

Our 5 Regions : Africa • Arab • Asia Pacific • Europe • Western Hemisphere



Taking the Lead in the Africa Region

The WAGGGS Africa Region brings together more than 500,000 girls and young women in 30 countries. We offer them opportunities for personal development and non-formal education and one of the key events we held in 2006 was the **Arab and African Youth Forum**. More than 50 young women from 34 countries participated in this exciting event in Cairo in September, with the theme 'Take the lead'. This was designed to offer young leaders the chance to explore cultural understanding, learn about adolescent health and gain leadership skills.

The forum was a great success and one of the participants, Alice Boateng, 29, from Ghana, describes her life-changing experiences: *"The most important thing I learned from the event is that teamwork and leadership style is very important in our daily life. We were taught about management skills and, as aspiring leaders, we were taken through WAGGGS programmes and structure, negotiating skills which deal with conflict management and much more. It is a mind blowing forum which must be organized more often."*

"The difference Girl Guiding has brought into my life is overwhelming. I am always taking up challenging positions, helping without physical reward, maintaining a positive attitude and showing love all the time," she says. *"It has increased my personal values; my mission statement has taken another dimension which cannot be comprehended."*

In 2006 the Africa Region began an **Anaemia Education Programme** in Uganda, Rwanda and Swaziland in a bid to increase girls' and women's knowledge about anaemia and its prevention and improve the health of more than 34,000 girls, women and infants.

The regional staff developed a training programme and materials aimed at helping Girl Guides educate other girls and women in their communities. This was in partnership with the Regional Centre for Quality Health Care (RCQHC), the Academy for Educational Development, the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project and a Senior Maternal Nutritional Health officer from each country.

Across the three countries, 75 Guide leaders will become trainers and 1,500 Brownies, Guides and Rangers will be trained as peer educators in anaemia prevention.

Continuing on our leadership theme, we held two major **leadership seminars** in the Africa Region. The first was in Lagos in March and its 20 participants were Chief Commissioners from 16 English-speaking countries in the region. The aim was to help leaders and Member Organizations deliver quality Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting. The main sessions focused on membership development, strategic thinking, good governance and strategic planning.

The second was held in Togo in November, with 15 leaders from 10 French-speaking associations. They also concentrated on strategic direction for their associations and the region. Both seminars were a great success and helped confirm that the future is bright for leaders in Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting in Africa.



Alice Boateng (left)

Landmark events in the Arab Region

The WAGGGS Arab Region has more than 160,000 girls in 13 countries. Girls and young women are able to develop leadership and life skills through regular seminars and workshops.

One of the landmark projects that has helped girls reach their potential last year was the **Iraqi Guiding Training event** held in February. For safety reasons, the event was held in Egypt with some of the Iraqi Guides and leaders leaving their own country for the first time. Under the guidance of trainers from the Arab Region, the young women learned about the roles and responsibilities of leaders, as well as practical tasks such as organizing a patrol and camping techniques. The event was a milestone for our fast-growing Movement in Iraq.



Manal Kahi (centre)

The **Needs of Young Women Survey** also proved a useful tool. We sent out a questionnaire to young women aged 18 to 30 throughout the Arab Region, asking about how best to meet their needs. Ninety-eight per cent of the 61 young women who responded agreed that WAGGGS was fulfilling part of their needs and they appreciated what the Movement was giving them in all fields of life. However, we found that they would like even more contact with Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world. They would also like modern technology to be incorporated in all Girl Guiding programmes.

Another milestone was the first joint **Arab and Africa Youth Forum** organized by the Arab and Africa Regions. (Please see the Africa Region section on page 5.)

Guides in Lebanon were also taking the lead, helping to distribute aid to Southern Lebanese refugees displaced during the recent war in the region. Manal Kahi, 21, has been a Girl Guide for 13 years and describes her work with Offre Joie (NGO): *“During the strike against Lebanon in July 2006, I participated in the relief efforts experiencing a very dreadful and precarious situation at schools and deserted apartments around the city. As soon as the cease-fire was announced, we rushed to the farthest safe point we could reach in the south, and delivered basic needs to the locals. This experience was one of the richest and most challenging of my life so far.”*

Manal describes what she has learned from this experience. She says: *“However small our contribution is, it can make a difference. Bringing some joy to the children; helping their parents, however tiny our contribution was compared to the gravity of their situation; defying fear, injustice and deprivation ... that was my way of saying no to war; and not doing it would have meant surrender.”*

Her Guiding skills were very useful during the conflict. *“As a Girl Guide, I was already familiar with leadership mechanisms. Only this time, actions needed to be taken very promptly and wisely, under highly stressful conditions. Fear needed to be contained and converted into positive energy. Endurance and faith, positivism despite all the negativity, quick yet wise decision making ... were all leadership skills I had the opportunity to further develop through my participation.”*

Strategic Leadership in the Asia Pacific Region

With 2.5 million girls in 27 countries, the Asia Pacific Region forms a key part of the WAGGGS global community. Our region offers girls and young women fun and friendship as well as opportunities for personal development and education.

One of the key events in the region was the **Strategic Leadership Workshop in Cambodia** which took place in November, with participants from 19 countries. The 60 adult leaders were able to build on their strategic leadership skills and learn how to be tomorrow's leaders, within their associations and the outside world.

Ruchira Jayasinghe, 28, from Sri Lanka was a member of the workshop planning team in Cambodia. *"It was a lifetime experience. I learned to listen to others' ideas and put mine across. I had a lot to learn from my team-mates. It showed me that no job is particularly difficult if it is done with a good team."*

Ruchira has been a Girl Guide for 11 years and is a member of the Asia Pacific Regional Committee. She says about her experience as a Guide: *"Girl Guiding has added another dimension to my life. This area is fun-filled, not stressed and life enriching. It has also given me a chance to share what I know and learn what I need to improve."*

"Girl Guiding has also given me the confidence to make my own decisions which has helped my personal and professional life to improve greatly."

Ruchira says that leadership skills are an asset in her personal and professional life and key for women nowadays: *"It is very important to develop leadership skills in women as they are the very foundation that a society is built on. Increasingly, girls and young women study, work, and run a home at the same time. If they are successful leaders in their chosen fronts, their society will be successful as well."*



Ruchira Jayasinghe



The **Pakistan Girl Guides Association** held a workshop on leadership skills in June, with 71 people attending a camp in the Bhurban Hills. The theme was 'girls worldwide say – we can make a difference' and the event focused on having positive attitudes in life and acquiring skills that will help make the world a better place.

During 2006, the **Project 3L 'Life Long Learning'** continued apace in the Asia Pacific Region. Responding to the need to provide young women with the opportunity for self-reliance, self-confidence and employment, the Girl Guides Association of Thailand and the Bharat Scouts and Guides held workshops teaching valuable life skills such as technology and the production of local goods.

Another key event was the **International Korean Symposium** held in Seoul in May. The Girl Scouts of Korea, who were celebrating their 60th Anniversary, hosted the forum and focused on key issues such as education, adolescent health and violence. Over 500 people attended, including WAGGGS World Board Chairman, Elspeth Henderson, who delivered the keynote address.

Exploring Rights, Responsibilities in the Europe Region

The Europe Region brings together 1.2 million members in 41 countries, including 13 new associations from Central and Eastern Europe which have joined us since 1990. Our Member Organizations provide dynamic programmes for young members, as well as training and personal development for our adult volunteers. We share best practice throughout Europe via workshops and networking, and promote partnerships with, for example, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum.

One of the major events in the Europe Region in July saw over 400 Guides and Scouts get connected through **eurolife.02**. The event took place simultaneously in six countries: Finland, France, Greece, United Kingdom, Portugal and Sweden and the goal was to give young people the confidence to make a difference in the world, via new technology. The Guides and Scouts talked to each other using the Internet, chat rooms and mobile phones and exchanged experiences across three different time zones. All the centres were cyber-linked to each other and a eurolife blog was updated every day by each centre.

eurolife.02 was based on the WAGGGS' triennial theme **'Our Rights, Our Responsibilities'** and the participants followed the same programme each day but with a local theme. A range of activities for all age groups explored their rights and responsibilities and the difference they could make in their global community.

Charlotte Thompson, 18, has been a Girl Guide in the UK for 11 years and was mentored in eurolife.02 by her leader, Karen Robinson. Charlotte says: *"eurolife.02 was an international opportunity I hope every Girl Guide/Girl Scout will be able to have. It was a great opportunity to make Girl Guiding friends from abroad. I especially felt a greater bond with my Guiding and felt inspired to spread the word and inspire others."*

She goes on to describe her mentoring relationship with Karen: *"My leader is someone I can turn to and share things with; a leader who I have a lot of respect for, but also someone who shows respect towards us as young women, offering us these fantastic opportunities and allowing us to be free to express ourselves."*

Karen describes the lessons learned at eurolife. *"The example of the younger leaders from other countries has led me to see that international experience is important and to concern myself less with trivial things like whether the tents are tidy!"*

She says: *"The main thing the girls learned in the camp was that the road to self respect is rocky. Their interaction with the other nationalities allowed them to look upon the peer pressure they are subjected to and assess it. This in itself was very valuable to their personal development."*

In August, more than 4,000 Rovers and Rangers from 30 different countries in Europe gathered in Italy at **Roverway 06**. It was an event for members of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) between ages 16 and 22. The Federazione Italiana Dello Scautismo (FIS) organized the event on behalf of the European Scout Region and the WAGGGS Europe Region. Based on the theme of a new European Renaissance, participants had the opportunity to celebrate diversity while empowering themselves as the architects of their future and their communities.

During the first stage of the nine day adventure, Rovers and Rangers explored different parts of Italy while participating in local community service projects. In the second stage, they had the opportunity to attend 152 workshops designed for them to explore their experiences and opinions. At the closing ceremony the participants offered the official flag to Guides and Scouts in the Middle East as a wish for peace and brotherhood.



Charlotte Thompson (far right) and Karen Robinson (3rd from right)

Discovering Potential in the Western Hemisphere Region

The Western Hemisphere Region is made up of 3.8 million girls in 36 countries. Offering fun and friendship to our members, we also provide a platform for girls and young women to be empowered to speak out on issues which affect them. The region works with UN agencies and NGOs on specific projects including, UNICEF, UNAIDS and UNESCO.

With the emphasis on discovering the potential of our members in the region, we held successful **Leadership Skills and Strategic Direction workshops** in Barbados, Guatemala and Brazil. The aim was to help Member Organizations implement WAGGGS' strategic direction in North America, Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

One of the participants in the Brazil workshop, Gloria Alarcón Bordón, 21, from Paraguay, has been a Girl Guide since she was nine years old. She says: *"My experience at the workshop was very pleasant, particularly because it was the first time I had been away from my country, and getting together with Girl Guides from different countries made me see first hand the unity that exists beyond boundaries in our Association. I met wonderful people who gave me advice, shared their experiences and left me with good memories. I am very grateful to all of them."*

She says: *"The workshop taught me skills as a leader I did not know existed until that moment. I can say that after three days I was able to use them and I continue working on them. It has given me much self-confidence. Now I feel more open to new ideas and ready to face challenges that I would not have dared to face before."*

She says about developing leadership skills: *"Obviously, it is in our own benefit and the benefit of others to keep improving our skills. Guiding allows me to do that and if all women both in Guiding and outside Guiding were able to develop these skills, our world would be a different world."*

Another two key events in the region were the 13th Central American Guiders' Gathering in Costa Rica from 7 to 12 April with the theme 'Programme and Membership'. Also, Antigua held the **16th Caribbean Link Conference**, 'Strengthening Caribbean Guiding' from 21 to 24 April. Participants discussed how the Caribbean had already been affected by globalization and agreed that there was a need to go back to sharing information.

In addition, an international event with participants from our region took place in October. WAGGGS representatives and members of the Latin American Youth Forum (FLA) from around the world gathered in Mollina, Spain, at the **7th University of Youth and Development**, a youth forum to debate, learn and promote global youth cooperation. The 40 young leaders from WAGGGS Europe and Western Hemisphere also participated in the **9th Euro-Latin American Youth Forum (FEULAT)** and a Training for Trainers session. At the end of the event, the girls and young women felt they had taken a major step towards discovering their potential as leaders.



Gloria Alarcón Bordón