



Arbeits- und Fördergemeinschaft der Deutschen Schulvereine in Namibia

(21/82/070 - Incorporated Association not for gain)

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AGDS Newsletter – July 2024

Dear Members and Friends of the Arbeits- und Fördergemeinschaft der Deutschen Schulvereine in Namibia (AGDS),

The preservation and promotion of German-language education remain the top priority of AGDS. However, in our discussions with schools and kindergartens, we have realized that this support must begin much earlier, starting in kindergarten.

1. Introducing the Board



Picture 1

Top Row from left to right:

Sonja Bartlewski, Dr. Gerda-Elisabeth Wittmann, Kai-Uwe Schonecke

Bottom Row from left to right:

Carola Hornickel, Sonja Pack (chair person), Sylvia Schlettwein, Karola Redecker

On 25 November 2023, a new board was elected during the 67th Annual General Meeting. We would like to thank Britta Bajorat, Hanjo Böhme, Karola Redecker, and Sven von Blottnitz for their dedicated service, as their terms have ended. Karola Redecker will remain in office for another year.

The new board members are: Dr. Gerda-Elisabeth Wittmann, Sylvia Schlettwein, and Kai-Uwe Schonecke.

Dr. Gerda-Elisabeth Wittmann was born in Windhoek and is an alumna of the Deutsche Schule Windhoek (DSW) and the Delta Secondary School Windhoek (DSSW). She studied Law, Political Science, and German Studies at Stellenbosch University. After completing her Bachelor's degree, she specialized in German Studies and earned a Master's degree in German literature.

After gaining some initial teaching experience at Stellenbosch University, she moved to North-West University (NWU), where she headed the German department for eleven years. In 2021, she earned her Ph.D. in educational sciences at NWU. Her research focused on autonomous learning, blended learning, and the continuous training of German teachers. She has published several academic articles in these fields.

Directors ▪ S. Pack (Vorsitzende) ▪ S. Bartlewski ▪ C. Hornickel ▪ K. Redecker ▪ S. Schlettwein ▪ K.-U. Schonecke ▪ G-E. Wittmann

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Since 2022, Dr. Wittmann has been working at the University of Namibia and has headed the Section German since 2023. She is a passionate educator and is particularly committed to German-language education and teacher training in Namibia. As a member of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Schulen (AGDS), she works with scholarship recipients and is also an active member of the AGDS Pedagogical Advisory Board.

Sylvia Schlettwein, was born on November 16, 1975, in Omaruru, Namibia, and grew up in Stellenbosch, South Africa, as well as in Katima Mulilo and Windhoek, Namibia. She studied German and Romance Studies at the University of Cape Town, the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lettres et Sciences Humaines in Lyon, and the University of Stuttgart, where she completed her Master's degree in 2002. She returned to Namibia in 2003 and has been living and working in Windhoek ever since.

Sylvia has worked as a travel agent, teacher, head of her own tutoring and language center, lecturer/head of the Department of Language and Communication at the International University of Management, and teacher of German, French, and History at the Deutsche Höhere Privatschule Windhoek. Currently, she is a lecturer in the Section German at UNAM. For 20 years, she has been setting, moderating, and grading exams (German First Language and French) for the Directorate of National Examinations and Evaluation. Additionally, she has been involved in Namibian literature for many years and is known as a writer, translator, editor, and moderator, in addition to her main occupation as an educator.

Kai-Uwe Schonecke attended school in Otjiwarongo and Windhoek and later studied Civil Engineering in Stellenbosch. Due to his profession, he spent many years abroad before returning to Namibia in 2015. In 2020, he became involved with the German-language radio station Hitradio Namibia to help preserve the German language and culture in Namibia.

2. Board Meetings in Swakopmund & Otavi

The first and second board meetings of AGDS in the first half of 2024 took place in Swakopmund and Otavi, respectively. We thank all school associations for their active participation and productive discussions. We are especially grateful to the Deutscher Schulverein Swakopmund and the Deutscher Schulverein Otavi for their excellent hospitality. Our next board meeting will be held on 2 November 2024, in Windhoek.



3. Dieter-Esslinger Pedagogy Conference 2024

The annual Dieter-Esslinger Pedagogy Conference, organized by AGDS, the Goethe-Institut, and the Section German of UNAM, took place from 19-21 April 2024 in Otjiwarongo. More than 100 participants from various kindergartens, pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, and universities attended. All participants were delighted to hear that, thanks to the support of the Mopane Fund, the conference's financing is secured for the next four years.

The event began on Friday evening at the C'est Si Bon Hotel with the arrival of the participants and an official welcome, followed by a communal dinner.

Saturday started with a plenary lecture by Dr. Bettina von der Way and Arthur Rapp (GI) on the new German Foreign Language textbook "Und jetzt WIR" (Hueber Verlag). Participants then split into four parallel workshops on topics such as:

- Didactics of the textbook "Und jetzt WIR"
- "How do I prepare my students for life?"
- Teaching poetry through creative writing
- "Education for sustainable development and anti-bias," including the calculation of the personal ecological footprint
- "German circles" for oral language practice
- Job and bursary application training for students
- Professional conduct in daycare centers
- Playful approach to poems

The day ended with various grade-level discussions, a delicious dinner, and lively discussions.



Sunday began with a lecture on teacher wellness by Karen Borchert. Other workshops included:

- New didactic approaches in the textbook "Und jetzt WIR"
- "Movement in DaF classes"
- "Experiential education," focusing on self-perception and communication
- A second workshop on teacher wellness

Generally, the feedback received attested to a very successful and inspiring conference. A big thank you goes to the organizers and presenters. We look forward to next year's conference.

Marianne Zappen-Thomson

4. Networking

4.1. AGDS School Visits



The AGDS executive continued its visits to AGDS member schools in the second half of 2024, visiting the following schools: Deutsche Höhere Privatschule, Delta Schule Windhoek, Delta Secondary School Windhoek, Otjiwarongo Secondary School, and Private School Otjiwarongo. AGDS used this opportunity to introduce itself to the new principals of DHPS, Mr. Jörg Przybilla, and DSSW, Mr. Sakaria Namwiha. It was highly motivating to meet the new school leaders, learn about their plans and hopes, and discuss how AGDS can collaborate with the schools in the future. The executive also visited the German mother-tongue branch of Windhoek Gymnasium and made valuable connections there. These personal school visits prove to be extremely important, as each school and school association has its own needs, concerns, and strategies. Understanding these is crucial for the directors, so that they can align the strategic plan of the AGDS accordingly. We thank all school boards for their trust, openness to discussion, and hospitality.

4.2. Kindergarten Network

Is it a problem if multiple languages are spoken at home? When should my child start learning a foreign language? Is it okay to sing an English song in kindergarten? These questions concern not only educators but especially parents of young children. For this reason, AGDS and the Kindergarten Network started a series of discussion circles on the topic of multilingualism. At a first meeting on 18 July 2024, the current situation in schools, UNAM, and kindergartens was assessed. At the end of August 2024, we will meet again to discuss our concrete needs and try to find ways to optimally manage multilingualism in families and educational institutions.



5. Introducing the new AGDS Office Manager



Karin Ilona Rothkegel, née Riedel, took over as the office manager of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Schulvereine (AGDS) on 1 June 2023. She graduated from Delta Secondary School Windhoek (DSSW) in 2001 and then emigrated to Germany, where she completed vocational training as a hotel specialist and further training in Business Management in the gastronomy and hotel industry in Hamburg. On 5 August 2010, she returned to Namibia. She is committed to the AGDS goal to contribute to the preservation of the German language in Namibia.

6. Events

August 1 – August 4: Cultural Festival in Omaruru under the motto "Peace"

August 31: Reading Festival in Grootfontein under the motto "Grootfonteiner Forest"

September 20: Final Gala Evening of the "Lilie" Project

The "Lilie" Project was supported by a significant bequest from the Private School Karibib, which still represents an important financial reserve for the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Schulvereine (AGDS). Since 2005, the "Lilie" Project has honored deserving educators annually at a gala evening. Over the past 17 events, 94 people have been awarded with a white, bronze, silver, or gold lily plaque and a cash prize.

Unfortunately, it has become increasingly difficult to apply fair selection criteria for the lily awards. These and other considerations have led the board to decide to conclude the project this year, at least in its current form. A gala evening will be held in a sociable yet festive atmosphere, but without the customary award ceremony.

2 November : 08:00 AM 3rd Board Meeting at DSSW

2 November 2: 11:00 AM 68th Annual General Meeting at DSSW

All other dates for our member schools can be found on our website www.agdsnamibia.com.

Please share our website www.agdsnamibia.com. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

We kindly ask you to continue to recruit new members, as we can only continue to finance and maintain our projects through increasing membership numbers and donations.

Membership fee for the 2024/2025 fiscal year is N\$ 450.

A special thank you goes out to our donors. Thank you very much.

Best regards

Sonja Pack