

# WAGGGS POSITION STATEMENT

## Girls' and young women's access to education

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) believes that girls and young women must be at the centre of all policy and programme addressing access to formal and non-formal education. The present and the future of humankind are in the hands of our young and future generations and in particular in the hands of girls and young women. As the voice of girls and young women, WAGGGS has identified the UN Millennium Development Goal 2 on access to primary education as a priority issue on which to take a stand and speak out, with special focus on achieving greater recognition of non-formal education as part of a holistic and comprehensive approach to education.

WAGGGS provides millions of girls and young women with non-formal education, giving them the opportunity to develop self-esteem, confidence and life skills. Working with Member Organizations in 145 countries, our vision is to build a better world through advocacy, education and action. We aim to speak out on behalf of girls and young women everywhere, as well as empower young women to speak out for themselves and for other girls. Our global action theme 'together we can change our world' encourages WAGGGS members to take actions to help achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals.

**WAGGGS calls on the international community to actively support free, quality and basic education by 2015 and reverse the unacceptably slow progress on girls' education by:**

- **Supporting** organizations involved the promotion of the education of girls and young women
- **Increasing** political commitment to give women's and girls' education a higher priority
- **Introducing** poverty-reduction strategies to ensure that the right to education is the right of every child
- **Eliminating** gender discrimination including the promotion of educational programmes that challenge traditional attitudes of men and boys toward women and girls
- **Providing** universal access to basic social and education services
- **Recognizing** non-formal education as a positive method of learning

**WAGGGS urges Member Organizations to:**

- **Emphasize** the importance of non-formal education to their governments
- **Work** in partnership with other NGOs and UN agencies
- **Build** confidence in girls and young women and break down gender stereotypes about education
- **Encourage** Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to get involved in Information Technology (IT), science, mathematics, sports and technology. Build these subjects into the curriculum and provide badges to motivate the girls
- **Find** out about the issue—Are girls excluded from school in your country? If so, what are the reasons for this?
- **Lobby** the international community to fulfil its promises to provide free, compulsory public basic education for all children by 2015

**How WAGGGS is addressing girls' education:**

- The World Association provides millions of girls and young women with non-formal education, giving them the opportunity to develop confidence, leadership and life skills.
- Key aspects of WAGGGS' non-formal education methods are learning by doing, volunteerism, and peer group learning. For instance, through its Building Peace Among Children project, WAGGGS trained young women from countries affected by conflict in Africa to be volunteer peace ambassadors among their peers.
- Through WAGGGS, girls and young women are given unique opportunities – in leadership, in global citizenship, in international travel and intercultural learning.
- WAGGGS works with a number of international partners on education including UNICEF and UNESCO.
- WAGGGS' Member Organizations ran 107 education projects between 1996 and 2002 - from lessons in citizenship for Girl Guides in Ireland to IT training for young women
- in Egypt.
- WAGGGS' theme for 2002 to 2008, Our Rights, Our Responsibilities, focuses on the right to learn.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **Thai Girl Guides build Educational Development Centre for the Communities**

The Girl Guide Association of Thailand (GGAT) is renovating its Educational Development Centre in the northern region. Located only 15 kilometres from Chiang Mai it is very convenient to cater to the needs of activities for the schools in the region. It also serves as a camp site for programs lasting for several days. GGAT continues to raise funds to conduct necessary work on the fences, roads, shower rooms and roof of the building.

The Educational Development Center for the Communities is open for Girl Guides from all over the world as well as for Thai schools and the public in the region. The activities offered by the Centre are in line with training girls and young women to realize their own potential and their rights to stand up and raise their voices in public.

### **Health Education Centre in Pakistan**

The Pakistan Girl Guides Association (PGGA) is carrying out an educational project in Samsani Khui village addressing the issues of Health, Literacy, Food and Nutrition, Recreation and Environment in mothers and children. The project is called 'Health and Welfare of Mother and Child' and is based in a Health Education Centre.

The PGGA aims to provide activities such as literacy classes for mothers and children, recreational activities for children, income generating activities, medical facilities for mothers and children, health and family planning education for mothers, an awareness of immunization programmes and Girl Guiding.

The project originally ran until 2005 and was expanded in 2006 with financial help from the Olave Baden-Powell Society. With this additional funding PGGA could add more rooms to their education centre and deliver non-formal educational programmes to more girls and young women from this community.

**“...There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls.”**

*Kofi A. Annan, former UN Secretary-General*

## Girls' Education Globally

- Education is a basic human right and fundamental to the fight for human dignity and freedom. Of the total number of primary school age children in the world who are not enrolled in school, 42% – 28 million – live in poor countries affected by conflict<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, insecurity and fear associated with sexual violence keep young girls, in particular, out of school.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 194 countries, obliges member states to “make primary education compulsory and available free to all.” According to the UNESCO Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2010, there were 72 million children out of school in 2007. Business as usual would leave 56 million children out of school in 2015. Around 54% of children out of school are girls. In sub-Saharan Africa, almost 12 million girls may never enroll<sup>2</sup>.
- Even if girls start school, they are far less likely to complete their education. Girls who miss out on primary education grow up to become illiterate women who are more likely to become HIV positive, live in poverty and pass on their vulnerabilities to their own children – if they survive. Two-thirds of the world's uneducated children are girls, and two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women<sup>3</sup>.
- Economic hardship can mean many parents view survival as the main priority and often co-opt their children, especially girls, as additional labour resources, or keep them at home to help with household chores and care. According to the ILO, the current total of children in hazardous work is estimated at 115 million; there is a recent rise in hazardous work among older children – an increase of 20 per cent within 4 years<sup>4</sup>.
- Cultural and patriarchal family structures tend to prioritise the needs of boys over girls. Other obstacles to girls' education include a shortage of school space, lack of female teachers, long distances to travel, unaffordable fees and gender based violence.
- The earning potential of women is often lower than men as fewer women study subjects that lead to economic success. Education equips girls and women with the ability to acquire and process information and increase earning power. Every year of schooling lost represents a ten to 20 per cent reduction in girls' future incomes<sup>5</sup>.
- In 2005 the world missed the first Millennium Development Goal: to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005. Despite some improvement in girls' enrolment over the past decade (particularly in Asia), the rate at which the gender gap is closing especially with regard to secondary education will need to be accelerated if the gender parity targets are to be met by 2015.
- Girls' education ranks among the most powerful tools for reducing girls' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. It can help slow and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS by contributing to female economic independence, delayed marriage and family planning, as well as greater information about the disease and how to prevent it.
- According to the AED learning Group, secondary school offers a valuable opportunity to catch girls, when they are most vulnerable and receptive to learning about healthy behaviours. In Zambia for example AIDS spread s twice as fast amongst uneducated girls<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (2011). *Education For All Global Monitoring Report: Hidden Crisis – Armed Conflict and Education*. Paris. For further information: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2011-conflict/>

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO (2010). *Education For All Global Monitoring report: Reaching the Marginalized*. Paris. For more information: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001865/186525E.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> World Bank (2008). *Girls' Education in the 21st Century Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth*. Washington. For more information: [http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/DID\\_Girls\\_edu.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/DID_Girls_edu.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> International Labor Organization (2011). *Children in hazardous work: What we know, What we need to do*. Geneva. For more information: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_155428.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_155428.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UNGEI (2005). *Girls' Can't Wait*. New York. For more information: [http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/gce\\_girlscantwait9C916A6F.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/gce_girlscantwait9C916A6F.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Academy for Educational Development (2006). *Keeping the Promise: Five Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education*. Washington. For more information: <http://www.aed.org/Publications/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&pageid=15504>