

Daniel Horst | P.1
High goals

Ruedi Hächler | P. 2
ABÖJ Jungschar
Congress 2023

Sarina und Daniel Zinstag-Schröder | P. 3
How to create a good foundation
in Ethiopia?

Cosmin Tamas | P. 4
"The goodness
of God"

High goals

Daniel Horst, Managing Director of Youngstars International



From the 20th to the 26th of August 2023, 28 Youngstars leaders from six countries took part in the International Technical and Experiential Education Course in Kavlak, Bulgaria.

After having the first experiential education course in 2021, in the middle of the Corona period, we -as always- conducted a careful evaluation. The lesson learned: the next course needs to be much more practical. That's why, this time, I set myself the following three ambitious goals:

- Expert training in Youngstars technique, combined with experiential education principles and methods.
- Applying what I have learned to the planning and implementation of a Youngstars afternoon program.
- Experiencing and understanding a holistically unified program based on a Christian theme with the focus on Youngstars technique and experiential education.

Even during the planning stage, we realized how difficult it was to include all of this, under one hat, so to speak. Thus, the first few training days were packed. The day that had the theme of "I am the good shepherd" is a good example of this:

- An introduction to Youngstars technique: building a cooking pit and a shepherd's oven.

- Holistic program in the early afternoon: A visit to a shepherd who explained a lot about his flock and our futile attempt to imitate the shepherd and call the sheep in.
- Experiential educational elements: Joint reflection on the experience and personal processing - "Reading and reflecting on the biblical text about the Good Shepherd from the Gospel of John in the vicinity of the animals and the shepherd was a special experience."
- Holistic program afternoon - conclusion: Afterwards we "dug out" our food -which was very tasty. An in-depth cooperation game rounded off the holistic program: The teams were never allowed to let go of their "sheep" (a watermelon) entrusted to them. This gave them the practical experience of what it can mean for a shepherd to look after his sheep and be a good shepherd.

Every one of our courses is pure experiential education, where external elements play a major role. We struggled with heat, 37° in the shade, a lack of English on the part of some participants and time pressure. The training of the theoretical basics of experiential education was clearly neglected. Were we setting our sights too high? Yes and no - we achieved most of our goals. As a course leader, I think we found a good mix. However, if we want to go deeper in the future, we need to run this



Youngstars technical training and the experiential education in two separate courses.

ABÖJ Jungschar Congress 2023

Ruedi Hächler, Country Director ABÖJ Austria

Right at the beginning of this year's Youngstars Congress, our speaker managed to put the participants on the spot.

"Do you still remember last Sunday's sermon?" "What was the Bible text and what was the core message?" You probably feel the same way as most regular church service attendees. We forget spoken words (theory, information, instruction) very quickly. Armin Hartmann had us hooked with this introduction. The almost 40 participants listened attentively to his explanations on the topic of "Experiential education in Youngstars".

Peppered with lots of examples from his many years of practical experience and - read and be amazed - from the Bible, he made it clear that it is not the aim of Youngstars to impart theoretical knowledge. Rather, it is about transformation, a fundamental change. He explained what this looks like in practice, in an easily understandable way, using a learning circle (theory - action/practice - reflection). The examples based on biblical statements were particularly valuable.



Biblical statement	Analogy Metaphor	Action Experience
You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.	Guilt = heavy burden Mercy = forgiveness Depth of the sea = irretrievably gone	Write debts* on stones Carry stones in a backpack. Throw the stones in a lake or large pond and let them sink **

* My personal guilt or the guilt of others against me.

** Another question: What happens if I don't forgive others?

In various workshops, the participants were able to learn, for example, how a reflection can be designed or how spiritual truths can be made tangible with chemical and physical experiments.



We used the Saturday afternoon to try out two one-hour experiential education exercises that can easily be used in the youth group or at the next youth camp. Of course, there was also enough time for personal exchange, communal worship and half a good night's sleep.

From child to partner

Dorka Beke and Botond Pertis, main leaders of the Basic Training of the Youngstars organisation "Horgony" in Hungary

Promoting young talent and unleashing young potential are central and of the utmost importance. Although no camps could be organized this summer for capacity reasons, we still wanted to have the Basic Training course.

The 12 participants aged 15 and older were challenged to complete their own projects in groups, including:

- a lookout tower,
- a Hollywood swing,
- a small Robin Hood camp.

Every day they had time to continue working on their projects. They were introduced to important pedagogical and methodological topics in a practical and experiential way so that they could apply them to their projects or practical tasks. They had to lead a game or moderate group discussions. Through this course, the participants have now become partners with their former leaders from previous camps. They are no longer children who just take part in programs, but young adults who take on responsibility and leadership tasks. At the end of the course, they proudly presented us with the

results of their projects, which they had planned and built themselves.

The result was remarkable but demanded full and tireless commitment from the young people. By the end of the week, almost all participants were exhausted. We had great weather for most of the week. Nobody got injured during the activities. The young people were open to everything. Even those who we thought were not paying attention, gave their best in the end.

We were right to prioritize the promotion of young talent. New youth leaders are ready to collaborate with our organization. Our organization, Horgony Hungary, is working hard to ensure that many children and young people can experience another adventurous summer camp next year.

How to create a good foundation in Ethiopia?

Sarina and Daniel Zinsstag-Schröder, long-time employees of Juropa and Youngstars International



Listen attentively

"Ealow, go left, go left, go right!" Ealow, go straight ahead now! Now you've done it." The young man Ealow, who has just graduated from high school and now wants to study civil engineering, is trying to find his way blindfolded in a game. All the other players call out to him in which direction he should move to find the goal. But sometimes someone says his name and he knows, from the rules of the game that this direction must be correct. He wisely filters out the right voice and slowly but surely walks towards his goal. In the following reflection, an 18-year-old girl concludes: "Sometimes it's quite hard to listen when someone calls your name. But trusting the right voice leads to the goal. It's like listening to the wise voice of God".

A few days before the course, Sarina and I (Daniel Zinsstag) arrived in the capital of Ethiopia. It was the second time for me, but Sarina had never set foot on African soil before. We were picked up at the airport by an Ethiopian woman who speaks Swiss German and taken to the site. We were allocated a small apartment in the Selam Children's



Village. The reason for this family hospitality is partly due to the culture and partly because my father had worked for this organization for many years. A few years ago, he asked us if we would be willing to run a course for young people on the premises of this NGO. They specialize in caring for orphans, school children and training young professionals. We listened and kept putting it off for various reasons. Was it wise to go there now?

Speaking wisely

At eight o'clock on Monday morning, the man in charge took us to his office, where twelve motivated faces stared at me. I was surprised to see them all, as it had been agreed that we would talk about the training schedule. I hadn't expected all the participants to be here already. Our first cultural misunderstanding was quickly resolved. Everyone went home without disappointment and the introductory course started the next day. Although we both had some experience with international training and all participants understood a little English, we realized that there is a difference between saying something and saying it in the culturally appropriate way.

Acting wisely

We spent a few days teaching and practicing basic Youngstar activities. Then we prepared them to create their own program with the children in the field. The field game was completely new to them.

Nevertheless, Ealow took up the challenge and came up with his own game on the theme of the children's program: The Wise and the Foolish Master Builder. In keeping with the theme, he carved and made some houses out of cardboard at home.



New friends

We also wanted to make new friends in Ethiopia. Sarina and I enjoyed the challenge of passing on our Youngstar knowledge there together. It was quite easy to make friends with the locals. There is a coffee shop every 200 meters on the street. Once, when I passed two participants on our course early in the morning, they invited me to sit down. They wanted me to try their food, which one of them shoved a bite directly into my mouth with his hand.

We laughed a lot, took away pictures and insights and an invitation to come back. We went home with this open question. How can things continue there? Our current connection is the NGO. What would be the next wise step? We know we need to listen carefully to God to see if HE has a mission for us in Ethiopia.

“The goodness of God”

Cosmin Tamas, employee at Micii Exploratori, Romania

Team leader course from October 8 to 13 in Brazil

After a journey of more than 25 hours, four of a training team of six arrived in Brazil, a country with a warm culture where everything important seems to happen around a meal - not much different from my home country of Romania. We travelled all this way to present the Youngstars Team Leadership Training- a course highly anticipated by the leaders

in Brazil, eager to be trained as well as possible to lead their team.

All through the week, we were faced with challenges, the first being a cold and rainy week for the month of October in Brazil. The Introduction was even delayed by a severe rainstorm causing a vehicle with supplies to slid in the mud and some participants arrived late because of the rainy weather.



Even though we had sunny days on the first day – Sunday and on Wednesday, the rest of the week was plagued by rain. Feeling really cold in the mornings, we prayed for sunshine, and the goodness of God shone through along with the sunshine He sent. Now a new challenge came – we realised the 30 degrees turned the building we were in into an oven! Yet, we were grateful that God in His sovereignty always knows what we need to do the work further.

The Thursday was another moment when I saw the Goodness of God. We already had to change the schedule for Thursday and Friday because of the rain, but on Thursday Daniel Horst had a lesson planned on the important part that being in nature plays in Youngstars ministry. We really felt there was great need to present this lesson and so we prayed... and God gave us a window of two hours in which the rain stopped, and we were able to show how easily we can use Nature to do the work with the children.

The weather however did in no way damp the enthusiasm of the participants who seemed to absorb the information we shared - I have never seen diaries and notebooks so full of notes and information as by the end of this week.

The focus of the course was on developing the skills of a team leader, but God worked beyond our

expectations and transformed the lives of the participants.



After the lesson on Personal Organization, the participants realized what impact this can have not only in work but also in their personal lives. Several of them testified about the impact of the course during their feedback:

- "I realized that, in the team, it is important to have both types of people, the organized type and the messy type. Together they complement each other. I used to be very frustrated with my team because some are not as organized as I, but God does not create people the same. In a team each member completes the team. When I return home, I will serve the team with what God has given me, knowing that everyone brings a personal contribution to the team."
- "I realized that multiplication doesn't just happen, it's a process in which you have to be intentional, invest and let God work. After this course I want to find someone to invest in. The multiplication - that's what will make Radicais in Brazil grow and bring a change in our country."
- "Financial planning has become a personal subject for me, that I want to work on. I have not kept records of expenses in my family until now, but when I return home I want to write down all the income and expenses that we have as a family. I think that this to help us be more organized and sensible."

- "I realized that I don't always have to sit back and not get involved. The seminar on how to lead the team to make a semester program gave me the courage to leave my comfort zone. When I get home, I want to be day leader. Until now I was too afraid to do this."

When we go to courses, we pray for and long to see the Lord work in the lives of the participants. During this course however, God spoke to me personally. On the last day during the closing message Daniel spoke about the restoration of Peter from John 21:15- 19. God spoke to me personally, asking the same question, "With what kind of love do I love God? This forced me to look at what I am willing to sacrifice in His service. Am I willing to give more than a simple 10 days for a training? Which things were I keeping for myself and how much am I trusting the Lord to lead me?"



This week, the Goodness of God not only shaped the participants but also me as a leader.