

From Past to Present

The International Scout and Guide Fellowship (ISGF), a worldwide organisation, was founded in 1953 with the name of the International Fellowship of Former Scouts and Guides (IFOFSAG). Initially there were 18 member countries: Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

It was created “to provide an international platform for adults who feel that the ideals of Scouting & Guiding should continue to be implemented in an adult context”, following resolutions from the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) at their World Conferences held in that year.

In 1996 the official name of the organisation changed to the International Scout and Guide Fellowship (ISGF) – an organisation for adults. The implications of this change of name are significant, in that the new name no longer contains the word “former”.

The ISGF provides a framework for the ethos of Scouting & Guiding to continue in adult life for those who are unable to undertake leadership in the youth organisation due to work, family or other commitments or advancing age.

The ISGF has, today, 77 Member countries having a national adult organisation known as National Scout and Guide Fellowships (NSGF), plus another 33 countries in the Central Branch (comprising individuals and small groups of adults living in a country where there is no NSGF).

Baden-Powell's writings

Some people are still convinced that Scouting & Guiding should be limited to youth. This was never the idea of the Founder, Baden-Powell. Not only did he launch mottos such as “Once a Scout, always a Scout”, or “Scouting/Guiding is from 8 to 80”, but he wrote some very inspiring words on the role adult Scouts/Guides were called upon to play in society. Here are some of his passages:

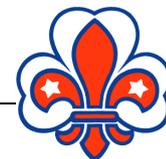
“In almost every country there are not only thousands, but in some there are millions of Old Scouts and Girl Guide women among the population, trained to be loyal and helpful citizens and to be good friends and comrades with their brother Scouts and sister Guides of other nations. In this widespread brotherhood lies before us a field of great possibilities. Fear seems to dominate the world just now - fear lest another great war should be sprung upon us. Yet if all nations practised instead of professing the key to the Christian precepts, that is to say, if love took the place of fear in their mutual relations with their neighbours, then peace and happiness would reign for all.

In our brotherhood of Old Scouts in every country we have already the nucleus of such attitude of mind. If this brotherhood were more fully organised, both in the Scout and in the Guide Movements, it would, with its ever increasing membership, become something more than mere nucleus, but rather a world league of peoples gifted with sane and stable minds, insistent on adjustment of difficulties through friendly arrangement instead of rushing madly to arms or even indulging in political arguments”.

(Jamboree [magazine of the Boy Scouts International Bureau], January 1937)

“Many millions of those who have been Scouts and Guides in their time now form a leaven in the different countries of men and women who disregard minor differences and past quarrels, but look forward to a future of happiness and prosperity for all through mutual amity and fellow-feeling.

Why belong to the International Scout and Guide Fellowship – an organisation for adults



We have here in embryo a universal army or police force of Peace to which the different armies of war will have eventually to surrender”.
(Jamboree, [magazine of the Boy Scouts International Bureau], July 1937)

The ISGF endeavours precisely to represent the nucleus of that “world league of peoples” and “leaven of men and women in the different countries”, imbued with the Scout & Guide ideals, that B-P advocated so many years ago.

Aims of the ISGF

In keeping with the Founder’s message, the Aims of the ISGF are to encourage its members to:

- keep alive the spirit of the Promise and Law as laid down by Lord Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the Scout and Guide Movement, in a process of continuous personal development;
- bring that spirit into the communities in which they live and work through active service to them; and
- actively support the WAGGGS and WOSM member organisations in these communities, in their countries and worldwide.

Members also have a special responsibility to uphold the Principles of the ISGF, namely to:

- respect life and human rights;
- contribute to international understanding especially through friendship, tolerance and respect for others;
- work for justice and peace in order to create a better world.

The ISGF – Structures and Policies

The ISGF policy is democratically agreed by a World Conference and carried out by the World Committee elected by it, thus reflecting the diversity of world cultures.

Besides its structure at the national level called NSGF, the ISGF has another at the local level called Local Scout and/or Guide Fellowship (LSGF) or Guild.

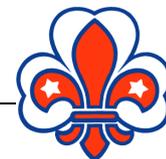
The more members the LSGF has, the greater the support it can give to the community and to the Scout & Guide associations, in addition to gaining inspiration for the personal development of members.

The ISGF, through the action of the World Committee, the Central Branch and the NSGFs in neighbouring countries, is engaged in an effort to develop adult Scouting & Guiding in countries where at present it does not exist.

Why should an adult belong to the International Scout and Guide Fellowship?

To continue being part of the Scout & Guide family

- At local, national and international levels individual members work together with other adults who believe in the Scout & Guide Spirit and carry out the Scout & Guide Promise and Law in their daily lives
- ISGF adults are self-governed at all levels of an adult organisation: as adults they are responsible for their own plans, activities, finances, elections, and development.



To engage in networking

- By attending conferences, gatherings and meetings individual members will establish, and be part of a worldwide network
- By creating a network which could be operational in case of disasters.

To support Scout & Guide leaders

Individual members may

- take some practical burdens off the leaders' shoulders so that they may stay longer as leaders
- babysit so that a leader can take part in a meeting with other leaders
- together with other Fellowship members provide manpower at camps and special events.

To share knowledge

- By taking part in workshops and seminars individual members will “give and get” information, skills and expertise.

To develop personally

- By taking part in debates, especially in the LSGF, but also at ISGF meetings and gatherings, individual members will grow and further develop their personality and find friendship, fellowship, fun and, most importantly, peer support.

To benefit from lifelong learning

- ISGF provides a worldwide forum for exchanging experiences, ideas and practices in adult education.

To have the possibility of supporting joint projects

- ISGF encourages its members to be actively involved in community service projects

By getting to know people and understanding conditions in and aspirations of a country, members are able to respond to calls for help in time of disaster and support individual co-operation projects readily.

To make new friends

- Individual members may deepen their knowledge and understanding about other countries and its people by taking active part in Twinning (linking) person to person, LSGF to LSGF or NSGF to NSGF.
- Twinning between a NSGF and a Central Branch group can help both parties in developing.

To gain knowledge of Scouting & Guiding around the world

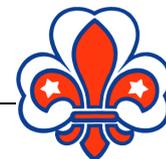
- ISGF has a partnership with WAGGGS and WOSM
- ISGF website provides information about Scouting / Guiding-led relief projects directly or through links to the appropriate website

To raise money through the Stamp Bank

- By collecting and sell used stamps individual members will give financial support to WAGGGS and WOSM

Any adult, who believes in Scouting or Guiding, by joining the ISGF, would not just be satisfied to live the Scout or Guide ideals in his/her own personal life or by occasionally helping the youth in

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Scouting or Guiding, but also participate in the great mission of spreading the “leaven” of adult Scouting & Guiding throughout the world.

Why should a Scout/Guide association support the ISGF?

One of ISGF’s aims is to support youth Scouting & Guiding. This takes place in a variety of services, as said above.

Furthermore, in many countries LSGFs also act as a reservoir of potential Scout/Guide leaders. In some countries leaders often leave the Scout and Guide Associations at the moment they enter employment or professional life and/or set up a family. Except in particular cases, they find it impossible to reconcile the very intensive commitment of being a Scout or Guide leader with professional and family life, especially at its early stages. A limited percentage of these leaders re-enter the Association as their children reach Scout & Guide age.

Suppose that, on leaving active leadership in the Scout/Guide Associations, an individual joins a LSGF – that is, a community inspired by the same values and principles, but drawing far less on one’s time and energies: then the chances of that person’s re-entering active Scouting / Guiding service at a later stage of his/her life would be much greater. Furthermore, he/she could continue to rely on the LSGF as a community that can provide back-up and appreciation for his/her service with the youth.

Experience shows that adults who have had the opportunity to join the ISGF, where there are programmes and activities that respond to their needs and aspirations, are more likely to resume service in the youth organisations. ISGF allows a NSGF to be a Section of a Scout/Guide Association (as opposed to an independent organisation) under conditions formulated in the Constitution. It is in the flexibility of its structures and in its capacity to respond to the needs, aspirations and wishes of the adults with attractive programmes and activities that the ISGF provides an added value to a country’s Scouting & Guiding.