

COP21

UN CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE 2015

A POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE WORLD
ASSOCIATION OF GIRL GUIDES & GIRL SCOUTS



Climate change is the defining challenge of our time and poses a critical threat to our future. As the leading voluntary organization for girls and young women, with 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 146 countries, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) has a responsibility to speak out on behalf of girls and their right to inherit a liveable planet.

WAGGGS calls on leaders to follow through on past pledges to combat climate change, including those made most recently at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. From 25-27 September 2015, nations of the world came together to adopt the new Global Goals for Sustainable Development – an ambitious framework to guide our progress toward a more just and sustainable future. However, without urgent action to curb the dire risk of climate change, all of our collective aspirations and efforts to achieve that better future will be jeopardized and undercut.

Nations of the world must commit to limiting warming to 1.5°C. Over 100 countries worldwide — including the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), who represent the populations most vulnerable to climate change — have declared their support for a 1.5°C target. There is a wide and growing consensus that limiting warming to 1.5°C is a safer goal than the currently agreed international aim of 2°C in order to avoid the risk of runaway feedback effects. Recent research indicates that this goal may still be just barely within our reach¹, but will require immediate and aggressive action

AT COP21, WE URGENTLY NEED AN AGREEMENT THAT IS:

- **Ambitious:** If we are to keep global warming below the 1.5°C threshold, we need to take concerted action to drastically reduce emissions, with the aim that emissions peak by 2020. Our subsequent long term goal should be to fully phase out all fossil fuel emissions and transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050.
- **Equitable:** Any agreement must be fully in line with the principle of common-but-differentiated responsibility (CBDR), recognizing countries' distinct historical responsibilities for current emissions levels. The agreement must also embody the principle of intergenerational equity and ensure that today's young people inherit a liveable world.
- **Binding:** The agreed framework must be legally binding with an effective compliance mechanism established to ensure nations are held accountable for and fulfill their agreed obligations, with regular reviews of nations' contributions built in every five years.

Such an agreement must be adequately financed.

- Governments must honor the commitments made in Copenhagen to mobilize financial flows of \$100 billion per year by 2020. This must then be only the starting point for scaling up climate finance in order to cope with the formidable challenges ahead. New financial commitments from developed countries must be binding, measurable, and verifiable.

¹ Rogelj J, Luderer G, Pietzcker RC, Kriegler E, Schaeffer M, Krey V, Riahi K. (2015). 'Energy system transformations for limiting end-of-century warming to below 1.5°C. Nature Climate Change. 21 May 2015.

- Adequate funding must be allocated for adaptation, particularly in the Global South. While financing for adaptation has increased in recent years, current financing levels still do not match estimated needs. At least 50% of international climate financing must be provided to support adaptation in vulnerable countries.
- Financing under loss & damage must be provided in addition to adaptation financing. Vulnerable countries must have recourse for the inevitable impacts they will suffer despite efforts at adaptation and mitigation.

As delegations work toward an agreement at COP21, we urge all parties to recognize that **climate change is not only an environmental issue, but fundamentally a human rights issue**. Climate change threatens our ability to guarantee safety, dignity, and basic rights to all and endangers particularly the most vulnerable, including women & girls.

Girls & young women are already disproportionately impacted by disasters & extreme weather and will continue bear the brunt as climate change intensifies.

Girls & young women face specific and increasing risks at all stages of disasters:

- As weather patterns become more extreme, it is girls & young women – who so often bear primary responsibility for food, water, and fuel collection – who must cope with the challenges of securing these increasingly scarce resources. As girls’ domestic chores become more time-consuming and as income pressures intensify, they are more likely to be pulled out of school and forced into income-generating activities.
- When disaster strikes, it is girls & women who lose their lives in greater numbers. In some recent natural disasters, upwards of 80% of lives lost were those of women & girls.
- And following disasters, it is girls & young women who are exposed to a severe risk of sexual assault and violence in shelters and refugee camps. In addition, devastated and desperate families often marry off their young daughters, increasing girls’ risk of early and forced marriage².

Currently girls’ unique needs and vulnerabilities go overlooked and unrecognized in disaster resilience and response programming. Governments must recognize that vulnerability to climate change is exacerbated and compounded by gender inequality and that building support for girls’ rights must be a part of climate change initiatives.

Girls & young women must be educated & empowered to advocate for change at the local, national, and international levels.

As signatories to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, governments have committed “to educate, empower, and engage all stakeholders and major groups on policies related to climate change.” Governments must follow through on this pledge to build the capacity of young people, working in conjunction with youth NGOs in their countries, through both formal and non-formal channels. Young people must be fully educated and equipped to participate in decision-making processes on climate change.

Education and capacity-building – particularly around girls’ leadership and climate change – is an area in which WAGGGS is a leader. WAGGGS helps to educate girls & young women on climate issues and equip them with the skills necessary to respond to this critical challenge. In WAGGGS’ work, girls have amply demonstrated their potential to be leaders and agents of change and to mobilize action in their communities.

Girls & young women must be substantively involved in the design, delivery, and implementation of nations’ response to climate change.

As nations set about developing National Adaptation Strategies/National Adaptation Programmes of Action, it must be ensured that these are fully gender-responsive and take into account girls’ and women’s specific needs and vulnerabilities. Girls’ and women’s rights organizations must be consulted and allowed to have substantive input into the design of these action plans. Girls are the experts on their needs and lived experience and can make a genuine contribution to the success of adaptation and resilience programming if given the tools and spaces to do so.

² Swarup, A., Dankelman, I., Ahluwalia, K., & Hawrylyshyn, K. (2011). Weathering the Storm: Adolescent Girls & Climate Change. Plan International.

Involving girls & young women is not only a best practice principle of program design, but it is a basic right of girls & young women to have their voices heard. Article 12 of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children the right to participate in decision-making that is relevant to their lives. Decisions made now around climate change and how nations will respond are deeply relevant and will have a profound impact on the world that today's children & youth will inherit.

Without urgent and immediate action at COP21, we risk missing the rapidly vanishing window of opportunity to avoid dangerous and unsustainable levels of climate change. The consequences of inaction in this moment will be devastating, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, including girls and young women. We call on all governments to commit at COP21 to a framework that is ambitious, equitable, and binding, and will deliver the transformative change we need.

ABOUT THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF GIRL GUIDES & GIRL SCOUTS

With ten million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from 146 countries across the world, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) is the largest voluntary movement dedicated to girls and young women in the world. Our mission is to enable girls and young women to develop their fullest potential as leaders and responsible citizens of the world. Through our innovative non-formal education programmes, we help girls to understand and take action on important issues in their lives.

Some of our current initiatives include:

- Voices Against Violence: empowering girls to understand & combat violence in their communities
- Global Action Theme: equipping girls to make the new Global Goals a reality

For more information about WAGGGS and our work, please visit: www.wagggs.org.