

Management & Recruitment of Volunteers in Non-profit
Organizations

Café Con Leche

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The following report is a draft for a solution-oriented analysis of the strategies of volunteer recruitment & management within the social organization “Café con Leche”.

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I. Factsheet

Café con Leche operates a social soccer project within the slums of Caballona and La Lechería – so-called Bateys – in the capital city of the Dominican Republic Santo Domingo.

Vision: Building strong and peaceful communities and elimination of racism and structural exclusion of the Haitian population in the suburbs Santo Domingo.

Mission: Contribute through Soccer and educational activities to the integral human development and a better inter-ethnic understanding of and among children and young adults in Caballona and La Lechería.

Activities: Currently three teams exist (1 women team, 2 men teams) with approximately 80 children ranging from an age of 8 to 19. A local coach is responsible for regular training and weekend matches. A German volunteer supports the coach in training sessions, matches & organizational tasks. Additionally the volunteer is realizing educational activities in co-operation with schools and the local community (e.g. workshops about Aids prevention, sexual abuse, family violence, etc.).

Organization: Café con Leche is a nonprofit association that was founded in December 2009. All its expenses are covered through donations from Germany and 100% of the donations are designated to the project activities. All members work on a voluntary basis, the only paid employee is the Dominican coach.

Homepage: <http://www.cafeconleche-vk.de>

II. Problem Identification

The German volunteers assume an important role within the project since they are responsible for fundamental organizational tasks and at the same time they ensure a constant communication with the management team in Germany. Due to the precarious environment the adaption to local conditions is challenging and the integration into local communities time-consuming. For this reason Café con Leche is only receiving volunteers with proper skills and experience, and usually for a period of one year.

In Germany, on national level there are several policies that support volunteering - within the country and throughout the world. Volunteer work in the developing world is relatively popular in Germany and has grown considerably within the last decade. The former civil service, which was the common alternative for the obligatory military service (for men only)¹, also allowed young people to do an equivalent 11 month volunteer service in a social project in the global south. But also women participated considerably in these publicly supported volunteer programs (the two regimes were ADiA and FSJ, which were supported indirectly through tax alleviation and subsidies). As a response to the high demand in 2008 a new ambitious program, called *weltwärts*, was launched, that allowed all kinds of social organizations to keep up with the quick growth of volunteers engaging in development projects. Under this regime approved sending institution receive up to 580 € per volunteer per month (350 for direct costs as board & lodging, and pocket money; 230 for professional/pedagogic accompaniment, working materials and direct project support)². This extensive financial support created an oversupply of volunteers and allowed those organizations with sufficient organizational capacity to increase their number of volunteers significantly.

“Café con Leche” is currently employing external volunteers through an agreement with the GIZ, the German Society for International Co-operation, which is assuming the financial, legal and organizational responsibilities for the volunteers, who typically are employed under the *weltwärts* regime. It is very likely that the present agreement is conditional on the government support through *weltwärts*, as the GIZ is one of those organizations that are obliged to receive a certain number of volunteers. Insider information revealed that the *weltwärts* program might be abandoned within the next years. Although there is no explicit evidence for this policy change, the suspicion was enough to realize the strong impact it would have on the organizations’ work, and therefore to get alert about the high dependency on political circumstances. Café con Leche highly depends on these volunteers as they are the principal contact in the Dominican Republic, which makes them indispensable for the coordination of the project.

¹ Since 2011 the obligatory military, and hence the civil service, doesn’t exist anymore.

² The sending entity is required to contribute a minimum 25% to the total costs of the service. For further information: BWZ 2007

In the short-term it is necessary to develop and implement strategies that guarantee a sustainable and reliable volunteer recruitment, since the structural dependence on volunteers makes the organization vulnerable for shifts in the political environment. Opportunities to mitigate this vulnerability need to be explored. Alternative models of recruitment and new partnerships with sending institutions can address this risk, but however they are limited by nature. In the long-term it is advisable to drive forth new structures that empower local employees and rely less on the German volunteers. In this regard, partnerships with local organizations seem to be essential in order to promote and sustain the autonomy of the project.

III. Recruitment & Management of Volunteers

In the following chapter I will address the identified problem by exploring the potential of proper management and recruitment strategies.

As a report for the Institute for Volunteering Research (Gaskin 2003) states, “research consistently shows that the way volunteers are managed and supported is crucially important.” (Gaskin 2003: 16) The report furthermore suggests eight progressive pressure points that determine volunteer involvement from the perspective of a potential volunteer:

From “doubter” to “starter”:

- 1.) The image and appeal of volunteering (public discourse)
- 2.) Methods of recruiting volunteers
- 3.) Recruitment and application procedures

From “starter” to “doer”:

- 4.) Induction into volunteering (employment)
- 5.) Training for volunteering
- 6.) Overall management of the volunteering
- 7.) The ethos and culture of the organization
- 8.) The support and supervision given to volunteers

The three first points, which aim at engaging people to start a volunteer work for the first time, are of less relevance for this proposal. As the prior experience of “Café con Leche” suggests, it is assumed that in general there is a potentially high interest (demand) of doing a volunteer service of the kind described above. Rather, the main obstacles are related to the steps necessary to pave the way for those that are already “starters” so that they can start “doing”, meaning getting involved in the project. The considerations include the induction (employment), training, management and support of potential volunteers. In the case of a one year stay abroad these activities, especially legal issues and support (insurance and cost

coverage), involve risks and costs that the organization is neither able nor willing to assume on its own.

Thus, the key problem we identified is not the very recruitment of volunteers in terms of “willingness to work”, but rather the legal, financial and organizational conditions related to the volunteer service. These constraints depend on the specific model of recruitment that is applied, but also on the wider institutional context, that is the supporting policies and structures of the public sector. From the organizations’ perspective the recruitment model is a critical decision point. In this regard both an analysis of the organization’s capabilities as well as its environment are crucial. This involves the institutional context and its expected development, and on the other hand the potential of sustainable partnerships.

The following suggestions can serve as a guideline for the recruitment and management process:

1.) The Recruitment Model

Generally two options can be distinguished:

- direct recruitment: initiate an own volunteer program, assuming all the responsibilities (becoming a sending institution)
- indirect recruitment: get volunteer support from another organization, that assumes all the financial and legal responsibilities (partnership with a sending institution)

The first option involves greater risks, but also allows the organization to have a higher degree of control over their volunteers, especially the selection process. The second option is likely to be favorable for small organizations that don’t have the organizational capacity & resources to fully assume the responsibilities related to financing, insurance, training, monitoring, evaluation, etc. Especially when operating abroad in a precarious environment, the risk potential of initiating an own volunteer program need to be carefully examined.

As described above *Café con Leche* is currently receiving volunteers through the model of indirect recruitment, which is conditional on the continuation of the partnership with the GIZ (the sending institution). Given the before mentioned risks and the weak organizational structure the option of direct recruitment is out of question at the moment. However, new partnerships should be considered in order to prepare for institutional changes and ensure sustainability.

2.) Preparing the Recruitment

Building new partnerships and therefore widening the opportunities of volunteer acquisition requires a proper communication strategy and management plan both in terms of the general goals of “*Café con Leche*” and specifically addressing the role of the volunteer within the organization. So before getting started with the recruitment some background work needs to be done. Some of the following questions should be discussed in the management team: Why do we want/need volunteers? Which role/responsibilities

should the volunteer assume? What are our expectations in terms of skills and prior experience? How will we ensure that the volunteer fits into the project/ that he or she is properly motivated? As the structure of the organization suggests, building trust is critical in this regard. The relationship with the volunteer can be improved through prior involvement (e. g. some sort of training) and continuous communication during the service.

3.) Volunteer Sources / Partnerships

Where to find volunteers? In his article Fritz distinguishes three different approaches of direct volunteer recruitment (Fritz n. d.): Warm Body Recruitment, Targeted Recruitment and Concentric Circles Recruitment. However, in case of indirect recruitment, targeted sources are existing sending institutions that have an interest in building a partnership with “Café con Leche”. Determining factors for the success of such partnerships are related to the environment, the strategy, structure and behavior. The main criteria should be:

Strategy: Sustainability (strong bonds through mutual interests and/or personal relationships), volunteer characteristics (the selection process of the partner).

Environment: Degree of dependency on external support structures

Structure: Nature of the contract/ agreement (flexibility vs. reliability), incentive structure

Behavior: Trust, good communication, culture & world view

The given agreement with the GIZ, shows how important the considerations of environmental factors are. “Café con Leche” has an interest in building a reliable long-term partnership that can withstand political changes affecting the external support structures.

I attach a list of sending institutions that may be eligible for a partnership. Since a close relationship (training and communication) between the volunteer and the management team in Germany is required, only national organizations are considered. The official recognition of the state is an important requirement for the volunteer service abroad. Different kinds of accreditation are included (EFD, ADiA, Weltwärts).

4.) Induction & Training

The necessity of proper preparation of volunteers is consensus among academics and professionals. Moreover accredited sending institutions are obliged to ensure a preparation through respective seminars. Some organizations do this internally; others (given their small number of volunteers) outsource these training seminars. The GTZ has its own seminars that prepare the volunteers for the service abroad. Nevertheless these seminars are very general in nature and cannot replace a project specific preparation and

instruction. Until now the volunteers haven't been receiving such preparation. My suggestion is twofold:

- Firstly, I recommend "Café con Leche" a preparation weekend in Germany, where the management team and the volunteer meet before departure. This is not only important for a proper instruction to the work, but also to get to know each other and to communicate the spirit and culture of the project. In the end it is trust and mutual understanding that ensures the success of this co-operation. In his report Gaskin (200: 15) underlines this notion: "Effective training not only equips volunteers with confidence and skills, it contributes to high retention by encouraging a sense of commitment to the work and reinforcing the perception that volunteers' role is valuable"
- Secondly, it is advisably that the new volunteer generation arrives before the former has left, so that they can use this overlapping time for "on the job" training and a general introduction into the local context.

5.) Support, Supervision & Evaluation

The volunteers have a high degree of autonomy since no direct supervision from a local authority exists. As long as the structures don't change fundamentally, this autonomy will remain. An effective way of improving accountability is introducing routines of writing reports, where the volunteer reflects about the past activities, makes suggestions for improvement and sets goals for the next period. A monthly report seems to be adequate. The setting of goals helps to establish performance parameters and to facilitate evaluation. But the reports do not only serve as a tool of (self-)control, but also as a basis for better guidance and support for the volunteer. Good information is a precondition for advices and other types of interventions that can help addressing the problems of the volunteer. Gaskin (2003: 23) concludes, that "The support given to volunteers should combine personal and professional support; a clear individual line of support; light-touch supervision (in most cases); prompt and straightforward payment of expenses; organizing volunteer get-togethers and socials; and facilitating volunteer support networks and mentoring."

IV. Concluding Remarks

I hope this brief report can stimulate further discussions within the organization helping to understand and address the main challenges related to the recruitment and management of volunteers. Especially small organizations often lack a well-structured and systematic approach to their managerial problems. This contribution is obviously only a starting point for a deeper analysis. The appendix joints a list of valuable sources of information and potential partners.

Given the previous suggestions I conclude with summarizing the main strengths and weaknesses, both externally and internally (the so called SWOT-Analysis):

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good co-operation between professional coach and volunteers (synergies) - qualified & motivated volunteers 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high dependence on volunteers - infrequent communication with volunteers and no direct communication with the coach - unilateral recruitment strategy
External	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - valuable partnership with GIZ (assumes responsibilities) - good public support structures for volunteering 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high dependence on public support program <i>weltwärts</i> (policy shift possible) - weak institutionalization of partnership

V. References

Gaskin, Katharine (2003): A choice blend. What volunteers want from organisation and management. A report for the Institute for Volunteering Research and the England Volunteering Forum.

<http://www.ivr.org.uk/Institute+of+Volunteering+Research%2fMigrated+Resources%2fDocuments%2fC%2fchoice+blend+report+for+printing.pdf> [accessed on 12/12/2011]

Fritz, Joanne (n. d.): Recruiting Volunteers – Three Approaches.

<http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/recruitvols.htm> [accessed on 12/12/2011]

Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung - BWZ (2007): Richtlinie zur Umsetzung des Entwicklungspolitischen Freiwilligendienstes „weltwärts“.

<http://www.weltwaerts.de/service/downloads/richtlinie/wwRichtlinie-de.pdf> [accessed on 12/12/2011]

VI. Appendix

List of volunteer databases:

<http://www.berlin.de/buergeraktiv/>

<http://www.freiwillig-engagiert.de>

<http://www.aktion-mensch.de/freiwillig/>

<http://www.ehrenamt-deutschland.org/>

<http://www.ehrenamtcard.info/ehrenamtcard/index.php?id=237>

General support:

<http://www.ehrenamt.de/>

www.jetst.de

<http://www.jugendprojekte-im-sport.de/> (information sharing)

<http://www.engagiert-in-deutschland.de/toro/resource/html?locale=de#!entity.760>

<http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/recruiting-volunteers>

Potential Partners:

Independent volunteer program by InWent: <http://www.asa-programm.de/>

Accredited sending institutions:

European Volunteer Service (EFD): <http://www.go4europe.de/information/entsender/>

Weltwärts: <http://www.weltwaerts.de/weltwaertsGehen/organisationen/index.html>

ADiA: <http://www.weltwaerts.de/entsendeorganisationen/erkennungadia/index.html>