

“let’s talk about adolescent health”

Seven Key Messages and Action Points from the Survey

KEY MESSAGE 1 Girls worldwide say “fight AIDS”

Nearly a quarter of girls surveyed know somebody living with AIDS. Girl Guides and Girl Scouts were asked which of the following issues would be important for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to talk to world leaders. They said:

- HIV / AIDS – 37%
- Adolescent pregnancy – 24%
- Sexually transmitted conditions – 22%
- Eating disorders – 17%

Action

Girls and young women call the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to take a stand on HIV and AIDS around the world. Almost all Member Organizations are already running projects on HIV and AIDS in their own countries. We need to continue the dynamic and inspiring work that is being carried out. Girl Guides and Girl Scouts can earn the AIDS Badge by undertaking activities in three areas through the AIDS Badge Curriculum: fighting fear, shame and injustice; prevention through change in behaviour; and care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS. The World Association is building a strong partnership with UNAIDS to have an even greater impact on preventing HIV and AIDS among young people.

KEY MESSAGE 2 Girls worldwide say “make healthy food choices”

89% of girls surveyed believe that young people are told how to keep healthy but 54% responded by saying that people chose not to eat healthy food.

Action

As part of our Building World Citizenship theme, almost 40 Member Organizations worked on Food and Nutrition projects. The World Association works closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization on its ‘Feeding Minds, Helping Hunger campaign’ and is launching a new initiative on the ‘Right to Food’ within the Our Rights, Our Responsibilities theme.

The survey indicates that we should continue our work on healthy eating, and give advice on diet including the benefits of healthy eating for each Region.

KEY MESSAGE 3 Girls worldwide say “prevent adolescent pregnancy”

80% of girls surveyed believe that adolescent pregnancy is an issue in their country. 42% of girls and young women want the World Association to launch its own sex education programme, with 39% of those surveyed wanting us to work on this issue at the community level.

Action

Girls and young women call the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to continue to promote access to education and information about sexual and reproductive health. They believe we should act at grassroots level through projects and through a global campaign which educates young women.

The World Association’s Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy campaign has been running for over five years with over 30 Member Organizations participating. The campaign has resulted in many countries looking at how pregnant teenagers or young mothers can be included in the Girl Guiding/ Girl Scouting programme, and in young women taking action at a local and national level to reduce the numbers of adolescent pregnancies. The World Association’s way of working enables girls and young women to talk openly about issues such as sexual and reproductive health among their peers and in a safe environment.

KEY MESSAGE 4 Girls worldwide say “it is important to talk about sex”

A third of girls surveyed confirmed that their parents first told them about sex. However, 38% said that girls receive no sex education at all in their countries. 85% of those surveyed say they would feel more comfortable talking to girls their own age. 61% said they wanted to make up their own minds about when to have intimate relationships and not be persuaded by their peers.

Action

Girls and young women call the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to take a stand on the importance of discussing sex. Peer education is an important part of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting, giving girls and young women the space and the opportunity to discuss issues which are important to them with their peers, giving them the confidence to make sensible choices and to develop their own values.

KEY MESSAGE 5 Girls worldwide say “let’s talk about the danger of drugs”

Over half the girls surveyed believe that young women do not understand the dangers of drug addiction. Almost one third of girls have been offered drugs. 31% believe that girls and young women take drugs out of desperation or depression and a quarter of them believe they take drugs because it is fashionable. 69% confirmed that it is easy to get illegal drugs, with 56% personally knowing someone addicted to drugs.

Action

Girls and young women call the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to take a stand on drugs and educating young women about the dangers of drug addiction. The World Association works closely with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. Several Member Organizations are already working on drug prevention projects. The World Association should continue and extend its work on drug prevention. We should also look at providing alternative extra curricular activities and a safe and supportive environment for young women who are susceptible to taking drugs.

KEY MESSAGE 6 Girls worldwide say “ban smoking in public places”

83% of girl guides worldwide believe that smoking should be banned in all public places.

Action

Girls and young women call the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to take a stand on smoking. The World Association and our Member Organizations should try to influence Governments and businesses at all levels, using these survey findings to bring in laws banning smoking in public places.

KEY MESSAGE 7 Girls worldwide say “discover your potential”

82% of girls surveyed feel under pressure to look and dress in a certain way. 36% of girls began caring about how they looked before the age of 12. Friends were listed as the biggest influence (39%) on the way young women choose to look.

Action

Girls and young women call on the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to continue to help them develop self confidence and self esteem. Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting can provide a safe and supportive environment in which girls and young women can cultivate their own set of values and grow in confidence.