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**Innovative HIV and AIDS training toolkit developed by girls and young women**

**5 August 2008, Mexico City** - The World Association of Girl Guides and Scouts, WAGGGS, today introduced its new innovative HIV and AIDS training toolkit which empowers young women to protect themselves against HIV infection, to advocate in their communities and to fight stigma and fear at AIDS 2008 in Mexico City.

The toolkit, developed by girls and young women, combines case study material alongside activities that have proved successful in several countries around the world: Brazil, Peru, Malawi, Kenya and India. WAGGGS received US \$100,000 funding from UNAIDS to develop this project.

WAGGGS Chief Executive, Mary Mc Phail, says: *"We believe that education and empowerment of young people in formal and non-formal settings is a key approach to fight HIV and AIDS, with special attention paid to the needs of girls and young women. This toolkit will be a great resource to increase our capacity to train girls and young women on HIV prevention and stigma reduction."*

WAGGGS' new toolkit focuses on women and young girls as they are more physically vulnerable to contracting the virus. Also, in many countries they have limited control over their sexual health and less access to education and HIV information which puts them at greater risk. Armed with accurate and useful information about the disease and its prevention girls and women can protect themselves and help reduce the spread of the virus.

The toolkit includes activities designed to assist leaders and promote discussion. The booklets cover information about HIV and AIDS, training in life skills and how to tackle prejudice and discrimination. In many countries girls won't have any other access to this information.

The resource is being distributed to all 145 WAGGGS Member Organizations and an international training programme is being developed.

**Ends**

**Note to Editors**

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## **Member Organizations in the WAGGGS HIV and AIDS Training Toolkit:**

**Brazil:** The first developing country to offer universal access to HIV treatment via the national health-care system. More than 180,000 people have access to free treatment. While the percentage of young people who are sexually active in Brazil changed little between 1998 and 2005, condom use has increased dramatically — by more than one third among 15 to 24 year-old men and women. Among Brazilians of all ages, the increase was almost 50 per cent during that period.

**India:** Recently revised figures state that the country it has 2.5 million people living with HIV and AIDS and has the highest rate of HIV infections in Asia. However, the focus of the new AIDS Control Plan is to involve community based organizations in prevention activities among high-risk groups and increase the availability of anti-retroviral treatment.

**Kenya:** Over the past decade, HIV prevalence has decreased as HIV services have been scaled up. General awareness and knowledge of HIV transmission are improving. However, among young people aged 15 to 24, only 47 per cent of boys and 34 per cent of young girls understand HIV prevention.

**Malawi:** According to UNAIDS, there are 940,000 people HIV-infected at the moment and because of AIDS, about 550,000 orphans. The Malawi project on sexual behaviour change is supported by the National AIDS Commission, a co-ordinated effort between the government and a voluntary organization to increase overall impact. The Malawi Girl Guides Association (MGGA) has multiplied their membership by four through their HIV and AIDS projects. Started with 2,500 members in 2002 and they counted 11,044 members in 2007.

**Peru:** Since 2003, the Asociación Nacional de Guías Scouts del Perú (ANGSP) has been carrying out a project called 'Tú decides' ('You decide') aimed at fighting risks such as early pregnancy, sexual transmitted diseases and HIV and AIDS among adolescent girls. In 2007 they ran the third phase of their project in five regions of Peru – Arequipa, Ayacucho, Chiclayo, Huancavelica and Lima. The goal was to reach 700 girls in 2007 and 900 more in 2008. The project has been supported by the WAGGGS Mutual Aid scheme, which promotes co-operation between Member Organizations, and received support from the UK, Finland and Canada.

### **About WAGGGS**

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) is the largest international organization providing non-formal education for girls and young women to develop leadership and life skills through self-development, challenge and adventure. WAGGGS' vision is to be a growing worldwide movement and the voice of girls and young women who influence issues they care about and build a better world.

Besides the WAGGGS HIV and AIDS Training Toolkit, a wide range of approaches are included in WAGGGS' campaign to fight against HIV and AIDS such as the AIDS Badge curriculum, launched in partnership with UNAIDS and ICASO in 1999, the advocacy work based on the slogan 'fight AIDS' and support for projects carried out by Member Organizations around the world.

WAGGGS is an organization with 10 million girls and one voice. It is involved in a number of advocacy issues in addition to HIV and AIDS, such as education, prevention of trafficking of girls and women and adolescent girls' health, including food, drugs, smoking and sex education.