

# Workshop Documentation

## PROMOTING YOUNG TALENT IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly difficult for international cooperation actors to find suitable candidates, especially those with experience abroad and management skills. cinfo is calling for a **coordinated call for action to sustain young talent to secure the future workforce** in our sector.

On Friday, 10 February 2023, representatives from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Federal Department of Economic Affairs Education and Research (FDEAER), Swiss NGOs, foundations, training institutions, international organisations based in Switzerland, young professionals, and Swiss politicians gathered for a workshop to co-create a call for action. This document shares the results from the three main collaborative parts of the [workshop](#): the **World Cafe**, the **Call for action** and finally the **Conclusion and general remarks**.

## WORLD CAFE: DEEPEN ASPECTS OF YOUNG TALENT PROMOTION

### OVERVIEW

During the World Cafe: Deepen Aspects of Young Talent Promotion, all attendees participated in forming four working groups to discuss the following predefined topics:

#### TOPIC 1

Do we still need talent promotion programmes, taking the changing roles in the IC sector into consideration (what are the roles of Swiss-based/global north professionals and young talent in the future?)

#### TOPIC 2

What are obstacles for IC organisations to create young talent programmes/positions/ initiatives? And solutions?

#### TOPIC 3

What are ideas for new ways of promoting young talent in IC?

#### TOPIC 4

What is/was expected from you to enter IC? What are the current stumbling blocks for youth interested in a career in IC? What are your needs? (Youth Group)

### OUTPUTS

#### TOPIC 1

Do we still need talent promotion programmes, taking the changing roles in the IC sector into consideration (what are the roles of Swiss-based/global north professionals and young talent in the future?)

- Talent development programmes are **useful and necessary** because they provide field experience in various settings. However, they should be contextually differentiated between the humanitarian and development sectors.
- Organisations face a **cost-benefit** dilemma as on one side, there is no guarantee that the young talent will remain with the organisations in the long term and on the other side, organisations may not have the resources to make a job offer to youth programme participants.
- Career changers ("quereinsteiger") are also becoming important actors to be taken into account. Atypical careers should be further considered and the relationship between the private and public sectors (new specific needs in IC) should be strengthened.

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### TOPIC 2

What are obstacles for IC organisations to create young talent programmes/positions/ initiatives?  
And solutions ?

#### 1. OBSTACLES

- The inability of IC organisations to **include** young talents in mandates (e.g. SDC calls for tenders).
- The necessity to keep overheads as low as possible, as private **donors are reluctant** to include talent development costs in their projects. Without external funding, it is difficult to cover the costs of talent development.
- The **lack of resources** to properly mentor and support young talent during their assignments.
- The minimum wage required by **cantonal regulations** makes it difficult to offer internships longer than 6 months.

#### 2. SOLUTIONS

- Introduce **minimum standards for talent development** (like for PSEAH or Security) and to adopt a **sectoral approach**.
- The **promotion of young talent in SDC calls** for proposals should be **made possible and positively assessed**.
- Talent promotion **needs to become a priority** in IC organisations..
- Pooling resources between organisations for talent promotion could be helpful

### TOPIC 3

What are ideas for new ways of promoting young talent in IC?

#### 1. FIND NEW AND ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES AND WAYS OF FUNDING

- Integrate programmes as part of academic studies and collaborate with educational institutions (e.g. NADEL model).
- Diversify talent programmes and use existing funding to potentially increase the number of young people supported by a programme. Invest not only in expensive programmes such as the JPO, but also in cheaper models.

#### 2. DEVELOP YOUNG TALENT IN THE WORKPLACE

- E.g. through leadership and mentoring, organisations need to take more responsibility/ownership for these programmes and the young people.

#### 3. ATTRACT PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE THE SECTOR (QUEREINSTEIGER)

- Potentially considering a talent programme explicitly for this target group.

#### 4. CHANGE REQUIREMENTS TO ALLOW FOR CAREERS FOR PEOPLE WITHOUT TERTIARY EDUCATION.

### TOPIC 4

What is/was expected from you to enter IC? What are the current stumbling blocks for youth interested in a career in IC? What are your needs? (Youth Group)

#### 1. THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE SECTOR TOWARDS YOUNG PEOPLE

- Young talent must already have international experience.
- Young people are expected to accept any entry level offer ("take whatever you get").

#### 2. STUMBLING BLOCKS FOR YOUTH INTERESTED IN IC

- The questioning of IC in general (its meaningfulness).
- Only "support" functions (communication, event management) rather than "thematic" functions (project management) are offered as a first types of experience, which limits the acquisition of relevant experience for IC.
- The insecurity caused by the risk of gaps in the Swiss social security system due to the nature of IC work (short-term assignments).

#### 3. NEEDS EXPRESSED BY THE GROUP

- Make the sector more transparent and accountable.
- Promote a culture of learning and "failing forward".
- Improve communication with young people. This should include tailored outreach (according to profile).

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### DISCUSSION ON THE CALL FOR ACTION

#### OVERVIEW

The first draft of a Call for Action was presented to all participants with the following common understanding supported by all stakeholders present at the workshop:

- Existing programmes for young professionals are essential for gaining sector-specific experience abroad.
- There is a need to explore new ways of developing talent, considering the changing roles of professionals in the global South/North.

<b>Swiss government: FDFA (SDC &amp; AFM, SECO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain the level of contributions for the existing programs such as UNYV/JPO/Nadel contributions</li><li>• Support the possibilities for Swiss Partners to include young professionals in their proposals</li><li>• Encourage its partners to offer possibilities for young professionals, specifically in the humanitarian sector (ICRC/MSF)</li><li>• The Humanitarian Aid Unit to intensify their programs for newcomers</li></ul>
<b>Swiss NGOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invest in mentoring/coaching for interns/young professionals; allow their young professionals to gain experiences in programs abroad</li><li>• Negotiate with donors to put young professionals into tenders as is expected in the private sector</li></ul>
<b>Foundations and private sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Run internal programs and fund external programs for young professionals such as for example Fondation Botnar's Young Changemaker Program, SDG Youth Program by Mercator Foundation</li></ul>
<b>Training institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer courses with practical experiences in transition countries. More of the courses should incorporate compulsory internships abroad</li><li>• Do more tracer studies for monitoring career entry/paths</li></ul>
<b>International organisations based in Switzerland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer clearer paths for young talent and pay interns in Geneva, for those that still do not</li></ul>
<b>Students / Young professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be active and try to get as much exposure as possible through voluntary work in associations, youth initiatives, internships, university tandem programs, exchange semesters etc. to develop relevant skills (including languages) for working in international cooperation</li></ul>
<b>Swiss Politicians</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be aware of the importance of promoting young Swiss professionals into this field and support the government to continue funding existing and innovative programs for Swiss and the youth in countries where Switzerland is active</li></ul>

#### OUTPUTS

The following points from the first draft Call for Action were challenged and new inputs mentioned:

<b>Swiss government: FDFA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain or increase the level of contributions.</li><li>• Raise awareness and sensitivity/importance of the issue through concerted stakeholder action.</li></ul>
<b>Swiss NGOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As young talents are usually not well paid, there should be a package of additional support (e.g. coaching, training).</li></ul>
<b>Foundations and private sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Philanthropic foundations ("Förderstiftungen") mainly fund activities in the Global South. Finding a foundation willing to invest in talent development programmes for Swiss talent is difficult.</li></ul>
<b>Training institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The usefulness of tracer studies is recognised and valued. The obstacle is again the question of which actors should pay for this research work.</li></ul>
<b>Students/Young professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This category of actors is already doing a lot.</li><li>• Many "young experts" have much theoretical knowledge, but more "skill building" is needed.</li></ul>

#### IN ADDITION:

- Another category should be added by integrating the ICRC and similar organisations.
- A clear political will is needed, especially in higher positions, across all actor types to support young talent promotion.

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### CONCLUSION AND GENERAL REMARKS

- The approach is very “Swiss-centric” and the tendency is towards localization and internationalization. The narrative must include the connection between the global South and the global North.
- The overall message of the call, importance of the topic and 'why' it is highly relevant needs to be developed to give more credit to the call.
- The final goal would be to have young talent promotion as part of the soon to be renewed “Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation” by the Federal Council.

### NEXT STEPS

2023

MARCH - MAY

- The narrative of the call for action will be drafted at cinfo considering the results of this workshop and then shared with our member organisations.
- cinfo will reach out to the different stakeholders through internal channels and participants of the workshop.
- The renewed “Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation” by the Federal Council should mention the need of talent promotion young talent promotion.

JUNE

cinfo Members Meeting – First evaluation of the outreach and second exchange on the call for action.

### ATTENDEES

- Members of the cinfo Foundation Board: Christine Beerli, President of the Board; Erich Wigger, Helvetas Head Finance&Services; Lorenz Indermühle, Director Fairmed
- Anne Bickel, Director People and Learning Swisscontact
- Kathrin Indermaur, Chief HR, Helvetas
- Matthias Feldmann, Stv. Sektionsleiter WEMF
- Markus Reisle, Chief of Staff Multilateral and NGO Division, SDC
- Daniel Fasnacht, Head Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding
- Matthias Boss, CEO Swisspeace
- Karin Schumacher, COO Botnar Foundation
- Darius Farman, Co-Geschäftsführer Foraus
- Former participants of youth programme: Alinéor Béjannin, JPO OHCHR, Manuel Lässer, Gewinnung und Ausbildung Commundo and Chloé Favre, Junior HR Advisor, cinfo.
- cinfo: Irenka Krone und Urs Stauffer; co-directors cinfo; Saskia Zaugg und Roman Twerenbold, Youth Focal Point; Lisa Isler, former director