



MEDIA RELEASE

Girl Guides adopt frank and open approach in worldwide AIDS programme

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10 July 2008, Johannesburg – The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) today launched an HIV and AIDS training toolkit designed to strengthen the movement's role in combating the pandemic in 140-plus countries where it has member organisations

The launch was one of the highlights of the 33rd World Conference of WAGGGS taking place in Johannesburg. Some 450 country representatives not only got their first look at the hot-off-the-press toolkit, but spent a good part of the day getting to grips with its practical use.

WAGGGS CEO Mary Mc Phail described the content of kit as “very frank and very full”. She said that the kit was intended as a resource for leaders and trainers in the Guiding and Scouting movement.

“It is an absolutely comprehensive resource that we are making available to young men and women to enable them to feel confident that they can work with their troupes. We want them to be safe in relation to sexual practice and in the assistance they can offer others.”

The toolkit was produced over a period of more than a year by drawing on the experiences of national Guiding and Scouting organisations in Brazil, India, Kenya, Malawi and Peru.

Mexican First Lady Margarita Zavala will project the toolkit more widely to the global community of HIV and AIDS interest groups at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City in August.

The kit aims to improve knowledge of HIV and AIDS, to develop the personal power of individuals to deal with HIV and AIDS in their own lives, and to break down the stigma that still attaches to people affected.

WAGGGS is encouraging member organisations in all countries to recommit themselves to confronting AIDS, even where prevalence is relatively low. "We are all absolutely affected by this pandemic," Ms Mc Phail insisted. "We want all our members to be safe, to protect themselves and to support their communities."

The Girl Guide and Girl Scout movement has 10 million individual members around the world. In a large number of countries they already undertake work in the field of HIV and AIDS prevention and care. The purpose of the toolkit is to improve the effectiveness of this work by including interventions that have proved successful in a variety of countries.

Maria Luiza Mury Alves was actively involved in the creation of the toolkit as chairman of the Brazilian Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. One of the elements that Brazil contributed to the kit was a set of interactive games designed to build knowledge of HIV and AIDS.

Brazil has been widely recognised for the quality of its HIV prevention and AIDS treatment programmes. Ms Mury identified openness as a key success factor in enabling people to adopt safe sex practices. "With openness people can understand (about HIV and AIDS) *and* they can change."

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