



WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS

STATEMENT ON GIRLS' LEADERSHIP





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Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting empowers girls to take the lead in their lives and societies. For over 100 years, we have offered girls the safe spaces and non-formal education opportunities to develop their values and practise leadership with social purpose. When girls and women have space to lead, they can transform their communities and the world.

GENDER BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP



Girls and women don't always see themselves as leaders. They can struggle to recognise that they deserve, and have the skills and experience, to be effective leaders. Generations of social bias tells them, both directly and indirectly, that women should not take the lead. Even the term "leader" is burdened with traditional definitions that tie it to positions of power, hierarchy and status. Both as a cause and a consequence of this, women are hugely underrepresented in leadership positions in society.

Gender is not the only factor that determines access to leadership opportunities; it can also be hindered by biases against other aspects of identity such as social class, race, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, etc. And girls need women leaders they can identify with, look up to and be inspired by.

- In 2020, only 2.6% of Fortune Global 500 CEOs were women¹, and none of them were women of colour
- As of January 2021, women held only 25% of parliamentary positions globally²
- Only 37% of women feel that society supports female leaders³
- 46% of girls and women feel their gender could disadvantage them when seeking leadership opportunities

THE WORLD NEEDS GIRLS AND WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



Organisations with more women in leadership are 1.4 times more likely to be thriving⁴, and gender equality is the number one predictor of peace⁵ – more so than a state’s wealth, level of democracy, or religious identity.

This has never been more relevant; a study of leadership responses to the COVID-19 pandemic across 194 countries found evidence that outcomes related to COVID-19 have been systematically better in countries led by women⁶, and the Harvard Business Review concluded that the leadership behaviours and skills most valued during a crisis are more effectively practised by women leaders.⁷

Girls who have leadership experiences when they are young are more likely to feel confident to take the lead as they grow up.⁸ How leadership is presented, experienced, role modelled and discussed as girls grow up has a big impact on how far they can see themselves as leaders or recognise and tackle gender bias.⁹ Three quarters of women today wish they had learned more about leadership and had more leadership opportunities while growing up.¹⁰ To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and specifically to ensure women’s full participation and equal opportunities in leadership at all levels of decision-making, girls need to have opportunities to practise leadership as they grow up.

HOW GIRL GUIDING AND GIRL SCOUTING SUPPORTS GIRLS’ LEADERSHIP

Girls right now are growing up fast, in an uncertain world. They are anxious about their futures, seeing global issues like climate change, social inequality and a global pandemic changing their societies at a terrifying pace – and as digital natives, they rarely get the chance to look away. They are also driven by a strong sense of justice, resourced by technologies that connect the world and enable them to think beyond national borders and stand up for what they believe in.

All girls need safe spaces to explore these complexities and build the resilience and global competences they need to navigate the world with kindness and courage. They need space for fun and friendship where they can be themselves. And they need to hear that, whatever society and media tell them, they can be brave - but don’t need to be perfect.

As the world’s only Movement for every girl and any girl, Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting gives girls around the world the confidence, values, and opportunities to practise leadership from a young age and become changemakers in their lives and in society.

Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting is perfectly placed to create these brave spaces. There are many ways that, as a Movement, we can maximise our impact on girls' leadership.

We need to support girls to **make a conscious link between their learning experiences and their leadership journey**. This makes leadership feel accessible to girls, and relevant to their lives. Our powerful non-formal educational method supports this by giving girls chances to develop their leadership through peer decision-making, self-directed learning and celebrating their personal and collective achievements.

It is also crucial that we **change how we define leadership**. By moving away from traditional definitions rooted in hierarchy and status, and celebrating everyday leadership, we make it a powerful experience for the many not the few. We must offer the experiences and learning opportunities that **support girls to practise leadership at all ages**. Over time they will redefine leadership for themselves, explore their values and passions and internalise a leadership identity.

We need to evaluate our organisational structures and **create mechanisms that support girls to participate in decision making**. If girls are not involved in decision-making, we need to understand why, and address the root causes. We need to **facilitate open conversations** about girls' space in society, how they perceive it and what obstacles are in their way. And we need to **involve boys and men** in the Movement and beyond in this conversation. By learning about the barriers that hold girls back, we give them and ourselves a possibility to dismantle these obstacles.

Finally, we must look beyond the Movement and contribute to building more equal societies for girls. We need to **challenge the influences that disempower and disenfranchise girls**, or damage their mental health, body confidence and sense of self. We can support girls to look wider too by ensuring they have plenty of opportunities to **connect with a diverse group of women role models and mentors** with different identities, backgrounds and paths, who will inspire them to lead with purpose.



Girls and women overcome gender bias and lean into leadership when they lead with purpose towards their passions and focus on the positive change they want to make.¹¹ This positive momentum, coupled with opportunities to redefine what leadership means and internalise a leadership identity, makes practising leadership a natural and powerful way to reach their purpose.





HOW WAGGGS SUPPORTS GIRLS' LEADERSHIP

WAGGGS defines leadership as a shared journey that empowers us to work together and bring positive change to our lives, the lives of others, and our wider society.

A good leader is a lifelong learner who consciously deepens their understanding of different contexts, draws on different wisdoms, and uses that learning to collaborate with others to make a difference.

Our gender-conscious and worldly leadership model redefines leadership to make it easier for every girl and woman to recognise herself as a leader and experience leadership as an empowering, enabling, and inclusive lifelong process.

88% of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts feel that being in the Movement gives them the chance to actively practise leadership.

We work with our 152 national Member Organisations to give more girls a brave space to practise purposeful leadership. We do this by:

- Supporting their work to offer transformational leadership education to girls of all ages, building resilience, global competences and agency
- Identifying strategies to create more space for girls to practise leadership in Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting
- Supporting and advocating for youth participation in decision making (such as through the Motion 32 project)
- Facilitating an international network that brings together the expertise, volunteers and resources to support global, regional and national leadership initiatives and conversations
- Offering learning and development systems, tools and opportunities to support adult volunteers to be empowering role models, and use our educational method to facilitate a quality leadership experience for girls
- Offering transformational leadership development opportunities that empower young women as changemakers and role models for girls, and help them build global peer networks

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