

**POLICY ON GIRLS AND  
BOYS, WOMEN AND  
MEN WITHIN THE  
SCOUT MOVEMENT**

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# **POLICY ON GIRLS AND BOYS, WOMEN AND MEN WITHIN THE SCOUT MOVEMENT**

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## BACKGROUND

Historically, when Scouting was created for boys in 1907, young people lived in a very different socio-cultural context from the one in which the majority of National Scout Associations operate today.

It is now nearly a quarter of a century since the Constitution of the World Organization of the Scout Movement defined Scouting as “... *an educational movement for young people open to all without distinction...*” – in other words, a movement which addresses equally the educational needs of both genders, girls and boys, young women and young men.

Today, National Scout Associations whose membership is open to both genders is the most common type. However, the fact that the Scout Movement is “open” to both genders does not mean that Scouting’s educational proposal will automatically address the educational needs of both. Nor does it imply that young people, or adults serving in the Movement, are automatically and spontaneously able to work together in a mixed gender environment in a spirit of equal opportunity and partnership. Considerable reflection, hard work and time are needed for this to happen - as many Scout associations are aware.

Indeed, many requests have been made in recent years, including formal resolutions adopted at World Scout Conferences (see Resolution 5/96, Resolutions 6/93 and 8/93 on the next page) highlighting the need for further work on gender-related issues in Scouting. Some requests relate to girls and boys, young women and young men in a youth programme context. Others refer to equal opportunity for both genders in the area of adult resources and the management of associations. Still others relate to greater representativity of women in decision-making bodies at local, national, regional and world levels, and so on.

Now, as we seek to clarify the mission of the Scout Movement in the context of today’s society, it becomes evident that gender-related issues must also be treated as an integral part of this work.

It is with these elements in mind that the World Scout Committee decided that it was necessary to establish a clear policy covering all aspects of this issue. Thus, the “Policy on Girls and Boys, Women and Men within the Scout Movement” has been developed for consideration by the World Scout Conference in Durban in July, 1999. This policy has been prepared in full recognition of the wide variety of socio-cultural contexts in which associations operate as well as of the varying membership situations of associations. It does not affect the sovereignty of each National Scout Association in deciding upon its membership.

This policy clearly examines - for the first time - the subject of girls and boys, women and men in the Scout Movement in all its aspects and clearly sets out the implications for National Scout Associations in terms of membership, Youth Programme, Adults in Scouting and Management, as well as the implications for world and regional levels of the Movement.

The World Scout Committee and the World Scout Bureau are also conscious of the fact that much more work needs to be done in this area, including the production of practical tools that National Scout Associations can use. The adoption of this policy would provide the framework for the development of these tools.

#### **Resolution 5/96**

“The Conference

- reaffirming Resolutions 6 and 8 of the 33rd World Scout Conference in Bangkok 1993
- appreciating the fact that many WOSM Member Organizations include females within their membership
- considering the need for a targeted programme aimed at the development of females, of males and - in those National Scout Associations which offer their programmes to both boys and girls, young men and young women - also of females and males together
- taking note of the different needs and experiences of females and males in the context of leader training
- recalling that few female members are represented in major decision-making bodies in WOSM
- recommends that the World Scout Committee ensures that in all its activities, especially in the context of youth programme and leader training, it meets the different needs of females and males and recommends to all National Scout Associations which have females in their membership to do the same
- strongly recommends to National Scout Associations and world bodies to work for a more equitable representation of females and males at all levels.”

#### **Resolution 6/93**

“The Conference

- considering the importance of equal opportunities for girls and boys, women and men
- encourages National Scout Associations which offer their programmes to both boys and girls, young men and young women, to ensure that these programmes are designed specifically to reflect a truly coeducational process
- encourages these National Scout Associations to also ensure that adult leader training opportunities reflect the Association’s coeducational purpose, process and programme
- asks the World Committee, through the World Programme Committee, to support national associations in the above.”

#### **Resolution 8/93**

“The Conference

- considering the adoption by this Conference of the *World Adult Resources Policy*
- considering that WOSM is an organization open to men and women, boys and girls
- considering the importance of equal opportunities for men and women
- requests the World Committee and those National Scout Organizations which have female members to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes as an important element in the implementation of the *World Adult Resources Policy*.”

# **POLICY ON GIRLS AND BOYS, WOMEN AND MEN WITHIN THE SCOUT MOVEMENT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

As a Movement whose purpose is to contribute to the education of young people, Scouting originally and for the first decades of its history addressed only the needs of “boys, adolescents and young men” – the male population – in the countries in which it was established. From early days, females played a prominent role within the Movement as adult leaders for the younger age sections. Later, girls and young women started to be admitted as youth members.

As a result of that evolution, the Constitution of WOSM, in 1977, defined Scouting as a movement for “young people” without any distinction of gender; since that date, Scouting has addressed itself equally to females and males, at all levels of the Movement.

Within the framework of its Mission, and without prejudice to the sovereignty of each National Association in determining its membership policy, the Scout Movement declares its commitment:

- to the fulfilment of its educational purpose: to contribute to the education of young people, females and males, as equals and on the basis of the needs and aspirations of each individual;
- to the principles of equal opportunities and equal partnership between females and males, both within Scouting and in society as a whole;
- to reach, in societies where mixed gender relationships are the norm, a situation where gender equality is a reality in terms of youth programme, adult resources, management and all other aspects of the Movement at all its levels.

## **I. IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SCOUT ASSOCIATIONS...**

### **A. IN THE AREA OF MEMBERSHIP**

The fact that WOSM today addresses itself to both genders without distinction does not affect the principle that each National Scout Association takes its own decision on whether or not to admit girls. It does, however, require that National Scout Associations consider their educational provision carefully, taking into account the characteristics of the society in which they operate and the changes taking place in that society which affect young people. Thus:

- In societies where mixed gender relationships (at school, in social and professional life) are, or are becoming, socially accepted and where, therefore, Scouting has a role to play in helping young

people to prepare for active and constructive participation in a mixed social environment, the norm will be for National Scout Associations to address both genders through a coeducational approach.

- When a National Scout Association operates in a society where separate gender relationships are the norm and where coeducation is therefore excluded, the association may continue to address the male gender only or may opt for providing Scouting to both genders in single-sex settings.

A National Scout Association which opens its membership to both genders must address the educational needs of both equally; therefore the decision to admit one gender cannot be solely as a response to the educational needs of the other.

If a National Scout Association admits both genders to any age section, then provision must continue to be made, in one form or another, for both genders in the subsequent age sections.

## **B. IN THE AREA OF YOUTH PROGRAMME**

1. Most National Scout Associations are open to both boys and girls, young men and young women, operating together in mixed units in one or more age-ranges. However, addressing the Youth Programme to young people of both genders requires more than simply putting both together; it requires practising coeducation. Coeducation is not simply the state of having youth members, male and female, in a mixed setting, sharing the same activities. It implies a specific approach.

Coeducation can be defined as an approach in which the response to the educational needs of boys and girls, young men and young women, is conceived on the basis of a common educational proposal and a clearly defined set of objectives and method which aim at the development of both genders equally, bearing in mind the individuality of each person and her or his gender identity.

It involves a setting in which:

- girls and boys, young women and young men, operate together, in a manner that offers equal opportunities to everyone in such things as participation in activities, sharing tasks and responsibilities, making decisions;
- they pursue a common framework of educational objectives at each person's own pace;
- the needs and interests of each gender are met;
- the individuality and gender identity of each person is respected;
- differences in the pace of development in the various dimensions of the human personality – physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual – are recognised and accommodated.

Coeducation as defined above does not necessarily require that young people of both genders have to undertake every activity together; a coeducational approach may also incorporate separate gender activities.

A coeducational approach has major implications for all aspects of the Youth Programme of a National Scout Association.

According to the World Programme Policy, each National Scout Association is responsible for the development, delivery and implementation of a Youth Programme which enables Scouting's educational purpose to be fulfilled, taking into account the needs and aspirations of the young people to whom the programme is offered.

- Each of the steps in the process of programme development (educational proposal, personal development areas, final educational objectives, age sections and stages of development, section educational objectives, activities, application of the Scout Method, progressive scheme) must be developed consistently with the definition of coeducation.
  - Similarly, the content and presentation of publications and other materials produced to support the delivery of the Youth Programme, including the images and terminology used therein, are addressed to all youth members, male and female, and reflect the principles of equal opportunities and equal partnership. Likewise, all leader training and other support provided to the delivery of the Youth Programme must reflect these same principles.
  - At unit level, the implementation of the Youth Programme – through the structure and functioning of the unit, peer and adult-youth relationships, conduct of activities and pursuit of educational objectives – must be carried out in a manner that is sufficiently flexible so as to stimulate the development of each youth member, male or female, and enable each one to feel that he or she is respected as an individual.
2. National Scout Associations which have opted to address boys and young men only, or both genders separately, must also ensure that the principles of equal opportunities and equal partnership between males and females are fully reflected in and promoted through their Youth Programme. This requirement must be kept in mind through all phases of the development, delivery and implementation of the Youth Programme.

### **C. IN THE AREA OF ADULT RESOURCES**

The World Adult Resources Policy states:

*“In order to fulfil its Mission, each National Scout Association should have the adult leadership it needs to develop and function effectively.”*

In an association which is open to both girls and boys, the “adult leadership needed to develop and function effectively” requires:

- a distribution of roles and functions within all operational teams based on competencies, not gender, while continually striving to achieve and maintain a balance between male and female membership at all levels;

- the development of competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) required to deal with both genders;
- relationships among all team members based on an attitude of respect, acceptance of differences and acknowledgement of demonstrated competencies.

Wherever they may operate – with youth at unit level or with other adults – adults usually work in teams and it should not be expected that any individual will personally display all the qualities and competencies required. These, however, should be collectively available from the entire team in which members, either male or female, complement each other.

All provisions of the Adult Resources Policy apply to both genders at all steps of the process (i.e. selection and recruitment, the provision of training and support, follow-up and evaluation). They should therefore be clearly presented to all, males and females alike, and equal opportunities should be provided to all to help them understand and accept the provisions, adhere to the values which underlie them, and continually develop the competencies required. This applies as much to associations open only to boys and young men as to associations open to both genders.

#### **D. IN THE AREA OF MANAGEMENT**

In all National Scout Associations, whether open to both genders or boys and young men only, all adults must have access to all functions and selection must be made on the basis of competencies required for the job and demonstrated by a potential candidate, not on gender.

This is only possible if the necessary conditions to enable adults of both genders to have access to all functions and participate effectively in any meeting or activity related to their function are provided.

In a National Scout Association which is open to both girls and boys:

- The structures of the association, and the decision-making process at all levels and in all sectors, must reflect the fact that the association is open to both genders in a spirit of equal partnership and shared responsibility between men and women.
- Internal and external communication must reflect an image of an association which is open to both genders in order to enable each member, whether young or adult, to identify with the Movement. This is only possible if the language, the images and the messages conveyed, both in educational and promotional materials, reflect a Movement which is open to both genders without distinction.
- The representative function, within the Movement and outside the Movement, both nationally and internationally, must reflect an image of an association which is open to both genders.

## **II. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORLD AND REGIONAL LEVELS OF WOSM...**

- The marketing of the association – which aims at providing the right service to the right people at the right place at the right time – should also be conceived as serving both genders and therefore take the needs of both into consideration in the definition, promotion and distribution of all products or services offered by the association.
- To provide support to National Scout Associations in the implementation of all aspects of this policy statement in order to assist them in ensuring that gender equality becomes a reality in terms of membership, youth programme, adult resources, management and all other aspects of the Movement.
- To encourage equitable representation of male and female WOSM members on the World Scout Committee, Regional Scout Committees, and subcommittees.
- To offer equal opportunities to men and women in the recruitment of personnel for the World Scout Bureau (headquarters and regional offices).
- To ensure that the fact that WOSM is open to both males and females is reflected in the way in which the Movement is presented (language, image, etc.) and in representation on external consultative bodies.