



Core objective of Ecoselva

The core objective of Ecoselva is to contribute to environmental protection and biodiversity preservation in Global South countries and to promote environmental education in both the Global South and North, making the world "fit for future generations." These contributions primarily aim to raise awareness and promote behavioral changes in both the Global South and North. To achieve these goals, Ecoselva connects initiatives in the Global North with those in the Global South at the level of partner organizations, volunteers and former volunteers, civil society organizations, and government institutions.

History

Ecoselva originated from the Friends of Peru Amazonico e.V., a group of former DED (German development service) development workers who established the organization in 1989. Ecoselva itself was founded in 2008 to support ecological projects within the framework of the weltwärts voluntary service program. Ecoselva's involvement in weltwärts began in 2010, building on long-standing collaborations with partner organizations in Peru. It aims to provide young volunteers with the opportunity for global learning through participation in and support of local environmental projects.

In 2013, Ecoselva took over 18 placement positions and a coordinator in the Dominican Republic from GIZ (German society for international cooperation), expanding the program there.

In 2017, Ecoselva assumed placements from the German *Welthungerhilfe* in India.

The founders of Ecoselva share a common background as DED development workers on a colonization project in the Peruvian rainforest during the 1970s, which contributed to deforestation by resettling highland farmers from the Andes into the rainforest. This experience highlighted that protecting the rainforest requires not only reforestation but also a change in consumption patterns in both the Global South and North.

General goals

We support:

- Rainforest-friendly, agro-ecological farming practices
- Establishing marketing structures for organic products at the regional level
- Adapting small-scale agriculture to climate change
- Sustainable food security and healthy diets (in line with the "Planet Health Diet")
- Improving dietary habits through the establishment of vegetable gardens in schools and homes

- Village development for indigenous and smallholder communities
- Enhancing hygiene and health
- Environmental and foreign language education, particularly in English and German, in schools
- Cooperatives producing organic and fair-trade products
- Promotion of sustainable tourism
- Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially:
 - Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
 - Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
 - Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
 - Goal 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, and halt biodiversity loss

Ecoselva's goals for the weltwärts voluntary service

- Promote equal intercultural exchange
- Enable global learning
- Raise awareness of all forms of discrimination and find ways to address them jointly
- Foster tolerance and empathy in interactions with other cultures
- Encourage engagement with climate change challenges
- Support young people's personal development
- Build cross-national and cross-cultural friendships and networks

We send volunteers to:

- Raise awareness of the global importance of sustainable rainforest and environmental protection
- Demonstrate the significance of sustainable lifestyles for all involved
- Experience and understand the living and working conditions of people
- Strengthen international partnerships
- Contribute to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3, 4, 6, 12, 13, and 15) within the framework of global learning
- Encourage volunteers to apply their experiences and insights upon return in Germany through civic and educational work, embodying global responsibility

We welcome volunteers to:

- Support volunteers' personal development through interpersonal encounters, intercultural exchange, and knowledge transfer
- Raise awareness of the global importance of sustainable rainforest and environmental protection
- Promote equal exchange between Global South and North partners, strengthening existing partnerships
- Empower partner organizations, especially through the engagement of returning volunteers as multipliers
- Raise awareness in German hosting organizations of intercultural collaboration with volunteers

- Encourage former volunteers in both North and South to network, providing valuable insights for development work in their respective countries

Ecoselva's fields of activity

Key tasks to implement Ecoselva's mission include:

- **Awareness-raising to promote socially just and environmentally friendly actions with a focus on sustainable local food security**

Ecoselva can contribute by raising awareness about rainforest and environmental protection in connection with agroecologically grown products. Through the weltwärts volunteer program, Ecoselva helps partner organizations and their target groups understand what German consumers expect from organic product producers in the Global South. Conversely, consumers can become aware of the benefits of buying environmentally friendly products at fair prices. Ecoselva is an active member of the Fair Trade Group in Sankt Augustin, which has been certified as a Fair Trade City.

Another approach is the concept of the "Participatory Guarantee System" (PGS), a local organic certification system, often at the village or regional level. PGS is not certified by third parties but through participatory bodies that include both producers and consumers. PGS strongly focuses on agroecological farming and certifies producers based on stakeholder participation, relying on trust, social networks, and knowledge sharing.

PGS supports local markets with short supply chains and removes the need for costly third-party certification. The PGS approach is complemented by establishing bio-regions/biodistricts to create local circular economies that enhance food security.

Some of Ecoselva's partners in Peru and India are already implementing this concept, supported by volunteers and development cooperation projects from Ecoselva. Ecoselva works with volunteers to promote education on rainforest and environmental protection, social justice in working conditions, and the implementation of PGS.

To develop bio-regions/biodistricts, it is essential to encourage "green thinking" among the local population. Both North-South and South-North volunteers are involved in this process.

Ecoselva contributes to promoting socially just and environmentally sustainable practices in both the Global North and Global South through educational work and support of the PGS concept.

- **Raising awareness for healthy nutrition and improving sanitary living conditions**

Healthy nutrition and sanitary living conditions are significant issues for middle classes in both industrial and developing countries. However, many poor families live under conditions that severely impair family health, particularly for children.

The reasons for poor health conditions often include systemic disadvantages in state health services for marginalized groups and a lack of awareness about the importance of healthy eating and sanitation.

Despite advancements in medicine, tropical diseases like dengue, chikungunya, malaria, and Ebola are on the rise. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical need for awareness in improving sanitary living conditions.

Young people in Germany possess a sound understanding of healthy eating and hygiene, which they can share through awareness-raising initiatives.

Ecoselva provides educational support, consultation, and project funding to improve nutrition and sanitary conditions.

- **Supporting the rights of indigenous groups and small-scale farmers**

Notably in Peru and India, many indigenous communities with diverse languages and cultures often live on the margins of society. Ecoselva supports these communities by involving volunteers in schools with a majority of indigenous students, village development projects, and especially initiatives for indigenous women. Ecoselva also conducts development cooperation projects in India, in Ladakh and Rajasthan, and in Peru.

- **Promoting horizontal knowledge management**

Today, the Global South has a strong base of national experts with substantial knowledge in public administration, private companies, and national NGOs. However, while knowledge is well-connected within international corporations, this is often not the case in public administration and NGOs on a national level, let alone among target groups in projects. While vertical knowledge communication is often organized through training and guidelines, horizontal communication typically occurs through exchanges during personal meetings or social media when strong networking is in place.

Through the weltwärts volunteer program, Ecoselva is well networked and collaborates with around 50 partner organizations in Peru, India, and the Dominican Republic.

To promote horizontal knowledge management, Ecoselva uses the following tools:

Support for NGO networking and their staff on a horizontal level by creating social media platforms, providing training, coaching, and staff support in NGOs

Ecoselva's partnership approach

Ecoselva works in partnership with organizations in Latin America and India. Our actions are guided by the goals and needs of our partners and target groups and the shared goal of global justice. We strengthen our partners to advocate for their own goals and rights, helping them build on their existing experiences.

Mutual learning between volunteers, partner organization staff, and host families

Volunteers, partner organization staff, and host families bring personal, social, and religious values that shape their behavior in various ways, some of which are similar, others different. The aim of mutual learning is to understand cultural values and appreciate their significance in a social context. Recognizing and respecting others' values fosters tolerance for unfamiliar perspectives, allowing collaboration.

Ecoselva places particular importance on preserving nature and a healthy environment through conscious human behavior. Many young people in Germany have developed a strong environmental awareness, and Ecoselva expects its volunteers to carry this positive commitment to environmental conservation into their work with partner organizations and host families. When differing views arise, constructive dialogue is encouraged, benefiting all parties involved.

In recent years, the number of German volunteers adopting vegetarian or vegan diets has noticeably increased. This positive shift toward sustainable eating habits has sparked dialogue with seminar venues, both in Germany and in host countries. Ecoselva's goal is for volunteers to become ambassadors of sustainable change.

General impact goals of the weltwärts volunteer program

The weltwärts program fosters future societal multipliers and leaders through North-South and South-North exchanges. Volunteers gain social skills that enable them to communicate and work with people from different cultures, fostering tolerance of diverse values. This promotes global learning, allowing volunteers to develop social responsibility and a holistic approach to thinking (social, economic, and intercultural) within their own societies.

Goals for alumni work

Weltwärts volunteers contribute to initiating learning processes upon return, highlighting global interconnections, and fostering responsibility for a fair, humane, environmentally friendly, and peaceful world.

Achieving these goals requires establishing a network for alumni to share experiences in various life phases (education, family formation, career, volunteer engagement) and to continue developing. Ecoselva supports these goals through:

- Disseminating information on weltwärts alumni activities
- Promoting alumni participation in development-oriented educational events
- Involving alumni as facilitators in all seminars
- Building a network via MS Office 365, Facebook, and Instagram
- Supporting Ecoselva's public relations through alumni contributions

- Supporting alumni-led initiatives with Ecoselva's resources
- Connecting North and South volunteers
- Engaging alumni in partnerships, such as the climate partnership between Sankt Augustin and Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic