

# Strategic Priority 5

Volunteers in Scouting – developing new approaches to broaden the base of adult support



The World Organization of the Scout Movement



## The KISC Staff Training Programme

### The Results

Here at Kandersteg International Scout Centre, we believe that we are a Centre FOR young people, RUN BY young people. It is the staff members that make the facilities, the campsite and the programme come alive **and** that creates the 'magic' that exists here. Central to this belief is that of having an international team of motivated young people from all around the world coming here to help look after the Centre.



Scouts from around the world gather for a celebration at Kandersteg

To achieve this, the staff organisation and training has developed considerably over the past few years into what is now a very well organised, sophisticated, tailored programme that fits the needs of the Centre and its very special environment. Under the Director, a professional member of the World Scout Bureau, there are what we call 'short term' and 'long term' staff who are all volunteers and give up from 3 to 12 months respectively, to join the team and help look after the World Scout Centre.

What we can do is affected by several factors, including budgetary constraints, physical space for beds and offices and the Swiss laws affecting employment of foreigners. The latter is a particular problem for any person from outside of the European Union, which can pose challenges in ensuring that the staff team fully reflects the fact that it is the World Scout Centre.

Every 3 months, a new group of 'short term staff' arrive for their 3 months, they

are trained by the long term staff for the first full week (2 in the summer) and they are then given major responsibility for all aspects of the Centre. They help look after up to 45 other staff, up to 1'400 guests at the height of summer and property valued at millions of Swiss francs - and at times they may be exercising this responsibility without professional support.

The average age of the staff is normally about 23 (the minimum age is 18); where the young people have real responsibility right from the start and which, quite simply, works incredibly well season after season. In the low seasons, we have around 20 staff, in the summer have up to 45 full time staff-together, they look after and improve the 'magic' that makes Kandersteg such a special place.

We have also developed several other ways in which people can help us as volunteers, e.g.

- running specific activities in the winter or summer months;
- joining a work party in the spring or autumn to help with the ongoing maintenance work on the campsite;
- helping to promote the Centre in their own country;
- passing on information to others and persuading groups to come and visit; and many other ways too.

Whether people have 3 months or only 1 hour a month, there are ways for all of them to help us and the pool of people who do this for us grows every month.



Kandersteg International Scout Centre

PROMISING PRACTICES

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Every one is working for something they believe in and our task has been to make sure that they can continue to do so, however they can and wherever they may be.



Volunteer staff working on maintenance tasks on the campsite

## The Reasons

The Centre is such a large-scale operation that it is simply essential to have good staff organisation and training systems in place. With 20'000 visitors in 2000-2001 and a turnover of more than CHF 1.8 million in 2001, effective staff training is vital.

While we want the Centre to be run properly, we also want to make sure that all of the staff who work here will benefit in a very concrete way for their future. Everyone who works here will have a fantastic time, try new activities and make loads of new friends - but this is not enough. They will all work in all areas of the Centre so all will cook, wash clothes and clean dishes - it is not the case that people are 'too important' to do jobs, and often this is one of the strongest focuses of 'learning by doing'!

We also want to ensure that everyone develops physically, intellectually, socially and spiritually; that they learn new skills and develop existing abilities that they can use in their future lives and careers, both in and out of Scouting. This is achieved through the whole ethos of the Centre, through the training, through the working methods, through the ongoing training programme and through the management system that is in place.

As part of this, every staff member, whether long or short term, has regular, 6 weekly evaluations. These are used as a time to make sure that things have been going well and will continue to do so, to deal with any issues that may have arisen (positive and negative), and to set goals for the coming time. These are run by the relevant Line Manager and found to be very productive and useful from both sides. As well as these, there are intensive final meetings that focus on evaluation and identifying ways to improve the individual, the position and the Centre in general.

When all staff leave, they get a strong reference that they can use when making future applications, they can also use the Centre Director as a reference at any time. However, the reference is only given once the full evaluation has been completed and discussed, an incentive that works very well! The ex-staff network is also something that we invest considerable time in maintaining and keeping them informed, both through the internet and traditional paper!

## The Methods

Over the past years, a good system of long term and short term staff has been developed. While all are volunteers, there are some differences: the long term staff receive pocket money, have a specific area of responsibility and provide the continuity between seasons; the short term staff work in all areas of the Centre and join us for 3 months. In the past 18

months, we have also developed a 'Senior Management Team' (SMT) that meets weekly to look at operational and strategic issues and planning.

The basis of our short term staff training programme is that it is run by the long term staff for the short term staff. It changes and improves every season based on the evaluations done during and at the end of the training and it is aimed at giving **ALL** staff a very good grounding and knowledge of all areas of the Centre. While there are, of course, specific work areas and people assigned to them, all staff are, for example, expected to check groups in when they arrive, work behind the buffet when we are catering for groups and clean floors where necessary.

The staff training programme thus achieves several goals:

- it creates a team of young people all working towards the same goals using the same systems and ideas, though always with the flexibility to change and improve;
- it gives all specific knowledge about the different areas of the Centre, e.g. how to operate the fire alarm, the rules that apply at the Centre or how to work in the shop;
- it gives all some more general knowledge and skills on, for example, communication, Swiss law and procedures or general guest service;
- it gives everyone the chance to have fun while learning!

All of the long term staff are involved in the preparation and running of the training sessions and the training ends with a very special 'Graduation' evening attended by all staff.

During the season, short term and long term staff are paired up to practice the theory, we operate a 'god parent' system at different times, there is always the chance to run over a session again and to say 'please help'. One of the strongest

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elements of the staff structure is that the vast majority of the long term staff have done a full season as a short term staffer and know exactly what it is like and how it works.

## Our Learning

Every time we plan our week of staff training, we look at the past season's timetable and decide if there is a need for change. During the training itself, we evaluate how it is going with the long term staff and with the short term staff themselves; at the end of every week, we hold a full evaluation with the new staff. Every time, we get suggestions and ways of making it better which are then used three months later.

With the very special environment within which we work, there is a strong need to make everything as clear and easy to understand as possible. Although English is the Centre working language, the majority of staff have it as only their second or third language, and the sessions have to reflect this in their vocabulary, methods etc.

While the week long short term staff training has been established for several years now, in the last three years we have also developed a more structured and developmental 'management training' for the long term staff. This was an area that had been neglected - we expected young people to come in and magically be able to manage and organise others of their peer group.

In response to this, a training programme was developed to give them basic skills in areas such as time management, motivation, delegation, problem solving, teamwork and planning. Done through a mixture of theoretical and practical sessions this is aimed at giving them the necessary skills to then manage a team of up to 10 other young people on a day to day basis. It is run by the members of the SMT and, sometimes, by external people.

As well as this general training run for all, each long term staff member has the chance to do a language course during their time here, as well as other courses such as basic and advanced first aid, computer training, hiking, climbing and much more.



Volunteer staff leading a hike in the countryside around Kandersteg

Perhaps the best way of judging how well we do is to look at two specific things:

- the evaluations that come back from the young people themselves and these are, almost without exception, extremely positive on their whole time here, but specifically the training;
- to look at what the guests say and again, the evaluation of the staff team consistently comes out at the very highest levels.

## Our Future Plans

- To continue to refine and develop the staff structure within the restraints that still exist here as staff come and go. In late 2002 the chalet facilities will be considerably improved through the completion of extra staff

accommodation and better social facilities and meeting space which will allow us to offer even higher quality physical rewards.

- To ensure we always have a good mix of nationalities on the staff. We are also creating specific budgets to support travel costs and also allow us to offer pocket money to those who need it, to ensure that they do not miss out while here.
- To maintain the current training structure as we are very happy with what we have now and know that it works very well for us in our environment. It is always adapting to take account of new or specific situations and we strongly believe in what we have, what we do and the way in which it allows everyone who stays at the Centre to 'Live their Dream'.

For more information about the Centre and the staff programme, please contact the Director, Miriam Herzberg at:

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