

Our Understanding of International Partnerships¹ at the YMCA in Germany

With this partnership framework, we set out a shared foundation for the international collaboration of the CVJM movement in Germany. It is intended to provide orientation, safeguard standards, and at the same time foster critical reflection and the ongoing development of our partnerships.

Our Core Convictions

Our partnerships within CVJM² with YMCAs are rooted in God's love for all people and in the Christian faith that compels us to make God's vision of a just world tangible. Our understanding of partnership stands in continuity with the YMCA's foundational documents, beginning with the Paris Basis and extending to current agreements such as Vision 2030.

We understand partnership as a contribution to a just and equitable world and as an expression of our responsibility, solidarity, and lived faith. In strengthening young people, we align our actions with global challenges such as climate justice, the realisation of human rights, and the promotion of peace, democracy, and participation.

What We Mean by Partnership

We understand partnership as a binding collaboration, jointly owned and accountable, between the YMCA in Germany and partner YMCAs. Rooted in trust, it draws strength from different experiences and contexts and benefits all parties. Our partnerships are long-term by design, usually involve several coordinated activities, and function as mutual learning and development processes where goals are set and delivered as equals.

Our Partnership Ethos

Rooted in the belief that every person bears the image of God (cf. YMCA Germany 2023, *Willkommenskultur*³), our partnerships are guided by the inviolable dignity of all people. We adopt a humble and learning posture that seeks to confront and unlearn the historical legacies of inequality and colonial patterns of thought and action. Recognising their continuing impact within our partnerships, we embrace self-critical engagement as essential to transformation.

We aim to embody solidarity, mutual respect, forgiveness, and reconciliation—ensuring these values are reflected in tangible practice.

Our Goals in Partnership Work

As part of the worldwide YMCA movement, we pursue a relationship-centred approach to partnership.

¹ This understanding refers to partnerships of YMCA Germany within the global YMCA movement and does not include other valuable forms of international cooperation within the YMCA. It may also serve as a framework for partnerships between YMCA Germany and external organisations.

² When using the abbreviation CVJM, we refer specifically to the YMCA movement in Germany. The abbreviation YMCA refers to international partners, regardless of how the acronym appears in the respective national language.

³ CVJM Deutschland (2023): *Willkommenskultur im CVJM – Ein Selbstverständnis*. Kassel. Online verfügbar unter: <https://www.cvjm.de/grundsatzpapiere> (Zugriff: 16.09.2025)

We are committed to strengthening the YMCA together, fostering international collaboration, and sharing the Christian faith and everyday life with one another.

Our partnerships seek to:

- Strengthen the identity of YMCA Germany as part of the global YMCA by consciously integrating global perspectives into our work.
- Make partnerships visible and effective across all areas of the YMCA movement.
- Enable global learning processes through which we learn from one another and act together for justice and peace, with a view to a world renewed by God.
- Share resources and access to foster mutual growth and sustainable development across the worldwide YMCA movement.

Structures and Policies – How We Shape Partnerships

Our partnerships are aligned with the agreements of the World YMCA and the Area Alliances of YMCAs, situating them within the wider international YMCA structures. Cooperation with existing YMCA partnerships in partner countries is coordinated accordingly. All partnerships within YMCA Germany are based on this shared understanding of partnership and form part of a coherent and coordinated approach, which may be further detailed in written partnership agreements.

Partnership work within YMCA Germany follows a clear and coordinated distribution of roles:

- YMCA Germany carries responsibility for coordination with the international structures of the YMCA movement (World YMCA, Area Alliances of YMCAs, and their working groups) and for the overarching partnership strategy within the German YMCA movement.
- Member Associations (MGVs) bear thematic responsibility for their partnerships, coordinate with their local associations, and keep YMCA Germany informed of significant developments.
- Structural and process-related issues are jointly discussed and agreed.

Within the working group *YMCA Worldwide*, the Member Associations and YMCA Germany jointly coordinate partnership activities in consultation with the Board. Together they develop strategies, establish shared commitments, and design measures for further development. The outcomes of this work are reflected in the relevant partnership agreements.

Partnerships are shaped with awareness of power dynamics and evolve through continuous shared learning. Our partnership work adheres to recognised standards of international cooperation, including:

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs⁴) and the YMCA's Vision 2030⁵

⁴ United Nations (2015): *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.

⁵ World YMCA (2022): *Vision 2030 – Empowering young people, transforming communities*. Geneva: World YMCA.

- Transparency principles⁶ and ethical communication guidelines
- The Code of Conduct for Development Cooperation⁷
- The Code of Conduct in Humanitarian Assistance⁸
- Educational and safeguarding standards for international youth exchanges, volunteer services, joint events, and other measures (covering inclusion, protection from abuse of power and misconduct, and safeguarding from sexualised violence)
- Recognised standards of ethical fundraising⁹

Forms of Partnership Engagement

We are committed to shaping the YMCA together in all its diversity, strengthening international collaboration, and sharing Christian faith and life in community. Our partnerships take shape through a variety of forms of engagement, including:

- **Encounters and exchanges**, such as youth exchanges, international volunteer services, workcamps, events, camps, partnership visits, worship services, and online formats that foster intercultural and ecumenical exchange.
- **Training, workshops, and capacity building**, aimed at strengthening leadership, organizational development, and project development—contributing to overall movement strengthening.
- **International programs**, including participation in global YMCA initiatives to strengthen the worldwide movement—such as the Change Agent Programme.
- **Collaborative work on key focus areas**, such as Vision 2030, alongside exchange on best practices and ecumenical perspectives within the global YMCA community.
- **Global learning and education work** in Germany.
- **Advocacy**, by amplifying the voices of our partners and integrating their concerns into our political engagement and public discourse.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We regularly review and evaluate our partnerships to understand their impact, sustainability, and quality, and to promote their continuous development. Our evaluation processes are based on recognised standards and are designed to be participatory, engaging relevant YMCA structures and contexts.

⁶ Transparency International Germany e.V. (n.d.): *Initiative Transparent Civil Society*. Available online at: <https://www.transparency.de/mitmachen/initiative-transparente-zivilgesellschaft> (accessed: 16 September 2025).

⁷ VENRO (2008): *Code of Conduct for Development Cooperation*. Berlin: VENRO.

⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) / International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (1994): *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*. Geneva: IFRC.

⁹ German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) (2024): *Donation Seal Guidelines*. Berlin: DZI. Available online at: <https://www.dzi.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/DZI-SpS-Leitlinien.pdf> (accessed: 16 September 2025).



With a focus on learning and impact, we assess changes in both attitudes and perspectives, as well as in the joint activities and projects carried out together. The lessons learned serve to deepen and improve our partnerships, encourage innovation, and set new shared goals.