

## **Partnership and Twinning Arrangements within Global Fellowship**

### **Some Guidelines**

Do you want to link up with other groups around the world? Read these guidelines to see how Global Fellowship can help you.

#### **Introduction: a family of uniformed Christian youth organisations**

1. In over 60 countries around the world there are uniformed Christian youth organisations which have historic links with The Boys' Brigade in the United Kingdom or FDF in Denmark. Most still use the name The Boys' Brigade or The Boys' and Girls' Brigade and a few (with historic links to FDF) use the title "Junior Ministry". Global Fellowship of Christian Youth – or GF for short – is the name of the big family that all these organisations belong to.
2. You and the young people in your local company or circle might want to get in touch with another part of our worldwide family. This can have some brilliant benefits: a better understanding of the worldwide family of which we are all a part; an insight into the lives of young people in other parts of the world; and an opportunity to learn from each other.
3. GF has prepared these guidelines to encourage companies and circles to think about how to develop and strengthen their links with other groups around the world.

#### **Getting to know other members of the family**

4. The first question to ask is this: how might we get to know other members of our international family?
5. There are lots of different ways, such as:
  - One-off exchanges of greetings electronically (for example, as part of a special company evening or church service)
  - Establishing a company link – exchanging news and photographs on a company or circle basis a few times each year
  - Setting up "pen pals" so that young people communicate directly (by e-mail, letter or by chatting on-line) with young people in other companies around the world
  - Visiting one another on a company/circle basis
  - Organising formal exchange trips where groups arrange to visit each other over (say) consecutive years
  - Arranging joint activities (such as a camp) or attending other events together (such as band or music festivals organised by one member organisation)
6. Obviously it is important in any partnership or twinning arrangement that the two groups know what each other want and are both happy with that.
7. A partnership will not work if Group A just wants to make contact with Group B for one evening so that its members can gain a particular international badge or award while Group B was hoping for an ongoing exchange programme.

8. The starting point must always be for each group to be clear and explicit about what it hopes to gain from (and what it is willing to offer to) any partner or twin. GF can then work with the national leadership in member organisations to see if a suitable partner can be found.
9. Modern communications - like the internet and email - make the world seem a much smaller place than once it did. Young people all over the world have much in common: many of their ambitions and fears are the same. However, there are also considerable differences between growing up and attending The Boys' Brigade, FDF or Junior Ministry in different parts of the world.
10. Any youth leader seeking to set up a partnership with a group of young people elsewhere in the world therefore needs to be sensitive in particular to the following factors:
  - The differences in opportunities available to young people in different parts of the world: young people's home life, their access to education and health services and the risks they face vary greatly in different parts of the world (and often from place to place within the same country)
  - The resources available to youth leaders vary tremendously: in some of our member organisations, work with young people uses expensive technology and equipment; in others, only the simplest and most basic equipment may be available. Again, this can vary greatly from company to company within one country
  - Language and cultural differences can create misunderstanding: it is not always easy to understand someone from a different culture – even if they appear to share the same mother tongue!
11. It is important to listen carefully to one another to ensure that each partner or twin is able to explain what it wishes to gain from and what it is able to offer to any partnership arrangement.

### **Developing family ties**

12. GF and the national leadership in member organisations strongly encourage links which seek to foster friendship and understanding between young people and their leaders. Where there are significant disparities between groups of young people in terms of resources, it is natural that one group may wish to share with another. Such sharing is to be encouraged but leaders are urged to consider the most effective and sustainable means of assisting those with fewer resources. Think about unintended consequences.
13. For example, many member organisations within the GF family have national level projects. For example, they might be trying:
  - to source and produce uniform locally,
  - to produce new, or to tailor existing, programme material for use with young people in their particular culture, and

- to develop their financial independence.
14. Those efforts can be easily undermined by well-intentioned gifts from abroad which cut across the national leadership's attempts to develop sustainable solutions to companies' needs based on the resources available locally. Such actions can also have the effect of creating jealousy between local companies and groups within the national organisation. GF and national secretaries are happy to help you avoid such difficulties. Please take advice if you are thinking about giving a gift abroad.
  15. Young people will often find the experience of interacting with their peers from elsewhere in the world not only exciting but also challenging. They may well begin to consider questions of justice and equality. Such questions can be unsettling and leaders should be aware of the importance of allowing young people to express their thoughts on such questions. Various development and mission agencies produce material which might help you to think about this together. GF is also happy to offer advice where it can.

### **How do I get involved?**

16. In order to assist in finding suitable matches and to keep a record of existing partnerships, companies or circles wishing to participate in any form of partnership or twinning are asked to inform their National Secretary of their intention. Some requests may desire a link in a specific part of the world. Others may have no fixed idea but simply be interested in twinning with another company or circle. Some groups may merely wish to share news occasionally whereas others may be looking for a group with whom to arrange an exchange visit. Obviously, the more flexible the request, the greater the likelihood that it can be accommodated.
17. Once your request has been made, the National Secretary will pass the request on to Global Fellowship. GF will then consider its database of other companies asking for links to see if it can make a match and, if not, it will advertise the offer on its website and inform national secretaries of the opportunity and seek their help in finding a suitable match.

### **Practical details**

18. Although GF is willing to help where it can, leaders remain responsible at all times for their own young people. They should therefore consider carefully the risks associated with any form of partnership with a company abroad and take appropriate steps to safeguard the young people in their care.
19. Leaders should be particularly aware that it is not always possible to be sure of the identity of the person with whom a young person is interacting on-line or electronically.
20. Any company considering travelling abroad with young people should ensure that they have adequate insurance, meet any visa/immigration requirements and that those travelling hold the necessary vaccinations. Specialist advice should be sought where necessary. Please note that some member organisations require companies to inform their national headquarters

before they travel abroad. Groups considering hosting a visit from those abroad should also consider what issues are likely to arise and warn their visitors in advance.

21. The GF office will always be pleased to help where it can but please bear in mind that GF has only one part-time staff member and is otherwise dependent on volunteers.

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