

SCOUTS GAINING PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS

Echo-Trainings for the World Organization of the Scout Movement

In seeking to help prepare young people for the challenges of life, the Scout Movement has done a unique and outstanding job in developing substantial ‘tool boxes’ of practical skills and supportive advice that have proved to be valuable for millions of youth—both boys and girls. Today, when increasing numbers of young people are faced in their own lives with crises and catastrophes that are not only physically devastating, but also emotionally and psychologically damaging, it is wholly appropriate to add practical emergency preparedness skills to their training.

The World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) is organized in 166 member countries, with recognized national Scout organizations, and over 40 million participants. Already a quarter of WOSM members is involved in activities, trainings and responses to natural disasters and crises, and the leadership of WOSM is now engaged in introducing a broad programme of ‘Humanitarian Action’ worldwide.

GIST-T, in collaboration with WOSM, plans to design and deliver a three-day Training of Trainers (TOT) in (i) Self-Care for Stress and Trauma and (ii) in Psychological First Aid (PFA), and in so doing initiate a series of echo-trainings at national levels.

- This first TOT will be held first in Switzerland for senior trainers from 20-25 national Scouting organizations, who in turn will develop their own plan of training appropriate for their national situation. The TOT would be conducted initially in two languages (French and English). The initial list of 17 selected countries is shown here.
- By focusing on Self-Care training, the scouts will gain a greater understanding of their own reactions to stressful and sometimes traumatic experiences, and know how to respond, or if necessary when to seek help from professionals.
- PFA training for scouts would be specifically targeted at their needs and capabilities, so they can better respond in crisis situations where they may be called on to help—as has already happened in Haiti, Nepal, India and Bangladesh, to name only a few. Proof of mastery of these two topics would earn scouts merit badges.
- Following the initial TOT, GIST-T would help to identify suitable and interested therapists, counsellors and trainers to accompany the national-level implementation, and support quality control and evaluation in each of the programme countries. To this end, GIST-T is in the process of establishing a database of qualified PFA trainers and mental health professionals.

Further developments could include designing and conducting webinars for subsequent TOTs in the five official WOSM languages (Russian, Spanish, French, Arabic, and English), and the preparation of a tailored-made online course.