

That's why kindergarten partnerships are important

We all live in our One World. This one world is diverse. Kindergarten partnerships between institutions in the Global South and in the Global North are an enrichment for everyone involved. Through encounters and exchanges, they enable children, educators and families to learn "in the world" in real terms instead of learning "about the world" in theory. International kindergarten partnerships can:

- · inspire and excite
- · encourage reflection and rethinking
- question and unsettle known worldviews
- open learning spaces
- promoting »world awareness« and acting in solidarity
- encouraging intercultural exchange on equal terms

Take a look at the world and discover similarities and differences together with the children, families and colleagues. Get to know different realities of life and new perspectives. In order to be able to shape our world together in a fair, sustainable and future oriented way, we have to understand global connections, adopt different perspectives and understand and critically question our own role in global society.

In an international kindergarten partnership, personal encounters and joint discovery and learning come first. With a view to sustainable development, early childhood education institutions (kindergarten) can use their educational work to lay the foundation for sustainable thinking and action in order to sensitize children as early as possible to a globally fair and sustainable world design.

The ability to think outside the box and face-to-face encounters within the framework of an international kindergarten partnership gives the children a playful and valuable insight into other cultures, realities of life and traditions. At the same time, our perception of our own culture and reality can change if we take a closer look at it in order to tell others about it. What is important to the children? What do you want to present and make visible?

International educational partnerships can help broaden children's horizons and give them a global perspective. By specifically looking for partners abroad and developing joint projects, Kindergarten teams can promote intercultural understanding and cooperation. The focus is on the exchange of knowledge, experience and perspectives on an equal footing. This distinguishes a kindergarten partnership from a sponsorship, where the focus is on financial support.



What does »Global South« & »Global North« mean?

The terms "Global South" and "Global North" are not a geographical location, because Australia, for example, also belongs to the "Global North". Rather, they have a political and socio-economic significance. The differences between countries of the »Global North« and »Global South« have historical, social and cultural causes and are often the result of colonialism, exploitation and inequality in the world economy.

The »Global North« refers to the richer, industrialized countries in North America, Europe or Japan.

These countries generally have a better quality of life, higher per capita income, greater political power and are often also politically more stable than countries in the »Global South«. The poorer, mostly less industrialized countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania belong to the Global South. These countries often have lower living standards, lower per capita incomes and less political power, and they may also be affected by political instability, poverty and the effects of the environmental crisis.

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»Don't walk behind me, maybe I'm not leading. Don't go infront of me, maybe I won't follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.«
Albert Camus

How do I find my partner kindergarten?

There are countless ways to find a partner kindergarten. Sometimes educators meet educators from other countries while traveling. They become friends, a connection develops – and that then becomes a partnership. Professional or private contacts can also be helpful: Do you know people who live here but come from a country that interests you? Or do you know people who are or have been on their way to the federal voluntary service, as Weltwärts volunteers, development workers or business travelers in countries of their choice?

Are there families in the kindergarten with a migration history? Ask the parents if someone can get them in touch with a kindergarten in the Global South. Maybe parents even want to get involved in setting up the partnership.

Many cities and municipalities have partner cities in the Global South, some even have climate partnerships. Churches also often have worldwide contacts. Ask the regional world shop whether there are direct connections. Alternatively, you can also contact the EPiZ in Reutlingen. There is a specialist promoter for international educational partnerships and contacts in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

TIP At the beginning of a partnership, clarify your own motivation in your team. For example, ask yourself questions like:

- Why do we want a partnership?
- What goals do we associate with it?
- Who benefits from the partnership and how?

Simply taking part because other kindergartens have a partnership, it looks good or is exotic is not enough for a partnership to last.

What are the first steps?

Once the first contact has been made, the initiation phase begins. Now a team of at least two coordinators should come together in each kindergarten. Is it possible to get to know each other for the first time by meeting via digital media? If not, use e-mail, SMS or the classic exchange of letters. Is there even the possibility of visiting each other, for example as part of a municipal partner-ship or climate partnership?

After getting to know each other for the first time, both sides clarify what expectations and goals they associate with the kindergarten partnership. »This is particularly important«, knows Kafalo Sekongo. "Because if you don't do that right at the beginning, you run the risk of improvising. Then old patterns of behavior can arise – for example the typical helper syndrome: The german kindergartens collects donations and send them to the kindergarten in the Global South. This does not result in a partnership, but in a sponsorship«.

That is why this question is so important: who benefits from the partnership and how? What can we learn from each other? Where are the similarities, where are the differences? Each facility can bring valuable experience to the partnership. Not only the educators, but also the children, the parents and the kindergarten management should be involved.

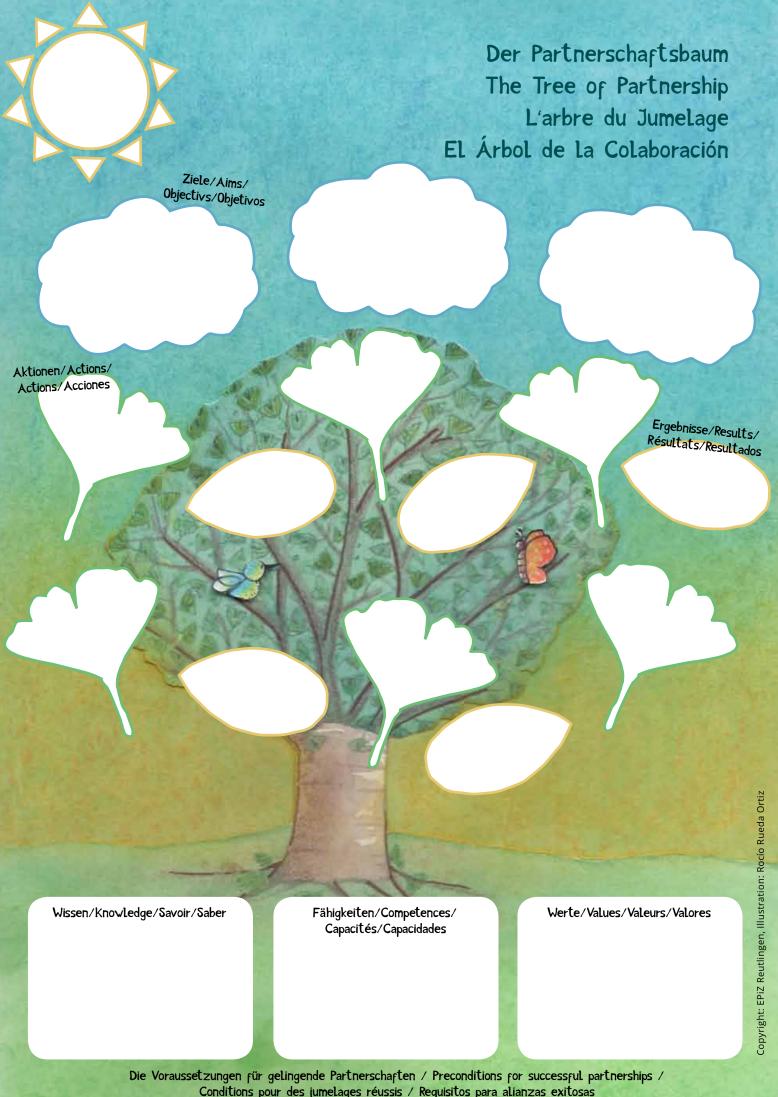
The first exchange between the two partner kindergartens best ends in a joint, formal agreement that both sides sign. It gives the partnership a meaningful and serious foundation. This is also beneficial for the kindergarten management and/or supporting organization supports the project accordingly.

TIP: Poster »partnership tree«

The poster shows a gingko tree with leaves and fruits, its leaves are a symbol of friendship. Here the goals (in the clouds), actions (in the leaves), results (in the fruits) and prerequisites for the success of the partnership in the root area can be described. The poster can be publicly displayed in the day-care center and thus make the partnership visible to everyone. You can copy the poster in four languages on the next page.

The kindergarten teams can also design their individual partnership tree. You are welcome to use the texts from the template in different languages.





How do we deal with prejudice?

Prejudices, clichés and stereotypes are one of the biggest challenges in a kindergarten partnership. At the same time, a kindergarten partnership is an exciting opportunity to learn and develop in this regard – on both sides! Because the question is not whether we have prejudices or not.

We all have prejudices and they are not inherently bad. They can give us orientation in our everyday life. Prejudices are mostly blanket judgments that are linked to an evaluation and that contain generalizations and socially constructed attributions. However, it is important to reflect on one's own prejudices and, above all, to pay attention to which ideas we consciously or unconsciously pass on to the children.

In order for both partners to perceive each other as equals and to be able to discard old, intellectual hierarchies, it is important to check whether the unconscious images in one's own head match reality. It starts with the language and the choice of words. It is therefore important that both sides have the openness to recognise, question and rethink their own, mostly unconscious, assumptions.

As part of an international kindergarten partnership, it is therefore also important to deal with the anti-bias approach (anti = against and bias = prejudice, prejudice, one-sidedness) and the goals of prejudice-conscious education. For this purpose, the Institute for Situational Approach - Specialist Department for Children's Worlds in Berlin (see list of links on page 12) provides four main goals:

Goal 1: Strengthen all children in their identities.

Goal 2: Enable all children to experience diversity.

Goal 3: Support and encourage critical thinking about prejudice, justice and injustice.

Ziel 4: Promote and support taking action against injustice and discrimination.

How does the partnership stay alive?

It is not uncommon for kindergarten partnerships to get to start with vigour and enthusiasm – but peter out after a few years. That is a pity, because by then both sides have already invested a lot of time and energy. But that need not to be the case. Here are a few tips to help put the partnership on a lasting and sustainable footing:

Draw up a joint agreement about the goals and values of the partnership and have it signed by both sides.

Make sure that there is a coordinator team of at least two people on both sides. Name it something like "Partnerships Inc." or "Place/Country Name Club" or something like that.

Make sure that the kindergarten management and the provider take the partnership seriously and support it. It would be ideal if the coordinators were given official working hours for this and had a budget for it. But that is often still a wish.

"If you stop cycling, the bike tips over," says Kafalo Sékongo. His advice: If possible, do a joint project with your partner kindergarten every year. Even if it's small! It's better to lower your expectations than to do nothing. Even seemingly small projects can be incredibly exciting for children. You can find ideas for this on the following page.

Make the partnership visible in your kindergarten! For example via an exhibition, a showcase, an information table or a partnership corner. You can also report about it online via photos, blog posts and videos on your website and in your social media channels.

Provide support. Involve not only the kindergarten management, but also the parents, the support association (if there is one) or external (educational) partners such as one-world shops.







Project ideas for KITA partnerships

On this double page you will find five ideas for projects that kindergartens can implement together in a partnership. It is important that something happens regularly - at least once a year or more often a small activity. Even seemingly small projects can be really exciting for the children and a real highlight!

1. Our kindergarten introduces itself!

At the beginning of a partnership, it is important that the kindergartens introduce each other. The children should of course be involved: What is important to the children? What do you want to show? Do you want to take photos of your place? Or capture the rooms in self-painted pictures? Do you want to show a typical daily routine on a large poster? Or send a site plan or floor plan of the kindergarten?

At the level of the educators and parents, information such as the number of children and colleagues, the religious orientation, the concept of the kindergarten, the location and the framework conditions and much more can also be relevant. Media or materials that the partner can use for a partnership exhibition are ideal. For example, a large poster with photos and basic information about the kindergarten.

2. This is how I imagine your kindergarten

Parallel to or in addition to the self-presentation of the kindergarten, the children of the respective partner kindergarten can of course also draw their own ideas of the life of the other children: What does the landscape or area around the partner kindergarten look like? What wild animals live there? What do the residential buildings look like and what are the streets like? What do people eat there and how are they dressed? All of this can be imagined – and then compared with reality. This is how we usually see where our (unconscious) images do not correspond to reality.

TIP: You can also use the »A view from the window« theme. Children can draw, photograph or describe their very personal view out of a window as a story.



3. Plant together ...

Kindergarten gardens are great for children anyway: here they can connect with nature with all their senses, observe the course of a plant from seed to fruit and experience themselves as creative and self-effective. It is particularly nice when both partner have or create a garden and exchange ideas about it. Possible questions from the children could be:

- What plants do you grow?
- How often and how much does it rain where you
- How warm is it where you are right now?
- What seasons do you have?

The following applies: there is room for a garden even in the smallest kindergarten. For example for a few pots on the window sill or plant bags next to a sunny wall. At least herbs and salads can be grown in it. Another alternative might be to plant a partnership tree at both kindergartens. This is a beautiful symbol of the connection growing and thriving.

TIP: sevengardens

sevengardens is a worldwide project of so-called dyer's gardens. The goal is to grow plants together with children that can be used to produce natural colors. This concept combines many aspects of education in a particularly accessible way: the children are gardening and experiencing nature with all their senses. In addition, they learn old handicraft techniques of paint production. And finally, they can get creative with the colors and express themselves creatively. Such a project is not easy. But in cooperation with a partner kindergarten it is certainly even more exciting than it already is. http://sevengardens.eu

4. Our favorite X

"What do you like best?" This question can be asked in many ways: The children can describe their favorite game. They can get a recipe of their favorite food, draw their favorite place, sing their favorite song and record it as a voice message. Or they can present their favorite book via video. Music and songs provide wonderful access to the culture and language of the partner kindergarten.

In addition, the children of both kindergartens can exchange pictures, recipes, audio or video recordings and much more. To us adults, that might sound like a small thing. But it is very exciting for children to discover the world of the partner children in this way. Especially when real, hand-painted pictures come all the way from Africa, Asia or Latin America to Germany ...

TIP Learningboxes Within the framework of the "Treffpunkt Welt" project. EPiZ Reutlingen provides so-called learning boxes for kindergarten partnerships, which can be borrowed. This includes, for example, materials for the prejudice-conscious education and training as well as boxes for each continent with children's books by authors living there. Also included are a number of special items. Education officers from the "Education Meets Development" program selected them with a view to their country of origin and tell their personal stories about it. You can find more information about the learning boxes at: www.epiz.de/de/medienservice/lernkisten

5. Celebrations here and there

"What festivals do you actually celebrate? Do you also celebrate Christmas or birthdays, for example? And if so, how? What other celebrations do you have?" Questions like these can be an opportunity for an exciting exchange between partners. Depending on the culture, tradition and religion of the country or the region of the partner kindergarten, there may be similarities, but there are also many exciting differences to discover. The children can explore these in a playful way – for example by describing the symbols, meanings, rituals, recipes, songs, stories and much more that are associated with a festival.

6. Create an exhibition

Water, games, garden, plastic, nutrition, climate, friendship, happiness - there is a variety of topics that are of interest to children and adults from all over the world. How about a joint project on one of these topics? You can show the shared experiences, thoughts and perspectives, differences and special features in an exhibition.

7. Tell & invent stories

Stories are everywhere! Which stories are told in the kindergarten? How and by whom are they counted? Is there a story that the children in the partner kindergarten would like to tell each? Develop a story or even a picture story with the children of the partner kindergarten and your children. Or read a multilingual picture book together and document the children's ideas and thoughts.



The goal of a kindergarten partnership. The view from the Global North ...

eople in the »Global North« have a rather outdated, colonial- influenced idea of the »Global South«. This notion is mainly maintained by the media. Through the choice of their narratives, images and words, they convey a strange picture of life in the Global South. An example from Germany is an amusement park in Saxony-Anhalt, through which the so-called »Congo Bongo Train« runs a so-called Africa Train. Along the railway line, the »journey through the land of the cannibals« goes through strange scenes and ugly wooden figures that dehumanize black people and portray them as cannibals.

Socio-economic differences also play a major role. As a result, latent but often outright racism is widespread. In this way, children grow into a world in which the people and cultures of the Global North look down on those of the Global South. A feeling of superiority characterizes relations with the Global South and thus impairs cooperation on an equal footing. Conversely, the people in the

> Global South have a colonial-influenced idea of the Global North. For example, they think that all Europeans or Ger-

mans are rich.

The complex, asymmetrical situation between the two sides requires deep, broad-based educational work that goes beyond formal education. Through a kindergarten partnership, educators can enable children to have a normal, untainted relationship between the Global North and the Global South right from the start, in which the children can interact and learn from each other regardless of their initial situation.

»A kindergarten partnership is about taking preventive action. Educators should break down negative images and preconceived notions about other peoples as early as possible«.

A kindergarten partnership is about taking preventive action. Negative images and preconceived notions about other peoples that may have been conveyed at home, on the playground or through children's books should be dismantled as early as possible. This is easier with young children than with adults.

Discrimination, feelings of superiority or even hatred should of course be nipped in the bud in a kindergarten partnership. For example, it is important that educators, in their function as role models, pay attention to their choice of words. Because words are followed by deeds. In addition, the kindergarten from the Global North should resist the "helper syndrome" - otherwise a partnership will quickly become a sponsorship. Instead, the children should learn as early as possible to perceive, respect and appreciate the world in all its diversity. In game situations, they should understand the interdependence of countries in the Global North and Global South and see themselves as individual pieces of a large puzzle. It should be clear to everyone that the whole picture can only come through cooperation and communication with other children in the world.

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»International KITA partnerships are a dialogue that opens learning spaces and changes us«.

There are countries, places, people, traditions and ways of life in the Global South that are very different from those in the Global North. There is a cultural richness that opens the boundaries of our imagination and shows us diverse perspectives on a "good life" – the "Buen Vivir" of the indigenous people of Abya Yala (that's what they call their continent, which we know as South America). There are ways of life that are wonderfully simple.

In Chile, for example, there are kindergartens that are made of clay, straw, wood and stones. There are often no special materials or modern technology available for the educational work. People do not see the original, simple and natural way of life as poverty, but their traditional knowledge and their traditional way of life and knowledge in harmony with nature makes them rich. There are also kindergartens in the city, that very poor children go to, where the educators know that their job is to give them a lot of love and security. And that is their wealth. And there are kindergartens that are comparable to well-equipped facilities in Germany.

If a kindergarten in Germany can exchange ideas with a kindergarten

in the Global South, it can only be enriching. It opens our eyes to wonderful and astonishing worlds, to diversity and simplicity or to a lot in common.

A partnership project is about learning from and with one another. Similarities and differences can be observed and re-

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flected on together with the children. We work on prejudices and stereotypes. We get to know each other. In an equal encounter at eye level, both sides can learn a lot from each other.

Such an exchange not only enables the children to discover new things, but also to look at what they know in a different way: their own way of life in the family and in the kindergarten, their surroundings, their small world. You can recognize yourself as unique and special. And when they share this with a child from another continent, their reality takes on a special glow that fills them with pride. This practice of recognizing oneself in the other is what we call »alterity«.

On the one hand, alterity can help us to open ourselves to the diversity and richness of other traditions; on the other hand, we can counteract prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination through a world-conscious attitude. Through an educational partnership, we can reflect on our way of life and traditions in comparison to those of others and open ourselves to the differences and similarities that unite us as human beings. Here we have to make progress in a society that is moving towards the diversity of people, languages and traditions, towards interculturality.

Interculturality is the reflected and critical dialogue between cultures, through which we enrich each other. This is why international kindergarten partnerships are so important. They enable a symmetrical dialogue that is so much easier for children. A dialogue that opens learning spaces and changes us.





What understanding and what expectations do the partners of the Global South have? Conditions for a successful partnership to shape a fair future together.

In today's world, it is almost impossible to live independently. Whether we are in the countries of the Global South or the Global North - everywhere the connection between people and societies ensures lively exchange as well as social, economic and intercultural dynamics ...

Our recent history has been marked by conflicts of varying degrees, including the war between Russia and Ukraine – with the indirect involvement of several Western countries. As a result, a new world order is unfolding before our eyes. In this situation, an educational partnership proves to be a remedy. It is an opportunity to lay the foundation for a better world. They enable people to see globalization from a positive perspective. Global learning supports them in this.

But how do the kindergarten partners in the Global South perceive such a partnership? What do you expect?

What benefit can they derive from it? For this article, we interviewed around sixty teachers from kindergartens and primary schools in Benin. The facilities selected are located in both urban and more rural areas. Half of the respondents have less than ten years of professional experience, the other half more than 10 years.

For an educational partnership with quality

A partnership just for the sake of partnership - without the serious will to exchange on an equal footing - makes no sense for the institutions in the Global South. A serious, high-quality partnership is needed between kindergartens in the Global South and those in the Global North, based on the following pillars:

- The interdependence between the Global North and the Global South should be recognized. It is often assumed that the Global South is (unilaterally) dependent on the Global North. This inequality is sometimes given the face of humane "solidarity", but it is an approach with negative consequences.
- All partners involved share responsibility for global challenges.
- The partnership needs a vision that goes beyond supporting institutions in the Global South in the sense of "helping".
- An exchange must be made possible between the partners, in which every child can ask open questions about the future of the world and see the world from new perspectives.
- The partnership should be understood by everyone involved as an opportunity with real added value.
- It should be a win-win partnership in every respect.
- Mutual commitment to quality.

The expectations of educators in the Global South can be summarized as follows:

Through the partnership, the institutions mutually stimulate each other through programmes, methods, teaching and learning strategies.

"We often lack suitable didactic materials and (technical) equipment. How do our partners deal with that?"

There is an exchange about the different cultures, traditions and ways of life. Everyone in the partnership can discover new things.

Cooperation serves as a basis for peace and understanding between children and between adults.

The partnership promotes solidarity through exchange and mutual visits.

The partners learn from each other. For example on the following questions: How do all children get access to quality education? How can you mobilize the public sector and state actors as well as other partners for kindergartens? How to identify, analyze and plan educational needs for learner well-being and country development? How can an appropriate framework for the development of children between the ages of four and six be designed? What are the living conditions of children and teachers like? Which activities with high symbolic appeal and intercultural significance can we implement together?

An educational partnership should include broad and coherent actions to create a closer connection between children and adults. Through the partnership, the child-

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ren not only get to know the partner kindergarten better, but also their own kindergarten. It also enables children to take initiative from a young age. All actors in the partnership then become one big family and broaden their horizons.

»I believe in the North-South partnership! The earlier, the more effective! The sooner, the more sustainable! The sooner, the more constructive for a better future«.



imprint

This publication shows different perspectives on the topic of international kindergarten partnerships and we hope that with this publication "Treffpunkt Welt" and the supplementary materials we will contribute to the successful practical implementation and effectiveness of international kindergarten partnerships.

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Read on, think further!

FaireKITA-NRW's Namibia project: https://www.faire-kita-nrw.de/namibia.html

Specialist center for children's worlds for prejudice-conscious education and upbringing: https://situationssatz.de/ fachstelle-kinderwelten/

Impulses for global learning in kindergarten: www. kita-global.de

You can find a variety of supplementary materials on the project »Treffpunkt Welt« – designing international daycare partnerships at:

thttps://www.epiz.de/de/Treffpunkt-Welt



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