



WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS

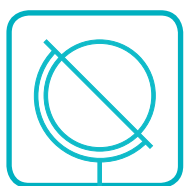
POSITION STATEMENT



BODY CONFIDENCE

As the world's only movement for every girl and any girl, WAGGGS believes that that no girl or young woman should be held back by worries about the way she looks. A body-confident girl feels free to be herself, to follow her dreams, fulfil her potential and make a difference in the world.

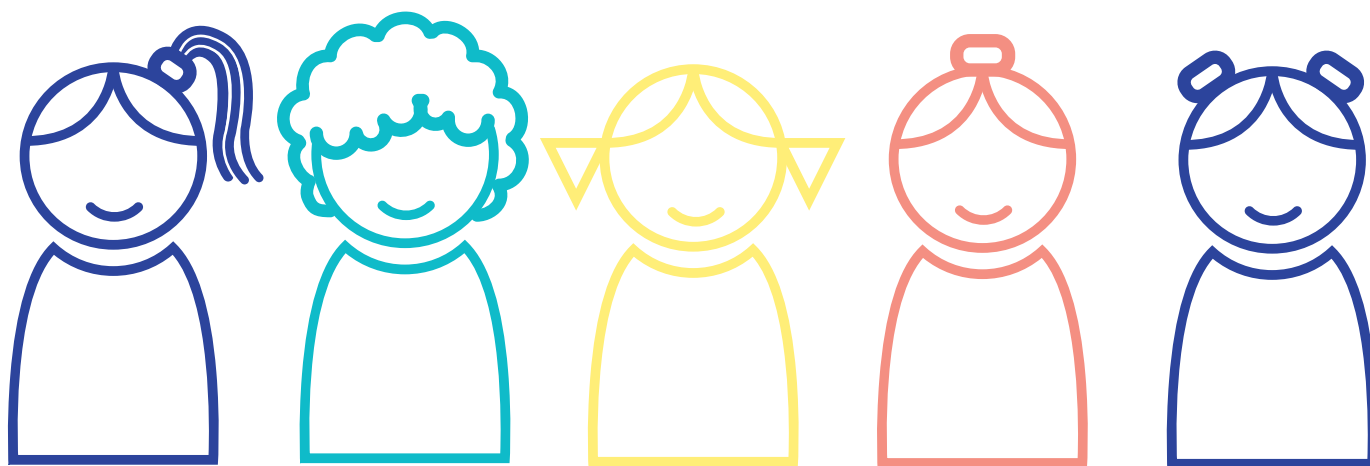
BACKGROUND



Low body-confidence and self-esteem affects girls and young women across the world.

In every society myths and stereotypes exist on what it means to be beautiful. Many young people feel under pressure to look a certain way and fit a narrow, homogenous image of beauty. Research shows that these issues are being exacerbated by a rise in social media usage. As technology gives more young people access to social media, the pressure to look and act a certain way is becoming more constant.¹ Globally, many girls and young women face discrimination because of how they look.

This discrimination and lack of body confidence is preventing girls from participating in leadership opportunities and directly impacting their ability to reach their potential and participate in important activities such as trying out for a team and engaging with loved ones. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) believe that body confidence and self-esteem are essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5: 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. To achieve women's effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making, girls need to be given the tools, spaces and confidence to learn and to be leaders and agents of change. No girl should be held back by worries about the way she looks.



1. Girlguiding UK 2016: <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/research-and-campaigns/girls-wellbeing-explored-think-resilient-report.pdf>



SCALE OF THE PROBLEM



Low body-esteem is causing the majority of women **(85%)** and girls **(79%)** worldwide to opt out of important life activities – such as trying out for a team or club and engaging with family or loved ones.²

Girlguiding UK's 2018 Girls Attitudes Survey found that **29%** of 11-16 year olds and **41%** of 17-21 year olds are not happy with the way they look. **52%** report feeling ashamed of the way they look because they're not like girls and women in the media.³

7 IN 10 women and girls think that the media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty.⁴

A U-Report Poll carried out by WAGGGS and UNICEF found that **59%** of girls feel pressure to change their appearance⁵ and skin bleaching is the second biggest body image issue faced by 20-24 year olds.⁶

Due to low self-esteem and body confidence, **7 IN 10** girls will not be assertive in their opinion or stick to their decisions.⁷

When girls don't feel good about how they look, **7 IN 10** girls will stop themselves from eating or otherwise put their health at risk.⁸

2. Dove 2017: https://www.unilever.com/Images/dove-girls-beauty-confidence-report-infographic_tcm244-511240_en.pdf

3. Girlguiding UK 2018: <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/research-and-campaigns/girls-attitudes-survey-2018.pdf>

4. Dove 2016: https://www.unilever.com/Images/global-beauty-confidence-report-infographic_tcm244-501412_en.pdf

5. UNICEF 2017: <https://ureport.in/poll/1964/>

6. UNICEF 2019: <https://ureport.in/poll/3255/>

7. Dove (2017): 'Girls and Beauty Confidence: The Global Report' https://www.unilever.com/Images/dove-girls-beauty-confidence-report-infographic_tcm244-511240_en.pdf

8. Ibid



CALL TO ACTION

193 countries around the world have adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals, agreeing to address poverty and global inequality. The SDGs are a clarion call to global leaders to ensure that all people can prosper and that no one is left behind. Goal 5 specifically focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Target 5.1 calls for an end to ALL forms of discrimination against women and girls and Target 5.5 calls for women's effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making.

For these targets to be realised and to ensure that women and girls are not left behind, but instead have the confidence to lead, make decisions and exercise their rights, governments must take active steps in progressing the Sustainable Development Goals. This will take a whole of government approach and needs to incorporate relevant sectors such as civil society and the corporate and media industry.

We therefore call for the following immediate action:

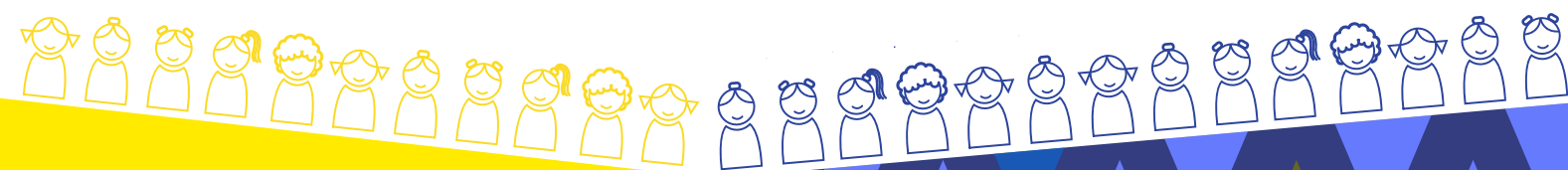
GOVERNMENTS:

- Flag icon Fund and carry out research to establish a national baseline understanding of the nature, prevalence and implications of low body confidence.
- Flag icon Integrate body confidence culture into school curriculum and activities. Schools have a vital role to play in supporting body confidence through incorporating it into classroom teaching and extracurricular activities.
- Flag icon Support and fund non-formal education programmes that address issues of body confidence and self-esteem particularly girl and boy only spaces.
- Flag icon Create/implement advertising standards that ensure that advertisements do not use airbrushing in a way that is misleading or potentially harmful. Obligate media outlets to state when they have used airbrushing and other enhancement techniques.

MEDIA:

- Flag icon Media (television, print and online magazines and advertisers) to stop propagating unobtainable body ideals and portray a diversity of women and girls with a broad range of healthy body types across media channels.

Continued



CORPORATE INDUSTRY:

- Corporate and health sectors to stop producing and advertising products and services that aim to alter the appearance and that can cause danger to health such as skin lightening or weight-loss products.
- Fashion industry to stop promoting underweight models and to use models who represent a wide range of body types and appearances.

CIVIL SOCIETY:

- Include body confidence education in all programmatic work with young people.
- All campaigns and programmatic work focused on improving young people's mental health should include body confidence.
- Include body confidence in the design and implementation of campaigns on SDG5.

CASE STUDY



Angeli is a member of Girl Scouts of the Philippines, she represented WAGGGS at the Women Deliver conference in Denmark in 2016 and spoke about Free Being Me. "Before I came to Copenhagen, I met up with some friends. Instead of asking me how I was, they immediately asked the question, "Why are you so dark?" As if my skin colour is the most important story in my life. In the Philippines, you will be surprised with the obsession of girls and women with whitening products, and the huge billboard advertisements.

Having dark coloured skin is devastating. It is associated with being poor, ugly, lower class. This has cost girls their education...

I was 14 when I first attended a Dove self-esteem session at a national Girl Scout camp. I was able to confront insecurities and fears in my own body. The confidence that I gained helped me find that capacity to lead young people...

In the Philippines at least 600,000 girls will be reached through Free Being Me over the next three years. Cultural change is a big challenge to overcome but for a girl who believes in herself, ain't no mountain high enough. Imagine a world where millions of girls believe that they can make the world a better place to live, regardless of their size, race or colour - a future where girls and women can reach their full potential."