

Leadership

Our nearly 100 years of experience have taught us that education and training are key to improving confidence, career opportunities and aspirations of girls and young women to discover their potential as leaders. Many women in top roles in politics, the media, business and sport are former Girl Guides or Girl Scouts.

Leadership development has been at the heart of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting ever since the Movement started. WAGGGS enables girls and young women to develop leadership and life skills through self-development, challenge and adventure. They, in turn are equipped to help improve their communities, their countries, and the world and provide inspiration to their peers and younger girls.

Today WAGGGS is building upon its successes by providing cutting-edge leadership training for young women across the globe in our World Centre and regional seminars such as 'Lead and Advocate', 'Leaders in Action' and our progressive WAGGGS Leadership Development Programme (WLDP). We work with and share our experience with other organizations in order to provide the best possible approach to leadership development to our membership.

Great leap forward

WAGGGS focuses on nurturing the leadership potential in each individual Girl Guide and Girl Scout and ensures they have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to take on responsible roles at every level. Planning and attending events like the 'Lead and Advocate' seminar in Sangam often prove to be turning points in the lives of young women like Charlotte Wong, a Unit Guider and Guide section consultant in Hong Kong.

"I was so excited to be invited as one of the planning team members of the seminar held in Sangam in November. Seven years after my first visit to the World Centre, I was no longer just a participant to look for self-growth, but someone who could facilitate the event and help develop other people's potential," she says.

Charlotte, 28, has been a Guide since she was seven years old and is one of many young women who has developed their leadership skills over the years through WAGGGS. As well as helping to plan last year's seminar in Sangam, Charlotte was selected to attend the Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Malaysia as a delegate.





"I was involved in Guiding for a long time as a key player in my unit and district but only within Hong Kong. I wanted to contribute further at a regional and international level, but was not sure if I was talented enough. These experiences gave me the confidence and served as a "yes" message. These are just like the stepping stones, and have encouraged me to stay in the Movement and go further."

Charlotte also attributes her career progress to experiences gained through Guiding. She adds: *"I work in an international firm with co-workers in different parts of the world. Being promoted to management level recently, I find my cross-cultural Guiding experiences extremely useful. It is not too difficult for me now to motivate my team based in Hong Kong and Europe to work closely and efficiently with each other."*

New leadership programme

The 'Lead and Advocate' seminar was part of the pilot for the new WAGGGS Leadership Development Programme (WLDP). The seminar planning team drew many materials from the modules which have been developed as part of the WLDP and combined them with exercises they had used before as experienced trainers.

Communication with an emphasis on inter-cultural understanding was a key part of the seminar along with leadership theory and advocacy.

Facing modern traditions

Girl Guides and Girl Scouts agree that attending international events gives them an insight into other cultures and different ways of doing things.

British Guide leader Sarah Rees, 33, was inspired by the impact of inter-cultural working at the 'Leaders in Action II', a Western Hemisphere Region workshop held at Our Cabaña in Mexico in January.

A leader for ten years, Sarah was delighted her expectations were fulfilled at the seminar, which focused on five key WAGGGS' topics including eating healthy food, preventing adolescent pregnancy, fighting AIDS, talking about sex and discovering one's potential.

"The girls in the Americas discussed topics around AIDS, sexual health and sex in a way that they wouldn't ever do at home and at that point I realised that I felt a cultural affinity with them," she says.

Sarah added: *"The event was electric and the participants came away with a level of enthusiasm that they took home. The topics we covered were, from my perspective, new, novel and really what young people today want to talk about – not what adults think they want or need to hear about."*

Other key leadership events in 2007

Looking at how personal and organizational values within Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting can influence leadership development was the main focus of the 'Values and Leadership Today' seminar for trainers at Pax Lodge. While in April, 23 young women gathered at Our Chalet for the 5th Helen Storrow Seminar to focus on strategies for strengthening the WAGGGS effort to combat HIV and AIDS around the world.

A network of young Girl Guide and Girl Scout leaders has decided to target inner city areas to develop Guiding and Scouting, following a seminar in Jambville, outside Paris, in November. And Guides in the Arab Region set a trend last November by including Commissioners alongside young women in a five-day leadership training in Oman.

WAGGGS Leadership Development Programme

We have been developing the WAGGGS Leadership Development Programme (WLDP) which covers topic areas that enhance leadership skills and personal growth.

The WLDP will strengthen our organization by addressing the needs of our Member Organizations and giving support in specific areas of leadership development. This is part of our ongoing commitment to assisting Member Organizations in their succession planning.

It will also have benefits at an individual level: for those currently in a leadership role, changing leadership roles or moving into a new leadership role, attending a WLDP event will not only strengthen their capacity but have a positive effect on other areas of their lives.

WAGGGS is working with a leading university in order to create high quality learning materials. We continue to network actively with other youth organizations with an interest in leadership development.

The WLDP will be officially launched at the World Conference in 2008.