



World Association
of Girl Guides
and Girl Scouts

Association mondiale
des Guides et des
Eclaireuses

Asociación
Mundial de las
Guías Scouts

WAGGGS POSITION STATEMENT

Girls and young women addressing hunger and food security

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 developments that aim to ensure food security. It is unacceptable for hunger and malnutrition to continue affecting particularly girls and women in a world that has the knowledge and resources to provide adequate food for all. 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 1 on eradicating hunger and extreme poverty as a priority issue on which to take a stand and speak out, with special focus on eradicating hunger and ensuring food security.

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 and national governments to ensure that all people, including girls and young women, are free from hunger, have access to adequate and safe food and are supported in making healthy food choices by:

- **Alleviating** the constraints faced by women in accessing food and ensuring gender-responsive interventions to improve household food security and nutrition
- **Involving** girls and young women in planning and the provision of programmes that affect their food security
- **Ensuring** that girls and women have the knowledge, skills, opportunities and resources to produce their own food or to earn income to buy it
- **Taking** steps through nutritional education, information and food labelling to promote balanced diets and healthy eating habits
- **Strengthening** action on counteracting obesity, including regulating nutritional labelling, education on healthy diet choices and ensuring access to, and availability of, healthier food for children
- **Providing** support for, and access to, physical activities in the local community, and in schools

WAGGGS urges Member Organizations to:

- **Support** Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to get involved in the fight against hunger and malnutrition and provide materials and badges to motivate members

- **Encourage** groups that are working on food and nutrition projects to apply for the FAO- WAGGGS Nutrition Medal
- **Work** in partnership with other Member Organizations, NGOs and UN agencies to support food and nutrition projects
- **Lobby** the international community to fulfil its promises to reduce, by half, the number of those who suffer from hunger, by 2015

How WAGGGS is addressing food and nutrition:

- WAGGGS works with a number of international partners on food and nutrition. It carries out projects related to FAO's "Feeding Minds Fighting Hunger" initiative.
- WAGGGS works closely with the International Alliance Against Hunger, a voluntary association of alliances in developing and developed countries, working towards eradicating hunger and poverty.
- Every October, the FAO-WAGGGS Nutrition Medal is awarded to Girl Guides and Girl Scouts working on food issues in their communities. So far, more than sixteen Member Organizations have received the medal for outstanding work. For example in Chile, Kenya and Pakistan, projects have improved the awareness of and access to healthy foods in poorer communities.
- In cooperation with FAO, WAGGGS published '*The Right to Food – A Window on the World*' cartoon book and activity guide. The book, which is illustrated by young people for young people, contains cartoon stories addressing food topics in eight countries around the world.
- The theme for WAGGGS' World Thinking Day 2005 was about food. Girl Guides and Girl Scouts were encouraged to find out more about food topics related to a specific country and about nutrition in general. Activities aimed at raising awareness on the right to food and the importance of a balanced diet. At least 70 countries took part; for example, the Danish Guide and Scout Association produced a brochure on healthy eating featuring different countries from around the world.
- The WAGGGS theme Building World Citizenship (1997-2002) involved more than 27 Member Organizations that carried out 45 food and nutrition projects.
- WAGGGS published another position statement on healthy food choices that focuses on healthy eating and eating disorders.

CASE STUDY

Joining Forces against Hunger

WAGGGS has joined forces with FAO to educate girls and young women around the world about the basic right to be free from hunger and malnutrition and to motivate them to become actively involved in the fight against hunger. By providing practical tools such as a cartoon story book and activity guide '*The Right to Food: A Window on the World*' we prepare and encourage girls and young women and their leaders to work together with us in the global fight against hunger.

Both books present right to food issues in a simple, understandable and attractive style to capture the attention of girls and young women. The story book includes eight individual stories, each of which highlights selected right to food issues in eight countries: Brazil, Canada, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The illustrations for each story were drawn by young artists, art students and Girl Guides/Girl Scouts through national contests, organized in eight countries. The teacher's guide provides additional information and learning material about the right to food, simple teaching tools, games and activities.

"We recognize that the nutritional well-being of all people is a pre-condition for the development of societies and that it should be a key objective of progress in human development. It must be at the centre of our socio-economic development plans and strategies."

World Declaration on Nutrition, 1992

Food and Nutrition Globally

- Children suffer most from hunger, also referred to as malnutrition or undernutrition. It is estimated by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) that today 925 million people across the world are hungry and poor nutrition plays a role in at least half of the 10.9 million child deaths each year--five million deaths¹.
- Seven in every ten of the world's hungry are girls and women. One in three of the world's malnourished children lives in India. According to UNICEF, malnutrition in children is not affected by food intake alone; it is also influenced by access to health services, quality of care for the child and pregnant mother as well as good hygiene practices. Girls are more at risk of malnutrition than boys because of their lower social status².
- Hunger manifests itself in many ways other than starvation and famine. Malnutrition can be an invisible killer. Most poor people who battle hunger deal with chronic under-nourishment resulting in stunted growth, weakness and heightened susceptibility to illness. Under-nutrition magnifies the effect of every disease, including measles malaria, diarrhea and AIDS³.
- Hunger also reduces school attendance more for girls than for boys. Of the 68 million out-of-school primary-school-age children, 53 per cent are girls (UNESCO Data Centre 2010). Hungry girls start school later, if at all, learn less or do not finish, resulting in lower earnings and increased risk of future hunger and a life of poverty.
- Each year, more than one million children under five die from vitamin A and zinc deficiencies. Anemia is the single most prevalent cause of micronutrient malnutrition which leads to a lack of energy, lower productivity and a reduction in the body's ability to fight disease: more than 130,000 women and children die each year because of iron deficiency anemia. In addition, eighteen million children per year are born with impaired mental abilities because of iodine deficiencies⁴.
- Good nutrition is not only about quantity of food, but also its quality. The nutritional value of food must be enhanced with micronutrients. Supplementary feeding programmes, food fortification, school feeding; food-for-work and nutrition education and consumer awareness programmes are the types of targeted programmes most commonly used to improve nutrition.
- In 2009, UNAIDS estimated that 1.8 million people died from AIDS. Globally, there are 16.6 million AIDS orphans⁵. Most of them have never learned how their mothers grew and prepared food. HIV/AIDS affects girls' and women's nutrition and food security. It reduces their ability to feed and care for themselves. This can lead to malnutrition, which can accelerate the development of AIDS. It is especially important for girls and women living with HIV/AIDS to eat healthy, well-balanced diets. Good diets prevent weight loss and help girls and women to stay healthy longer.

¹ FAO (2010). *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome. For further information: www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1683e/i1683e.pdf

² UNICEF (2008). *The State of the World's Children*. New York. For further information: www.unicef.org/sowc08/index.php and www.unicef.org/publications/files/Tracking_Progress_on_Child_and_Maternal_Nutrition_EN_110309.pdf

³ World Hunger Education Service (2011). *2011 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics*. For further information: www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm and www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/child_hunger_facts.htm

⁴ Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (2009). *Investing in the Future*. Washington. For further information: http://www.gainhealth.org/sites/default/files/report/investing_in_the_future_pdf_11749.pdf

⁵ UNAIDS (2010). *Global Report on the AIDS Epidemic*. New York. For further information: <http://www.unaids.org/globalreport/>