

Independent Evaluation

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ASA-Program 1960-2010

Work- and Study abroad in Africa, Asia and South America

Evaluation: Center for Evaluation and Methods (ZEM)
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Short Report



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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE ASA PROGRAM

InWEnt – Internationale Weiterbildung und
Entwicklung gGmbH

ZENTRUM FÜR EVALUATION UND METHODEN

RHEINISCHE FRIEDRICH-WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT BONN



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Background, stakeholders and evaluation aims

The ASA program is a dynamic education program for students and young professionals. The basic version of the program comprises the **learning cycle** (preparation, three-month overseas internship, follow-up) and subsequent activity in ASA's network. The ASA program's overarching development goals (2008 program statutes) are as follows:

The ASA program contributes to individuals within our society gaining a better understanding of global interdependency and working towards the goal of global sustainable development.

ASA helps commit future decision-makers in Germany and Europe to political activity that promotes global sustainability.

Apart from these general goals, the ASA program management has formulated additional aims, which have been in place since approximately 2002 (2008 program statutes). These include enabling participants to act as **multipliers** and lobby for sustainable global development, strengthening development education and lobbying organizations by means of **capacity building**, supporting individual commitment to development education by helping individuals **form networks**, facilitating involvement in **participatory political decision-making** and democratic processes by providing the opportunity and scope for decision-making and participation, as well as contributing to **innovation in development education** by trialing new concepts in self-guided learning and the integration of these in pedagogical support programs for development policy communication. Finally, the ASA program aims to contribute to **European cooperation on development education**.

The evaluation presented in this report was put out to tender by InWEnt GmbH as part of the independent evaluation program and awarded to the Center for Evaluation and Methods (ZEM), Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn in September 2009. The evaluation assessed the ASA program according to the Evaluation Criteria of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ, 2006), taking into account the program's development and organization over the 50 years since its foundation. One focus was on assessing the effectiveness of the ASA program throughout its development, with consideration of the goals the program had at various stages. The evaluation was prompted by the occasion of the ASA program's 50th anniversary.

Declared users of the evaluation are the BMZ (in particular, the Departments 111, 114 and 120), other funding bodies, as well as participating German Federal States and InWEnt GmbH as implementing and sponsoring organization. The evaluation report is also intended for ASA board members, for all current and previous ASA participants, as well as for ASA's program partners in Germany and partner countries.

Methods employed

One evaluation strategy was online interviews (including analysis of current situation and networks) with ASA participants of the last 50 years, along with **surveys of a comparison group** of applicants rejected between 2006 and 2008. A total of 1416 individuals participated in the surveys, of which 136 were in the comparison group. Additionally, twelve **interviews were carried out with the program staff and management, as well as the funding bodies and committee members**. Other surveys included ten selected ASA program participants as **case studies**, one **group discussion** with three ASA program participants and a **SWOT analysis** with 13 ASA staff members and volunteers, as well as representatives of InWEnt. Additional **(data) material** specifically related to the questions posed in the evaluation was also included. The reporting tools selected ensured that the perspectives of the various stakeholders over the past 50 years were represented and the evaluation questions were answered in full scope. The mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, group and individual settings, as well the inclusion of the different stakeholders, ensured that the results were validated against each other and the perspectives of all stakeholders were considered.

Selected results

The ASA program originated as a student initiative. After switching sponsoring organizations several times, it has been administered by the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft, InWEnt GmbH's legal predecessor, since 1981. **It has experienced ongoing growth since its foundation, both in terms of the number of participants and in terms of the implementation of sub-programs**, such as the South-North program, ASA-GLEN (Global Education Network of Young Europeans, since 2003) and YLS (Young Leaders for Sustainability, since 2008), which was merged into the program *ASApreneurs - Shaping a Sustainable World* in 2009. Young professionals without academic training have also been able to apply for selected projects since 1984. The introduction of sub-programs is necessary to adapt the ASA program to changes in society and development policy, although they also increase the organizational complexity and the complexity of the program as a whole.

An important shift in the ASA program's 50-year history has been the paradigm shift away from training young professionals in development cooperation to preparing them for development education and as multipliers in Germany. Among the areas affected by this shift are the programs' goals and target group. The differences between the participants over the years in terms of their current professional activities indicate that this paradigm shift is also evident in the participants' career paths. However, often the expectations and associations of the program applicants continue to focus on the project to be carried out during the internship and its success.

Despite structural changes, important aspects of the ASA program, namely the self-responsibility and level at which the participant contributes to the program, have remained in place over the years. The inclusion of the ASA participants in the shaping of the program and decision-making was identified as one of the most important factors for the program's success. Other factors in its success include the

preparation and follow-up stages of the overseas internship, the integration into the ASA network, the learning environment, in particular, the innovative forms of learning and teaching techniques, as well as the strong commitment of the ASA participants to the program. Thanks to ASA's unique combination of learning cycles and networks, no comparable programs could be identified. Barriers to the program's success included lack of staffing, the time-intensive (communication and decision-making) processes associated with the program's collaborative organizational structure, as well as the high complexity of the program. Overall, previous ASA participants assessed the planning and implementation of the teaching cycle positively, and judged the way the program was carried out to be of high quality. Didactic principles and content requirements were largely adhered to in the learning cycle. The program documents also show that participation is actively sought and implemented at many levels in the ASA program, such that many skills in development education are gained not only through the formal program, but also by participating in the network.

The ASA program is well integrated with other development education programs, particularly *ENSA* and *weltwärts* and has strong ties to the development community and its organizations. The ASA program fulfills the German federal government's prerequisites for development education (Concept 159) and also contributes to establishing a global network of partnerships (Millennium goal 8) with its support of professional, but above all, personal contacts.

Overall, participation in the ASA program is a significant step in the development of ASA participants' private and above all professional lives and its effect is evident on various levels. By participating in the ASA program, the participants gain skills and know-how that they can also use in their subsequent careers (output). Training young leadership is not a goal of the ASA program. However, it is illuminating that, of the ASA participants who completed the online survey and had participated in the program between 1960 and 1981, two-thirds have professional, and approximately half have disciplinary, managerial responsibility. Of the surveyed individuals who participated in the ASA program between 1982 and 2002, approximately half have professional, and a third disciplinary, managerial responsibilities. Furthermore, participation in the ASA program influences participants' personal development (Output) and networks (Outcome 2). Examination of the professional and personal commitment of participants in even earlier years showed that the ASA program strengthens long-term and effective involvement as multipliers advocating for global sustainable development in politics, business and society in Germany, and recently, also Europe (Outcome 1). Many previous ASA participants are actively involved in development organizations and development education (Outcome 2). Two-thirds of the surveyed ASA participants described themselves as multipliers advocating for global sustainable development in politics, business and/or society in their various professions. As well circa two-thirds claimed to participate in sustainability projects, introduce development topics in their work or maintain professional ties to organizations that are concerned with social and ecological responsibility.

The contribution to the primary effect in terms of development policy on location was assessed by the participants in the various evaluation interviews as small and unsystematic. However, such an effect is

not the goal, but an unintentional side-effect of the ASA program. The Global Learning campaigns and related public relations activities will contribute to **confronting broader sections of society with development education issues in the future (Impact)**.

The **sustainability** of the goal achievement can be described as long-term in most cases, and at the least, as medium-term. **The ASA network, in particular, has a long-term impact and can serve as a means of involving alumni.** Alumni describe their participation in the ASA program as having had significant effects on their professional careers, their personal development and their professional and non-professional advocacy for sustainable global development, even a long time after completing the program. Examination of the professional and personal involvement of the participants in earlier years shows that the ASA program strengthens long-term and effective involvement as multipliers advocating for global sustainable development in politics, business and society in Germany, and recently, also Europe (Outcome 1).

A clear conclusion as to whether the goals of the ASA program are reached with the highest possible (fiscal) efficiency, has little point here, because neither the use nor the effect of the ASA program, particularly in terms of the multiplier role, can be measured in monetary terms. Due to the small proportion of funding allocated for administration, the small proportion of task management costs compared to the overall program costs, and due to the commitment of volunteers, **it can be assumed that the resources are certainly used effectively.** However, one problem for the continuing quantitative and qualitative work is the program's lack of adequate staffing.

In terms of gender equality within in the ASA program, the proportion of male ASA participants has been at 30% in recent years. The long-term benefits of participating in the ASA program are assessed similarly by men and women. The contribution of men and women to the design of the program can also be described as approximately equal.

Recommendations

Overall, the ASA program's ability was assessed as fulfilling the evaluation criteria. However, the evaluation also identified measures that would contribute to making full use of unexplored potential and maintaining the quality of the ASA program in the long-term.

With the diversification of the ASA program through the introduction of new sub-programs over recent years, **efforts should focus on consolidating the program over coming years.** In light of the staff's already high workload, further sub-programs should not be introduced in coming years without the provision of additional human resources. Apart from establishing the newly introduced programs, attention should be placed on the goals and organization of the South-North program, which has already been in place for some time. An additional focus should be increasing the number of participants already in the workforce. Possible measures for this include strategic partnerships to ensure professional reintegration, possibly also in coordination with ASAprenuers.

To increase the proportion of male program participants, more effort should be made to set up projects in male-dominated professional areas, such as business, engineering and life sciences.

The monitoring and evaluation tools used in the program should be adjusted and streamlined. Future determination of the program goals should take into consideration the analysis of the goals presented in this evaluation.

The facilitation of skills and know-how, as well as international and practical experience by participating in the ASA program, both in the learn cycle and through the network, should be more strongly emphasized in the internal and external presentation of the ASA program. The professionalization and certification of the (practical and methodological) skills gained by participating in the ASA program are a significant component of the program's ability to attract not only students, but also those in the workforce, and are a basis for promoting Germany's higher education profile. Obtaining credit points in Bachelor or Master's programs for participation in the ASA program and the resulting skills should also be investigated if the number of applicants decreases due to the higher workload that students in such courses would experience. Furthermore, the fact that the ASA program aims to involve participants in development education on a long-term basis and is not a program of development cooperation should be communicated more clearly to the outside.

The scope available for participants to contribute to shaping the program and share in decision-making, which is an integral part of the program, should be structured more clearly in some aspects. Here, **more task descriptions and handover procedures** should be introduced to, on the one hand, facilitate the integration of new members and, on the other, prevent loss of know-how due to staff changes. Since the alumni are a great resource for the program (some are employed at high levels, have positive attitude to the program), the exit from **involvement as volunteer in the ASA program should be more clearly structured. Possibilities should be created to reduce the level of time-consuming involvement, while retaining the commitment to the program** (e.g. expert alumni conferences, alumni groups on ASA internal server, mentoring program, planning of large, topic-specific events on global learning).

Involving volunteers requires time and staffing resources of the paid staff, as does the management of the additional challenges, the structuring of learning processes in the network and organizing the alumni. **Appropriately paid and permanent positions for university-educated employees should be provided for these tasks.** In light of the fact that the evaluation showed a fragile staff structure and that the full-time staff members have a high workload, **we recommend that one or more additional positions be provided and existing fixed-term contracts be converted into permanent project positions.** Allocating responsibility for on-going activities in the ASA program to employees with fixed-term project positions endangers the quality of the ASA program.

The position of department 7.03, and thus the ASA program, could be strengthened if the role of ASA within the environment of international exchange preparatory organizations, in particular in development work, could be more clearly defined. **For example, the 7.03 ASA department could be officially mandated to take over the pedagogical supervision (in particular the preparation and**

post-processing) for young people for short overseas stays in developing and transformation countries (as is already in place at ENSA and DED-weltwärts). Responsibility for the preparation and follow-up by development experts would remain with Area 8, the preparation center for InWEnt's development work. Combining both mandates in one organization would increase the opportunities for cooperation and prevent counterproductive competition. Maintaining the program's independence, flexibility and ability to generate its own dynamic is vital for the proper functioning of the ASA program. **Last, but not least, the program advisory board and committee membership should remain in place, to ensure the integration of ASA in InWEnt and the development education and development work community.** Apart from the volunteers' input into the shaping of the program, the most important factor for the program commission is the participation of a leading member of the sponsoring organization. Diverse membership that facilitates the integration of participants from many different political areas (government and non-government development work, universities, business, German Federal States) is a decisive factor for the program advisory board.



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