

October, 2004

Partnerships in Action

Guidelines for North-South Co-operation

This document is based on text developed by the North-South Network of the European Region, formerly published on the European Scout web-site.

3. The Co-operation Process

Step 4: Planning an activity

4.1 What kind of activity is suitable?

An activity is something that somebody does. It may take several different forms, depending on whether the partners participate or not. It should meet the criteria laid out in the original partnership agreement. It may consist of one large activity, or a number of smaller ones, and involve different young people during the period of the agreement.

In the past, it was common for activities to start with a visit by the northern partner to the southern partner. But this is certainly not the only way of doing it. It is also possible for the South to approach the North with a partnership proposal involving them coming to visit the North. Since the youngest Guides and Scouts cannot visit their partners, it is more difficult to arrange a direct contact experience for them. By including, in a partnership agreement, a budget allowance for young people to travel both ways, we can provide a quality experience for all involved, regardless of their age.

It is important that all age groups participate in activities, which may mean that a specific activity has to be adapted to suit the age ranges involved. To involve all age groups, a complete set of activity ideas will need to be developed for those unable to visit, particularly the younger members. There are many

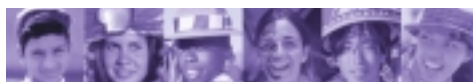
ways of learning about another country and the way people live there, without actually meeting them. There are plenty of good resources available, both within our Associations and outside, which can provide us with a great deal of information and activity ideas. By combining such information with the personal details and experiences of our partners, we have a powerful means of educating young people. Young people develop by building up a personal relationship with our partners as they obtain up-to-date personal information which they can compare with their own situation. This is as relevant for the youngest members as it is for older members.

Example:

An Association invited one Guide and one Scout, both aged about 16 years old, from Zimbabwe to Sweden. They stayed for about one month and took part in a camp. They spent most of the time visiting a variety of local groups where they took part in troop meetings for different age sections, shared their culture and compared their different Guide and Scout experiences. They also visited some of the local schools to see what lessons in Sweden were like and to share, in an informal class atmosphere, what life in Zimbabwe was like.

4.2 Criteria for a good activity

The criteria for a good activity may be defined as follows:



a. Responding to educational objectives

A good leader knows what he or she wants to achieve in organising a given activity. An educational objective should state which attitudes, knowledge or skills a young person will have the opportunity to acquire by doing the activity. Many educational objectives may be fulfilled in the field of cooperation and development, for example:

- Inter-cultural awareness: make young people more aware of and sensitive to the cultural richness of other civilisations. For example, by organising an exhibition on a given country to show different aspects of its culture, history, famous people, etc.
- International interdependence: enable young people to discover the interdependence between industrialised and developing countries. For example, by identifying all the products which come from developing countries and are sold in a supermarket.
- Discovering appropriate technologies: give young people the opportunity to discover that developing countries can solve many problems by applying appropriate technologies instead of copying the methods used in industrialised countries. For example, solar ovens, manual pumps, etc. Experiencing these technologies is also a very interesting way of developing creativity.

b. Meeting the interest of young people

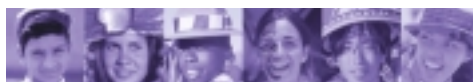
Not every activity corresponds to the interests of young people. You cannot educate them by proposing boring activities that they will reject. We shouldn't forget that Guiding and Scouting are not the same as school. Our main principle is learning by doing, so activities have to be attractive. Interests are different for each age range and may differ according to sex. This has to be taken into careful consideration.

c. Challenging, but feasible

Guide and Scout activities have to be challenging. They have to encourage young people to go further, do more and overcome their limits, but at the same time they have to be feasible. It would be totally unrealistic to organise a work camp for Cub Scouts in, for example, Sierra Leone. Young people can sometimes lose their sense of reality and it is the responsibility of the adult leader to help them limit their ambitions.

d. Using the Guide/Scout Method

The key to the success of an activity is to use the Guide/Scout Method: use the patrol system, the progressive scheme, the Promise and Law, and maintain a good balance between indoor and outdoor activities, reflection and action. It will then be clear that activities in the field of cooperation and development can provide fantastic educational opportunities.



Example: youth exchange

Throughout last year a group was involved in an exchange programme. Our younger members (aged 7-10) were involved in exchanging photos, tapes and letters. We also exchanged "activity boxes", which contained different Guide and Scout programmes, local recipes, handicrafts and newspapers. A lot of time was spent investigating the issue of young people's health in both countries. The group collected and examined examples of local river water and visited a water purification plant to see how this water is processed. The partner group also examined their water. They had far greater problems in obtaining good drinking water, particularly during the dry season. Older Guides and Scouts from both countries joined together to arrange a visit and spent a week together, enjoying home hospitality, before going on to camp in the local mountains.

4.3 Preparing an activity

In any partnership, there is always a large number of different people involved, Guides and Scouts of all ages, leaders and maybe other supporters. They will all need different kinds of help and support to prepare for the activity.

To prepare for any activity in a partnership, it is important for both partners to remember the objectives defined in the original agreement.

We know what we are aiming to achieve, but we should also discover things about each other and about ourselves at the same time. We will all probably be immediately aware of differences, but you may well also find a surprising number of similarities.

In preparing activities together, we will discover that our attitudes towards each other play an important role. As the partnership develops, we will gradually notice that our knowledge and experiences change our attitudes.

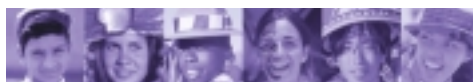
A firsthand experience in another country will usually involve experiencing a culture shock upon arrival, no matter how well we do your research beforehand. It is advantageous if someone from each party has met beforehand.

The activity may require training in special practical skills and this should be planned carefully. Some physical fitness training may be necessary. Social skills, such as public-speaking or presentation skills, may also be useful.

Example:

An Association supplied some motor scooters within the framework of an agreement. Before the visit, members of the Association received training in how to maintain the scooters, so that they in turn could train the new owners.

Living, even for a short while, in another culture may be difficult, as not only are there physical differences, but also differences in social



structures and cultures, for example the role of women and men in society. This may place a great strain on individuals.

4.4 Running an activity

Despite all the detailed planning we may have done for an activity, things will usually end up being different from what we planned! People have different views on the importance of time and the different ways of using time.

Whatever the activity, it is important to allow young people to spend time together as young people and as Guides and Scouts. This may involve planning for some social events, such as a campfire or barbecue. A lot of good inter-cultural exchanges happen without any planning at all. All they need is an empty space in the programme timetable.

The agreement specifies the purpose of the activity. However, there are a lot of factors over which you have no control and which will influence the activity, such as the weather, transport and human factors.

Just because the activity may not turn out exactly as planned does not mean that it is a failure. If young people's attitudes have changed, because they have had a worthwhile experience, then the partnership has been a success. This new knowledge and experience may well lead to new types of issues being examined and new activities being undertaken.

Example:

Two groups swapped all sorts of things over the summer months and they decided to exchange Christmas packages, so that each group could celebrate in a different way. Unfortunately, due to a postage strike in one country, the box sent to one of the group arrived too late to use for Christmas that year. However, the other group had a great time and I am sure we will do so next year.

