goals. That would be fantastic, because it would provide new arguments for creating a stronger, more secure and more inclusive environment for volunteering.

Sandra Koch worked in Sierra Leone from 2015 to 2017 with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Entwicklungsdiener*innen (AGEH), now Agiamondo, in the Civil Peace Service program.

Interview:
Gabi Waibel

Support and photos:
Katja Dombrowski

“VOLUNTEERING” – AS DEFINED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations General Assembly defines volunteering as “a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor” (Resolution A/RES/56/38).

More Information

IVY 2026 – International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development

On 5 December 2025, the United Nations proclaimed the “International Volunteer Year” (IVY). The objectives of the IVY are to

- highlight and strengthen the important role of volunteerism in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- to strengthen public awareness of volunteerism and its impact and promote its social recognition.
- to call on governments, organizations, and communities around the world to create suitable conditions and actively support volunteerism as a significant contribution to sustainable development.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has been mandated to support Member States in implementing IVY 2026 (Resolution A/RES/78/127) and has developed a Communications Guide and other materials to help plan national initiatives. The Communications Guide can be found at:

www.t1p.de/IVY_com_guide

At the European level, the “European Volunteer Centre” has addressed these objectives and published the paper “The Volunteering Policy Environment in the European Union.” It identifies three key areas of socio-political relevance of solidarity-based engagement in the European Union:

- Volunteering as a social inclusion and equality infrastructure
- Volunteering as democratic participation and civic space
- Volunteering as resilience, preparedness, and solidarity

The paper was presented to the European Parliament – the task now is to implement measures to strengthen and promote volunteering. At the national level, both governments and civil society are called upon to act.

All organizations are invited to highlight their volunteer-related activities this year and register them on the IVY 2026 Knowledge Portal:

www.t1p.de/IVY_portal



30 YEARS OF THE UN IN BONN



In 1996, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program became the first UN organization to establish a presence in Bonn. Many others followed: more than 25 UN agencies are now represented in Bonn, and the number is growing. In the past twelve months alone, UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have joined. As a result, the number of UN staff in Bonn has risen to over 1,200 employees. The UN Campus is coordinated by UNV.

UNV places volunteers in and for United Nations organizations – last year, more than 17,000 from 182 nations. With UNV's Online Volunteering Program, you can also make a difference from home – while being flexible, working digitally, and using exactly the skills you want to contribute:

www.unv.org/become-online-volunteer

PREVIEW: COMMUNITY FESTIVAL AND OPEN HOUSE ON 5 SEPTEMBER AT THE BMZ IN BONN

UNV and AGdD are participating

On 5 September, an open house will take place as part of a community festival at Villa Hammerschmidt and on the grounds of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The event is hosted by the Federal City of Bonn, the Office of the Federal President, and the BMZ. Together with international partner organizations, Bonn will present itself as an international city – and celebrate 30 years of the United Nations.

The AGdD and UNV will also be represented with a booth. We look forward seeing you there!

Visitors are asked to book a free ticket online in advance and to present a valid photo ID at the entrance.

For the latest information, visit:

<https://www.bmz.de/de/aktuelles/tag-der-offen-tuer-im-bmz-bonn>

Environmental Peacebuilding

Peace as a Prerequisite for Climate Protection

The climate crisis is leading to increasingly extreme weather events worldwide and, in the long term, to the loss of our means of subsistence. Especially in countries of the Global South, the effects are already clearly felt by many people: Droughts are reducing pasture and farmland, water sources are no longer reliably available, and floods are destroying entire livelihoods. This not only exacerbates existing conflicts but also creates new ones. For this reason, the Civil Peace Service (CPS) places a special emphasis on what is known as “environmental peacebuilding.”

The conflicts themselves are not the problem. Rather, it is how the parties to the conflict deal with them that determines whether the climate crisis will lead to more confrontation or more cooperation. However, as long as conflicts and a lack of prospects destabilize societies, they cannot engage constructively with climate protection and adaptation to changing conditions.

CONFLICT, PEACE, AND CLIMATE

To promote the topic of environmental peacebuilding, the Civil Peace Service Consortium launched the online hub “Peace Improves the Climate” in 2021. Among other things, the hub features case studies, expert articles, interviews from research and practice, podcasts, and further information on the context of climate and conflict. The hub can be found on the consortium’s website.

In 2024, the Consortium organized a specialized event with representatives from sponsoring agencies, partner organizations, and experts from several countries. The goal was to exchange ideas and learn from experiences in other countries. After all, perspectives on climate, the environment, and nature vary greatly from region to region—depending, among other things, on how and to what extent the consequences of climate change are already being felt.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

The approaches to addressing these issues are as diverse as the perspectives and conflicts themselves. The CPS always prioritizes dialogue and exchange among the parties involved in the conflict. This often helps prevent violent confrontations and fosters cooperation. In Uganda, for example, the CPS and

its partners are working to inform the public about the impacts of climate change and to create dialogue forums for the nonviolent resolution of conflicts.

In Bolivia, the first graduate program on the resolution of environmental and resource conflicts was launched in cooperation with the University of Núr. And in the Sahel region, the CPS and its partners are working to ensure a more equitable use of natural resources with the participation of all those affected.

In many countries, the scope for civil society activities is becoming increasingly restricted. As a result, people and organizations working to protect the environment and uphold human rights in the context of climate issues are under threat in many regions. The CPS’s presence can offer them some protection against repression, allowing them to continue their work.

In this way, civil peacebuilding lays the foundation for a collective, equitable, and peaceful response to the climate crisis.

Eva Schimmelpfennig
Press and Public Relations
Civil Peace Service Consortium (CPS)

© Weltfriedensdienst e.V. Foto: Tim Bunke



The photo shows participants in a Camel Caravan Demonstration in Kenya, an annual environmental and peace demonstration. Its purpose is to raise awareness about the protection of endangered water resources and the peaceful coexistence of the ethnic groups living there.

Environmental Protection and Peace Work

Committed to Social Sustainability

Zandra Martínez works as Global Lead for Social Sustainability at the international NGO Preferred by Nature. She draws on much of the experience she gained during her CPS assignment in Guatemala in her current role, such as the ability to manage conflicts and view them as opportunities.

My assignment as a specialist with the Civil Peace Service (CPS) in Guatemala began in November 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic—a time when the global situation was marked by great uncertainty. As a GIZ CPS specialist, I worked with the organization Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM) in Guatemala City. Among other things, GAM organizes campaigns and projects related to the culture of remembrance in Guatemala. A brutal civil war raged there until 1996. Thousands were unlawfully detained and, in some cases, tortured, and countless people were forcibly disappeared. Many of the crimes from that period have not yet been fully addressed. My task was to support GAM in keeping these memories alive and ensuring that the consequences of enforced disappearances find their place in the collective memory.

GAM organized campaigns to address enforced disappearances and their intergenerational consequences. Among other things, we organized workshops with survivors and interested parties to raise awareness of the issue and influence political processes. We also worked with indigenous women's groups and advocated for courts—ideally—to address cases of enforced disappearance.

Zandra Martínez (center) during her work as a professional in Guatemala—her focus was on projects related to the culture of remembrance following the long-running civil war.

The goal: for affected families to experience justice. And where this is not possible, to “heal the hearts” of those who have suffered unnamed and unpunished injustice.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

In February 2023, I returned to Germany and found a new home in Bonn. Since 2020, I had been a volunteer board member of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international organization that promotes responsible forest management and sets standards for it. In 2022 and 2023, I served as chair of the board.

My experience with the CPS opened my eyes to new perspectives on the close connection between human rights and environmental protection. Much of the work done in peace processes can be applied to environmental conflicts—including working methods, approaches, and solutions. For example, the challenges of forest conservation, particularly in the Global South, cannot be fully understood without considering structural and intergenerational violence—especially when groups such as indigenous peoples or local communities are involved. Alongside my FSC activities, I worked as a freelance consultant in the field of sustainability, completed several continuing education courses, and also took advantage of the counseling services offered by the AGdD—for example, I used the ProfilPASS to refine my skills assessment.

JOB AT PREFERRED BY NATURE

In April 2025, I found a new position at Preferred by Nature, an international NGO founded in 1994 in Aarhus, Denmark. It advocates for sustainable land use, responsible economic practices, and climate protection. Preferred by Nature takes a holistic approach: it aims to promote environmental protection while simultaneously improving the social conditions of the people who use the land. As Global Lead for Social Sustainability, my role is to further develop the social aspect. Preferred by Nature certifies sustainability standards—such as those of the FSC, Rainforest Alliance (RA), or the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)—and also develops its own standards for corporate environmental and social commitments. In recent years, the organization has also developed its own innovative approaches to ecosystem restoration, with a particular emphasis on social aspects and conflict management. In addition, we initiate projects funded by governments or private foundations that are aimed at smallholder farmers. As a



result, in regions around the world where Preferred by Nature has been active for 30 years, both people's living conditions and the state of ecosystems have gradually improved.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES

There can be no healthy environment if the people who depend on natural resources do not live in dignified conditions. I experienced this firsthand during my CPS service in Guatemala.

As Global Lead for Social Sustainability at Preferred by Nature, my main task is to strengthen the social perspective within the organization so that we can contribute as effectively as possible to improving living conditions for groups such as smallholder farmers, workers, women, indigenous peoples, and migrants. To this end, I continue to develop our social strategy and support all our departments with expert knowledge on social issues and human rights.

There is also frequent criticism of certification systems regarding the promised impacts. One of my tasks is to highlight their actual positive effects. However, certification can only ever be part of the solution. That's why we also support organizations in implementing better practices. One example is the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, or FPIC for short. This principle protects the self-determination of indigenous peoples by granting them the right to decide for themselves on projects on their land—such as forest use.

WORKING FROM HOME IN SWEDEN

I now live with my family in Sweden. Since I work almost entirely remotely, my workday begins at 8:00 a.m. in my small home office—with a view of a tree in the garden and my free-range chickens. I check my schedule, respond to emails, and tackle the tasks on my to-do list for the day. I'm currently, for example, revising the Sustainability Framework, Preferred by Nature's key policy document on human rights and social issues.

Around noon, I take a coffee break, say hello to my chickens, and walk through the garden with my dog Milo. In the afternoon, I have meetings and engage in creative collaboration with my colleagues.

When I'm in the mood for face-to-face interaction, I visit our office in Copenhagen—a two-hour drive away—and meet with my colleagues there in person. I also frequently travel internationally to collaborate with project partners on-site.

VALUABLE CPS EXPERIENCE

Much of what I learned at the CPS benefits me today: For example, the ability to manage conflicts and view them as opportunities is crucial. Especially in the environmental sector, differing interests give rise to conflicts, but these often offer potential for sustainable solutions.

There are also differences in mentalities and work styles between the Global South and North, for example,



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regarding perceptions of time and planning. My Mexican background and my experience in Guatemala have helped me understand these differences.

Added to this are a sensitivity to trauma-informed approaches, experience working with vulnerable groups, and an understanding of the connection between the past and overcoming violence.

Collaboration at the CPS is based on mutual learning and partnership. Local perspectives greatly enrich the work, and that, too, is a valuable experience.

My time in Guatemala was particularly formative for my professional development because it gave me a unique perspective on the issue of human rights. It is one thing to talk about human rights and quite another to witness real human rights violations—such as in the case of enforced disappearances.

CONCLUSION

My career path and experiences show that peace work and environmental protection are very closely linked.

I am a woman of Indigenous descent from Mexico and am now 53 years old. I've had the opportunity to share many facets of life with people from all over the world—including during my time with the CPS in Guatemala and time and again in my work today. These experiences have shaped me into an open-minded person who understands that every human being's dignity and worth are non-negotiable.

Perhaps that is precisely why I am increasingly troubled by the current social climate and the growing distance I perceive in our relationships. We must find new ways to bridge these gaps. After all, peace work in particular thrives on interpersonal closeness.

Zandra Martínez
works at Preferred
by Nature as Global
Lead for Social Sustainability.

Zandra Martínez
MA Human Rights and
Governance
2020 - 2023:
Guatemala, GIZ

Interview with Krischan Ostenrath, WILA Bonn

The climate protection job market seeks flexible problem-solvers



Krischan Ostenrath heads the Labor Market Department at Wissenschaftsladen (WILA) Bonn e.V. and is editor-in-chief of "WILA Arbeitsmarkt". For nearly thirty years, he has been addressing issues related to the labor market and skills development and is the author of numerous publications. In addition, he serves as coordinator of the Green Working World Network and oversees research transfer projects in the field of "green" employment.

In this interview, he provides insights into current developments in the field of climate protection, describes the requirements for skilled workers, and contextualizes the topic of green branding.

www.wilabonn.de

Climate change is transforming the economy and the job market. Which fields within climate and environmental protection are currently particularly affected—and to what extent?

The job market in climate and environmental protection has been growing steadily for years and at a significantly faster rate than other sectors of the economy—by an average of 5 to 6 percent annually. Political influences can slow this trend, but not stop it. The energy sector—with its focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency—is particularly dynamic, as are the circular economy, sustainable construction, and mobility. In contrast, demand is declining in environmental education and in traditional consulting fields, such as waste management consulting.

Completely new job profiles are relatively rare. Instead, existing professions are evolving due to additional sustainability requirements. This is particularly evident in the skilled trades, such as plumbing, heating, and HVAC: here, energy-efficient technologies, smart-home applications, and customer consulting have gained in importance. Specializations such as high-voltage technology in the automotive sector or roles such as wind energy service technicians have also emerged. In degree programs such as Electrical Engineering or Process Engineering, climate and environmental protection now play an important role.

A new field that has emerged in academia, for example, is energy consulting, which often involves professionals from architecture, civil engineering, or the skilled trades. There are also new job profiles in the "sustainable construction" sector.

Where do you see the greatest demand for workers in environmental and climate protection right now and in the near future? What qualifications or job profiles are in demand?

I see the greatest demand in apprenticeship-based trades, especially skilled trades in the construction and energy sectors. Academic qualifications are less in demand, though they are most sought after in the energy sector. I tend to use the term "skilled labor shortage" with caution. According to the Federal Employment Agency, there is no nationwide shortage of skilled workers in Germany, but rather only in certain areas. This is evident in some technical apprenticeship trades or in the IT sector related to climate protection. Often, mobility and matching play a role. For example, college graduates are generally more mobile, whereas skilled workers in basic apprenticeship trades are less flexible in terms of location. Unattractive working conditions and low pay are also reasons for shortages.

Qualifications in technical trades are in particularly high demand, for example in the installation and maintenance of heat pumps and air conditioning systems, as well as in the construction of electrical and energy supply systems. There are far fewer positions to fill in the management of larger companies. These typically require a business-related degree, such as in business administration or economics. Demand is relatively low in the fields of journalism and education, as well as in consulting roles such as sustainability or waste management consulting. In these less technical fields, however, career changers also have opportunities because highly specialized expertise is not required. Here, as in all other fields, the willingness to pursue continuing education is essential to meet the dynamic demands of the industry.

Which skills are currently particularly relevant for the green job market and will continue to gain importance in the future?

In addition to technical knowledge or so-called "hard skills", interdisciplinary competencies are becoming increasingly important: The climate and environmental market is highly dynamic, and technologies are evolving rapidly. Accordingly, there is a particular demand for flexible problem solvers who are willing to continuously acquire new knowledge. The ability to think holistically is also important. It's no use having a perfect grasp of the technical dimension if you haven't understood the economic dimension. You might be able to install a heat pump, but it won't benefit the customer if it isn't economically viable. Customer consultation also plays a role. Furthermore, the interplay between ecological and digital transformation—the so-called "Twin Transition"—

is central. One example of this is smart homes, where digital skills are in demand. Digital tools are also on the rise in manufacturing and the skilled trades. The impact of AI on the labor market is not yet fully foreseeable. Nevertheless, I expect that everyone will be expected to handle it confidently in the future. AI will also play a major role in continuing education. Even today, people can acquire knowledge in a very short time using their cell phones. This means that entirely new forms of “continuing education” are on the horizon.

Can you say which paths to qualification or continuing education are particularly useful?

The format of continuing education depends heavily on the specific professional field. In the skilled trades, there are still continuing education programs certified by professional chambers. Colleges and universities now offer smaller academic certificates (so-called “micro-credentials”) that are less comprehensive than a graduate program or a second degree. Sometimes you can acquire skills “on the job,” but for legally regulated occupations, you may still need certification. The continuing education market is very confusing, and you should carefully consider what will be helpful for your career goals. The good news: Depending on your employment status, the Employment Agency may cover the costs, for example, if you are at risk of unemployment.

What is green branding, and what role does it play today in choosing an employer?

Green branding refers to marketing strategies used by companies to deliberately build a sustainable and responsible image. It involves the overall perception of a company’s environmental—and often social—responsibility. In contrast to so-called “greenwashing,” where companies feign a sustainable image, green branding is based on genuine, measurable measures.

Green branding is a highly topical issue. Many employers portray themselves as “greener” than they actually are. A striking example is the use of pesticides advertised as sustainable, even though they contain glyphosate. Then there are true sustainability pioneers, who, however, often struggle to develop a viable business model. But these are really the extremes. The greatest momentum lies in between—among companies that are gradually moving toward sustainability. Even if progress there is often slow, the willingness to change is an important signal. In this regard, setting aside the clear-cut extremes, every job seeker must decide for themselves whether an employer’s sustainability ambitions are sufficient—there is no clear-cut index here.

Studies show that sustainability is playing an increasingly important role for employees when choosing an employer. Nevertheless, very few are willing to sacrifice key factors such as a good salary, job security, opportunities for professional development, family-friendly policies, or work-life balance for the sake of sustainability. These traditional criteria also apply in the green job market, where employment conditions aren’t inherently more attractive than in other sectors. Sustainability is therefore an important factor for job seekers, but not the sole

deciding factor.

How can job seekers find out more about this?

There are a few criteria that can be used to assess sustainability in companies. For larger companies, you can review the mandatory sustainability reports, which are publicly available. Other indicators include relevant certifications, such as an organic certification or, in the construction industry, the “Sustainable Buildings” quality seal. Finally, there are several major associations in Germany, such as the Federal Association for Sustainable Economy, the German Working Group for Environmentally Conscious Management (BAUM), and the Green Workplace Network.

If a company is involved in such an association and even pays a membership fee, you can assume that sustainability is a serious priority for them. The Green Workplace Network also offers a checklist titled “How Do I Find a Sustainable Company?”. You can use it to find information if you’re looking for a green employer.

How will the job market in the field of climate protection develop over the next 10 to 15 years?

Forecasts show that over the next 10 to 15 years, there will certainly be a need for hundreds of thousands of skilled workers. The exact number depends on specific developments, which in turn may be influenced by political factors. The problem of a shortage of skilled workers will persist for decades to come. We can only try to manage the shortage; we won’t be able to eliminate it. As much as I believe the job market will continue to evolve toward ecological transformation, I’m more cautious when it comes to sector-specific forecasts. For one thing, I don’t know where individual technologies or services will stand in the face of international competition 10 to 20 years from now. For another, I think it’s the wrong approach to base career choices on a supposedly booming industry. Rapid advances in knowledge will shape the labor market in the 21st century. Flexibility and a willingness to learn are therefore essential. And: You’ll only be happy doing work you enjoy.

Interview:
Silke Wesemann

Climate Change Dialogue Center

Liaison for Partner Organizations in Six Countries



Mirko Klein (center)
during a radio interview in El Salvador

I see evidence that climate change has long since reached the countries of the Global South during every partner visit I make as a counsellor at the Climate Change and Resource Conservation Dialogue Center (Dialogstelle Klimawandel und Ressourcenschutz) for Brot für die Welt (BfdW). There's no need for extreme cyclones or months-long droughts to see this. Even small variations in the rainy seasons can lead to severe crop failures—and thus to economic crises in many communities where we work with our partner organizations. And a failed harvest often means more than "just" not having enough food on the table. It also means less can be sold at local markets, resulting in a lack of funds for families' education or healthcare.

POINT OF CONTACT FOR SIX COUNTRIES

I'm currently based in Mexico City, where I'm organizationally affiliated with one of our partner organizations. Since 2021, I've served as the point of contact and advisor for Brot für die Welt's partners in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia—countries facing the consequences of climate change. As a liaison, I not only support them on issues such as climate change adaptation but also help ensure that their voices are heard in political processes at the national and international levels. Brot für die Welt aims to give affected groups a strong voice and empower them to take control of their own destinies.

HARNESSING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Experience shows that successful adaptation measures are often implemented most effectively by people who know their communities well and understand what is needed to become more resilient to climate change. That is why I support our partner organizations and communities through participatory processes in developing local adaptation plans—and often also in taking the first steps toward implementation. This involves, for example, protecting crops and securing the drinking water supply or, depending on the region, measures to prevent flooding or landslides. The creation of early warning systems also plays an important role. In Cuba, for example, solar panels are being installed to maintain communication with disaster response teams during power outages following hurricanes and to keep essential medications refrigerated.

TRANSFER AND NETWORKING

As a dialogue facilitator, I also support knowledge transfer and the development of strategies to reduce long-term vulnerability to climate change and poor resource management. To this end, I conduct training sessions, connect partners, and enable marginalized groups to participate in regional and international exchange forums such as the UN Climate Change Conferences. Women, young people, and indigenous peoples play a special role in this context, as they suffer particularly from climate change and are often excluded from public processes.

RESOURCES ARE RUNNING LOW

For me personally, the exchange with our partner organizations through the Dialogue Center is very educational. It's clear how uniquely climate change affects us all and that, therefore, solutions must above all be developed and implemented locally. Of course, this requires resources, and funding in particular is currently in short supply in development cooperation. I find this very concerning. I hope that German development cooperation will continue to be a reliable partner in countries of the Global South.

Mirko Klein

Expert on adaptation to climate change and sustainable agriculture

2018 - 2021: Philippines, Brot für die Welt/DÜ

2021 - 2024: Costa Rica, Brot für die Welt/DÜ

Since 2024: Mexico, Brot für die Welt/DÜ

Climate Change – We are changing too.

International Climate Service—A New Idea



Professionals and staff members of the PORET organization in Zimbabwe are organizing tree-planting initiatives in watersheds.

The global climate crisis is not only an environmental and economic challenge, but above all a political and social one. To date, international climate policy has been heavily influenced by technical, financial, and market-based approaches. At the same time, perspectives, experiences, and solutions from the Global South are not given sufficient consideration in key debates on transformation.

Against this backdrop, the development service agencies have conceived the idea for a new program: the International Climate Service (IKD). The IKD sees itself as a meaningful complement to existing climate policy instruments. Its approach is knowledge-based and focused on the long term.

The core principles of the IKD are:

- participatory – Involvement of local actors and grassroots movements
- sustainable – Long-term impact through knowledge exchange and networks
- innovative – Linking climate protection and development cooperation
- politically aligned – In line with the German government's foreign climate policy strategy and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

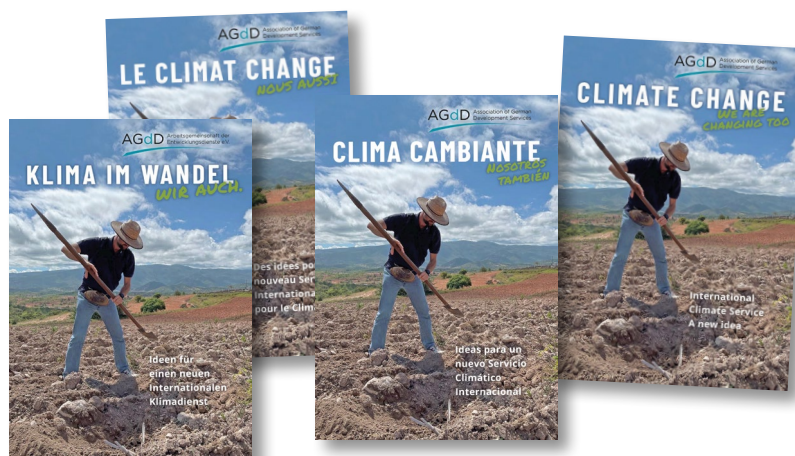
The focus is on deploying professionals and strengthening cooperative relationships, which are anchored in a broader civil society platform. The IKD steps in where purely financial, technological, or regulatory measures are insufficient to enable genuine political participation and to incorporate local experiences into global transformation processes. The goal is to work with stakeholders in the Global South to develop solutions and practical knowledge and to actively bring these perspec-

tives into the international climate discourse.

The IKD is an innovative evolution of the development service. There are already professionals working on climate-related projects who are having very positive experiences (see the article by Mirko Klein, p. 16). What is new is the decision to bundle such initiatives into a program-focused approach titled "Climate Protection and Climate Adaptation." The next step is to secure solid funding for a pilot phase.

Background information on the program concept, as well as comments from partner organizations, can be found in the brochure on the International Climate Service, which you can download here:

<https://www.agdd.de/en/before/international-climate-service>



The brochure "Climate Change—We're Changing Too" is available in four languages.

Blue Run for the Climate

31 Marathons from Lake Constance to Berlin



Simon Fischer on his Blue Run from Lake Constance to Berlin

Simon Fischer worked as a professional and coordinator for the World Peace Service in Kenya from 2021 to 2023. Working closely with local partners of the World Peace Service, he promoted peace there—especially in places where the climate crisis is exacerbating existing conflicts.

During this time, he regularly traveled to the northern, extremely arid regions of Kenya, which are particularly affected by climate change. “There, you can clearly see what happens when the average temperature in a given area rises by two degrees in a very short time. The water shortage is extreme. The hardship drives people into a struggle for survival that increasingly leads to violent conflicts between different ethnic groups—ranging from cattle theft to armed clashes.”

rential rains threaten our water supply. Yet everyone can make a difference right now—and at the same time lead a healthier and happier life. And he leads by example: In talks at various stops along the way, he shared his experiences and demonstrated how cold showers and a predominantly plant-based diet lead to peak performance. “Over the past 20 years, we’ve lost an amount of groundwater equivalent to Lake Constance. It’s getting warmer and warmer, and groundwater levels continue to drop. That’s why we need to use our water more carefully and motivate others to join in.”

RAISING AWARENESS FOR THE CLIMATE

His run took him through the Rothaar Mountains and the Harz Mountains. The consequences of global warming are evident there as well: Due to global warming and water shortages in the forests, bark beetles have been able to multiply rapidly and attack the spruce trees, leaving hardly any of them standing. “That really struck a chord with me,” said Simon Fischer.

On the final day, he made a final sprint to Berlin. There, Simon Fischer was awaited not only by his family but also by many other people who welcomed him with cheers. “That was a great feeling. I think many people have been inspired to live their lives a little more mindfully—and maybe even to start running. Anyone who spends a lot of time outdoors finds it hard to mistreat nature the way it’s being mistreated in so many places right now. And if I was able to motivate people to do that, I’ve already accomplished a lot.”

Simon Fischer can’t solve the water problem with the Blue Run. But with his unusual initiative, he’s managed to draw attention to the issue—both in the media and among the people who saw him in person, accompanied him, and listened to him.

www.wfd.de/blue-run



ACHIEVING A LOT IN SMALL STEPS

Back in Germany, he wanted to draw attention to the consequences of climate change that he had witnessed daily in Kenya, and in the spring of 2024 he launched the “Blue Run”: In 31 days, he ran 31 marathons from Lake Constance through Bonn to Berlin. “Running helped me break out of the ‘climate change paralysis’ that many people fall into when they don’t know how to move forward. But: If you take many small steps, you’ll eventually reach 100 kilometers; if you don’t take any at all, you’ll never get there,” says Simon Fischer.

His message: Extreme droughts and tor-

Playing for Change

The Afro-Reggae-Band "Rise'n'Shine"

In 2016, I traveled to Tanzania. Funded by Brot für die Welt and the Nordkirche, I worked there as a project coordinator for the Evangelical Church (ELCT-ELVD) in Mwanza. In my work—which focused on water, climate, gender, and partnerships—I experienced firsthand how closely joy, community, and the desire for justice are intertwined. This experience became the starting point for something I could never have imagined back then: our Afro-reggae band Rise'n'Shine.

MUSIC THAT MAKES PEOPLE HAPPY

In February 2019, I traveled to Zanzibar for the Sauti za Busara music festival. There, I met bassist CG and guitarist Phillip. We hit it off immediately, laughed a lot, listened to music, and talked late into the night about life and the power of East African music. Then, as the sun rose in the morning, one of us asked the question that changed everything: "Why don't we start a band?" I couldn't get that idea out of my head. Back in Mwanza, I organized a church music workshop. There I met Miss Keys and Angel—two amazing musicians who were immediately ready to try something new. In an old shed that served as our rehearsal space, a spontaneous idea evolved into an international band project that connects people across borders: musically, culturally, and politically. Rise'n'Shine stands for global solidarity, friendship, joy of life, and human rights—and for music as a safe space for connection. Our multi-instrumentalist Christian Mgana likes to say: "We don't make music to become famous, but because we love it—and to make people happy." This attitude continues to shape us to this day—whether in Tanzania, Uganda, or, since 2022, in the Bonn area. Half the band has since found a new home here: two of our musicians are here for their studies and training, and I work as the head of the fundraising department for the Evangelical Church District of Bonn.

MUSIC WITH A PURPOSE

Our music has been socially engaged from the very beginning, shaped by Tanzanian Rastafari culture and the themes of my project work. Our first album, "Mama Africa," released in 2020, was a declaration of love for our roots. After that, we embarked on an unusual project: Together with the police academy, we produced "War is a Business," a song about violence, corruption, and the economic interests behind conflicts. It was precisely the collaboration with the police—an institution that many view with fear—that made this project so significant: music became a bridge. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we created "Usimwache mtu nyuma" ("Leave No One Behind") and "Times of Fear"—songs about solidarity in uncertain times. We also addressed the topics of health education and the human



right to water through our music.

A severe flood following a concert in Mwanza, when we were unable to get home for hours, provided the impetus for our climate activism. In collaboration with the Climate Justice Information Center and Fridays for Future, we created "Our World, Our House." And with the "Voices of Climate Justice" tour, we traveled throughout Germany.

At the same time, we developed the Church Climate Action Partnerships project at the project office of the Evangelical Church in Mwanza—and clearly felt the synergy: The songs inspired the project work, and that, in turn, nourished our music.

Rise'n'Shine on a small stage in Mwanza (above) and on tour in Germany in Wuppertal (below).

MUSIC THAT BRINGS ABOUT CHANGE

Today I know: Everything I do is closely connected to my years of service. I've learned that collaboration requires relationships—trust, empathy, and shared joy. Music creates all of that. It unleashes energies that no concept paper can generate.

Dear returnees, bring the joy of life from your mission back with you to Germany. Put the knowledge you've gained to use; share your stories. They are valuable and inspiring. And if you'd like: Come to our concerts or use the free educational materials on our website. Feel free to invite us to summer festivals, conferences, and other events.

We believe that music can change the world. Step by step. Song by song. Together.

Free educational materials, audio samples, and contact information for the band are available on the Rise'n'Shine website: www.riseupafrika.org

Anne-Christina
Achterberg-Boness
2016 - 2022:
Tanzania,
Brot für die Welt/DÜ



© Rise'n'Shine

30 Years Pro Peace

Peace work requires perseverance



Thirty years of campaigns and political pressure from Pro Peace have made the Civil Peace Service strong.

As Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1997, Johannes Rau supported the first training courses for the Civil Peace Service and personally congratulated the first CPS professionals.



In 1996, the organization "Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V." was founded—now known as Pro Peace. Since the late 1990s, the organization has been active in regions of international conflict—initially in the Western Balkans and the Middle East, and later also in Ukraine and Southeast Asia. Through its "Kommune & Konflikt" program, Pro Peace has also been applying its expertise at the local level in Germany since 2006.

Pro Peace celebrated its 30th anniversary with an event held on 5 March 2026 in Cologne. The evening focused on the question of what peace work can concretely look like today.

Chairwoman Caroline Wiegand emphasized the importance of sustained peace work. "Surprisingly little is said about peace," she

said, noting that violence and war remain a terrifying reality. That is precisely why the work of peace organizations is so necessary—even if it often receives less attention than debates on military or security policy. At the same time, she noted, conditions have become more challenging.

Cologne Mayor Derya Karadag also praised the organization's work: "30 years of Pro Peace—that's a strong sign that peace also requires perseverance and that there are people who take responsibility."

PEACE AS A PROCESS

Under the title "How Can Peace Grow Again?", Alexander Mauz (former chair of Pro Peace), Chen Alon (co-founder of the Israeli-Palestinian initiative Combatants for Peace), and Angela Starovoyta (project manager of the Empathy Ukraine Network) engaged in a discussion. It became clear time and again during the discussion: Peace

is not a state that suddenly comes into being. "Peace is a process," said Alexander Mauz—a long-term journey that requires relationships, trust, and inclusion.

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY NONVIOLENTLY

Another discussion between Zeynep Karaosman (Palestinians & Jews for Peace initiative), Dalilah Shemia-Goeke (Federation for Social Defense), and Christoph Bongard (Pro Peace) focused on the situation in Germany. During the discussion, Dalilah Shemia-Goeke introduced the concept of social defense. This is based on the idea of protecting livelihoods and democratic structures through nonviolent means, such as civil resistance, social networking, and solidarity with those affected by violence. In light of increasing militarization and political polarization, such approaches are more important than ever.

ACTIVELY LIVING NONVIOLENCE

Caroline Wiegand summarized the key ideas of the evening: Positive peace does not arise solely from the end of violence, but rather where structural inequalities are dismantled and nonviolence is actively practiced. The experiences from three decades of peace work clearly showed: "Peace does not arise on its own. Peace grows where people work through conflicts, strengthen empathy, and keep spaces for dialogue open."

UNDER A NEW NAME

Three decades after its founding, Pro Peace's mission is more relevant than ever. In early 2025, the organization therefore changed its name from "forumZFD" to "Pro Peace." With this change, the organization is making a clear and unambiguous commitment to its vision of a more peaceful and just world. For peace is not an ideal—it is a task, and one that is more urgent today than ever before.

www.propeace.de

Honored for Long-Term Dedication

Professional Martin Wilde Receives the Order of Merit

In November 2025, Martin Wilde received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany from Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in recognition of his many years of exceptional dedication. Martin Wilde is currently working as an AGIAMONDO vocational training specialist at the Don Bosco Solar and Renewable Energy Center in Ghana.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations and have asked Martin Wilde to share insights into his current work in Ghana and the significance of this award for him and the project.

Even as a young person, Ghana—its people, its history, and its culture—fascinated me. I have had close ties to the Salesians of Don Bosco in Germany and Ghana since my school days in Bonn and through my work for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Ghana from 1998 to 2002. In 2000, I married my Ghanaian wife, and later, as founding chairman of the Ghana Forum NRW, I co-initiated the partnership between North Rhine-Westphalia and Ghana.

This West African country is my second home, and so, after many years as executive director of the Federation of Catholic Entrepreneurs and of Don Bosco Mondo, I wanted to return there. In the spring of 2021, the opportunity arose: I traveled to Ghana as an expert for AGIAMONDO on behalf of the Bonn-based Jakob-Christian-Adam Foundation to support a project in the field of vocational training.

SHARING SOLAR EXPERTISE

In 2017, German electrical engineer and Salesian Brother Christof Baum launched the Don Bosco Solar Center in Ashaiman, a suburb of the Ghanaian capital Accra, which provided young people with training in solar technology. Together with various Ghanaian and German network partners, we developed a concept to share this expertise with other vocational training centers in Ghana—an idea that also piqued the interest of the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia. The plan: to establish a nationwide vocational training network for solar technology, in which basic solar technology training takes place at vocational schools throughout Ghana, while advanced training and professional development for teachers are provided at the Don Bosco Solar Center in Ashaiman.

SUCCESS STORY

To date, nearly 70 professionals at 16 vocational schools nationwide have received advanced training in solar technology. This year, we will complete the installation of technical equipment at the remaining vocational schools—after which all of them will be able to offer hands-on basic training in solar technology.



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A major milestone in 2022 was the certification of the advanced Don Bosco solar training program by the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)—the first certification of its kind ever in Ghana. Of the more than 200 graduates of this six-month advanced course, nearly 80 percent have secured a job or been admitted to a technical university.

In 2025, five graduates were placed in regular apprenticeships in Bochum through a collaboration with the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK) and the Ruhr District Craftsmen's Association; nine more are expected to follow this year.

We want to continue this success story. The pioneering work in solar technology training is now to be replicated in the field of electromobility—Ghana currently lacks the necessary training capacity in this area. However, the first steps have been taken: Last year, the first 14 specialists received advanced training in high-voltage battery technology at the Ruhr Academy of Crafts.

VALUABLE MOMENTUM

The presentation of the Federal Cross of Merit by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in person at the German Ambassador's residence in Accra was a great honor for me, as well as for my wife Nana and our daughter Stephanie, both of whom have played a major role in my commitment to Ghana.

Above all, however, it is also a tribute to all our partners in Ghana and Germany who support this pioneering work. And it provides welcome momentum for our projects on the path toward the green transformation of Ghana's economy.

After the presentation of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany at the German ambassador's residence in Accra: Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier with Martin Wilde, his wife Nana, and daughter Stephanie (in the foreground)

Martin Wilde,
Since 2021:
Ghana, AGIAMONDO

Further Information

CLIMATE PROTECTION INITIATIVES



NATIONALE
KLIMASCHUTZ
INITIATIVE

Through the **National Climate Protection Initiative (NKI)**, the **Federal Ministry for the Environment,**

Climate Action, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN) supports projects in Germany that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Agency for Municipal Climate Protection at the German Institute for Urban Studies (Difu) is responsible for all questions regarding funding opportunities for municipalities, potential, and other aspects of municipal climate protection.

www.klimaschutz.de

www.t1p.de/klimaschutz_NKI

You can find job openings from municipalities here:

www.t1p.de/klimaschutz_kommunale_jobs



Since 2008, the **International Climate Initiative (IKI)** of the BMUKN has been funding climate and biodiversity projects in the

Global South. Technical support, program management, and project evaluations are provided by the **IKI Office** at the federally owned Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft (ZUG) gGmbH.

www.international-climate-initiative.com

Job Postings from the BMUKN:

www.t1p.de/BMUKN_karriere

DEUTSCHE BUNDESSTIFTUNG UMWELT (DBU)



As one of the largest foundations in Europe, the DBU supports environmental protection projects, including those carried out by NGOs. The DBU identifies climate change, biodiversity loss, resource management, and harmful emissions as key challenges. Consequently, the foundation's funding priorities are based on both current scientific findings regarding planetary boundaries and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The affiliated Center for Environmental Communication in Osnabrück also offers events.

www.dbu.de

INFO ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft Natur und Umweltbildung is the umbrella and professional association for environmental centers, initiatives, providers, freelancers/self-employed individuals, and other people active in extracurricular environmental education. In addition to ideas for environmental education projects, the website also features links to environmental centers and organizations involved in environmental protection and nature conservation.

www.umweltbildung.de

NEWSLETTER

GERMANWATCH E.V.

The Germanwatch®Kompakt climate newsletter provides updates on key developments in the fields of science, international politics, national implementation measures, and business. On the Germanwatch blog, expert authors share their personal insights and analyses.

www.germanwatch.org/de/GermanwatchKompakt
www.germanwatch.org/de/blog

KLIMAREPORTER® – QUALITY JOURNALISM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

klimareporter® is an independent online magazine focused on climate change and the energy transition, publishing daily reports, analyses, interviews, and opinion pieces on the causes and consequences of the climate crisis.

www.klimareporter.de

RELEVANT JOB BOARDS

Job board for environmental professionals
www.greenjobs.de

Jobs in the renewable energy sector
www.eejobs.de

Job platform for sustainability, CSR, NGOs, and the environment
www.nachhaltigejobs.de

Platform for sustainable jobs:
www.goodjobs.eu

CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

You can find a selection of continuing education opportunities in the areas of sustainability, environmental and climate protection, including management on our website:

www.agdd.de/linklisten-weiterbildungen

AGdD Online Expert Discussion

Images, Power, and Responsibility: Decolonial Visual Practices in Dialogue

This expert discussion for returning professionals focused on key questions regarding a power-critical and responsible visual language in development cooperation. The discussion among participants was based on the results of the AGdD photo contest "Decolonial Perspectives on Development Service" 2025, which were reviewed and analyzed together during the event.

In conversation with jury member and photographer Wara Vargas, the criteria for decolonial visual practices were explored in depth: What challenges exist in the selection and use of images? What opportunities arise for more nuanced representations of global interconnections? And how can visual language contribute to greater justice and equality? At the same time, Kabita Gurung, the winner of the photo contest, was given the opportunity to share her perspective, her creative processes, and the story behind her photo. This highlighted the importance of contextual sensitivity, self-reflection, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Anyone engaged with decolonial visual practices quickly realizes that this is only possible through an ongoing process of learning and negotiation. We would like to encourage all professionals to engage in this process, because good visual narratives make an important contribution to our goal of a more just global world.

Read more at www.agdd.de

INTERVIEW: From Uganda to Cologne

Norman Mukasa traveled to Uganda with his wife as her accompanying partner. Today, the family lives in Cologne with their children.

In this interview, he talks about his arrival in Germany.



www.t1p.de/agdd_norman_mukasa

BOOK RECOMMENDATION: Der letzte Jaguar

Kristina von Stosch worked as a professional with the CPS in Bolivia and Timor-Leste. In her novel "Der letzte Jaguar", she writes about resource conflicts and forest fires in the Amazon Basin and the mysticism of Indigenous legends. Learn more about the novel and its creation at

www.t1p.de/agdd_stosch_jaguar



READ A GOOD BOOK? !

SHARE YOUR BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS WITH US

In 2026, we're continuing our reading journey. Our goal: To feature a book recommendation every month that helps us think outside the box, learn about other realities of life, and understand and question existing power structures—or even gain inspiration for development policy and global peace work. You're warmly invited to participate. Feel free to suggest novels, (popular) science books, or specialized literature, and explain in a few lines why you're recommending the book.

Send your suggestions to: redaktion@agdd.de
We'll reward every published book recommendation with a free book.



AGdD Programs for Returning Professionals

Seminars and Webinars

We regularly offer seminars and webinars in English:
www.agdd.de/en/after/seminars-and-webinars

Individual Counselling

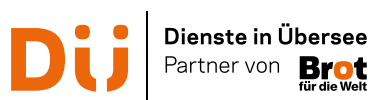
We offer individual career counselling for (returned) development service professionals:
www.agdd.de/en/after/individual-counselling

More topics on returning on our website

Working and applying in Germany for non-German experts in development services and their families
www.agdd.de/en/after/working-and-applying-in-germany-for-non-german-experts

How to successfully return with your family
www.agdd.de/en/after/information-on-return/returning-with-a-family/how-to-successfully-return-from-development-service-with-your-family

Our Members:



Further information:
www.agdd.de

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