



May 2005, No.2

Community service and development

The Issue

An important part of the activities of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) is service to the communities in which its members live and work. Member Organizations (MOs) often participate in or organise community projects. Many organizations, over time, move from providing a 'one off' service (where time and resources are given by members to others in need) to more developmental models which have an enabling effect, can build relationships and often have a longer lasting impact.

Community service involvement has been a traditional activity of Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting and has real attraction to many members and volunteer supporters who want to participate with MOs on a limited time basis or occasionally.

Corporations such as UPS have a commitment to working with their communities. This is a growing part of the corporate sense of responsible citizenship and a recognition of the need for 'balanced triple bottom lines' (economic, social and environmental) There are organizations connected to faith communities and special interest groups, labour and gender groups also working on community projects.

The three MOs participating in the Signature Programme have reviewed and extended their commitment and understanding of community service.

Understanding community service projects

The Girl Guides of Malaysia (GGAM) identified key aspects of community projects:

- Ideally, a community project will make a lasting difference
- It will benefit the person doing it – as well as others
- It may be organized and carried out by GGAM members
- It may be organized by GGAM members with other community volunteers
- It may be organized by others and GGAM play a significant role
- Community projects demonstrate that Girl Guides/Girl Scouts value service
- Community projects can contribute to higher profile & recruitment for members & volunteer supports

Finding new strategies

Member organizations are learning how to maximise the impact of community service for greater benefit to communities, for development of members and to increase profile and community awareness of Girl Guide and Girl Scout principles.

Mexico

Guias de Mexico (GdeM) has agreed a strategy of partnership with other high profile non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are active in the national and local community.

They worked with the Jimmy Carter Project building houses with low income families – many of them with women as heads of households.

Guias de Mexico shared logistical arrangements and encouraged members to participate in and evaluate projects. In return, GdeM received a share of the media and profile resulting from the project.

This strategy enables GdeM to develop public profile, build its own expertise and provide opportunities for its members to engage in community service while restricting the amount of human resources needed while GdeM recruits new membership.

In some very economically deprived areas Guias de Mexico will take occasional specific programmes and visit to build relationships - looking for opportunities to train leaders and establish Girl Guiding in the communities.

One district in Mexico (Monterrey) had been taking Christmas gifts to a home for girls for several years. For Christmas 2004, they gave Girl Guide membership for the Christmas gift. This means a move from the charity model to involving the girls and enabling them to be part of Girl Guiding rather than beneficiaries of charity. This will be for approximately 200 girls – adding to GdeM's membership numbers and broadening its diversity in the community.

This required a review of costs and uniform expectations by the National Board – which, in turn, resulted in an overall review of costs of membership and a more flexible approach to uniform requirements.

Malaysia

In Malaysia, GGAM now reviews community service projects for impact.

Project	Involvement	Impact
Lids for Limbs – collecting tops of cans for re-cycling into prosthetics	Organized by GGAM Public participation	Positive experience Ongoing impact Good introduction to personal benefits of service
Peace Packs for Iraq.	Organized by GGAM Public participation	Positive experience Ongoing impact Good introduction to personal benefits of service
Dreams & Teams Sports Festival – leadership and event management for young guides	Organized by GGAM Participation from primary school children	Positive experience No lasting impact Strong benefits for girls
Visits One visit to Hospital / old folks home / orphanage, etc	GGAM	Positive experience No lasting impact Good introduction to personal benefits of service
Ongoing regular visits to hospital / old folks home / orphanage, etc.	Organized by GGAM Volunteer supports may participate	Can make a difference Forming relationships Ongoing contribution
Running a Brownie / Guide / Ranger group in the orphanage	GGAM	Lasting difference
Engage people from the hospital / old folks home / orphanage, etc visit so they become volunteer supports or members	GGAM	Lasting difference

China

The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association has had relationships with All China Youth and Women's organizations for many years. Now, as new ways of work emerge HKGGA and the Chinese Young Pioneers will be partners in a community service project in 2005.

This will be based on a developmental approach in which both HKGGA and the partner organization will identify the project and then share expertise and resources for planning and implementation.

It is hoped this will lead to more community service and to exchange of best practices for all concerned.

There have been plenty of ideas to consider, including the possibility of Girl Guide and Chinese Young Pioneer volunteers running holiday programmes in Shanghai – building on HKGGA's experience with very young children's programmes.

Sharing ideas

WAGGGS Regional Committees and staff are well placed to identify and share effective models of community service. This is an area of activity where MOs could increase their understanding and the impact of community service and developmental initiatives.

Much has been written and is available for further understanding of the nature and potential for volunteers to be involved with communities. Organizations such as Civicus, the United Nations Development Programme, websites for the three participating MOs and UPS can be useful resources.

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