

## **WAGGGS STATEMENT ON COVID-19**

**UPDATED 29 APRIL 2020**

In light of the ongoing global situation with COVID-19, we wanted to bring you an update following our most recent World Board meeting.

This period has been challenging for us all and we want to start by recognising your incredible work in every part of the world. We are inspired by every single one of our Members, volunteers and girls, who continue to take the lead in their communities, to spread hope and light during this time.

As you know, the impact of COVID-19 has meant that we have already had to make changes to the way that we deliver today [[You can find a link here to our full response to the pandemic](#)]. However, like many of our Members, the implications reach further into the future.

As we look ahead, we need to make sure that we set ourselves up to continue to offer value and support to you, our Members, in what will be a very different world. The Board and Leadership team have worked together to examine a number of scenario models and produce plans based on projections of a severe reduction in unrestricted income through 2020 and 2021, and a change in MO priorities.

With this in mind, we are introducing several further changes to the way we operate now, to help us secure our long-term future sustainability.

### **1. We are scaling back operations in the short term**

From 1 May, we will be taking advantage of employment protection schemes in the UK and Belgium and placing two thirds of our eligible staff on furlough or temporary contract suspension during May and June. We will also put on hold some of our programmes and delay infrastructure investments.

These decisions have been hard, but ultimately we want to ensure that we retain our highly skilled staff to prepare for when we will scale back activities. By making full use of the employment protection schemes that exist in some countries, we are also able to better protect staff employed in countries where no such safety net exists.

During these next two months, we will focus our resource on membership support and core activities, and we have put in place mechanisms for staying in touch, as we operate with fewer team members than usual. If your usual staff contact is unavailable, their Out of Office response will provide contact details for a member of the team who can help. Our lead and senior volunteers also remain active and available to help with specific concerns related to COVID-19, through our member consultancy support [[You can apply for support through this form](#)].

## **2. We are reviewing all of our programmes and content**

We know that it is more important than ever to give girls a platform to have their voices heard. We are adapting the way in which we deliver all of our programmes, to engage girls with topics relevant to today's world, such as SurfSmart, and taking a specific focus on the gendered aspects of COVID-19, through programmes such as Stop The Violence and SDGs, [[You can read our initial Position Paper here](#)].

We are undertaking a thorough review of our funded programmes, in collaboration with the external partners, to re-assess priorities, deadlines and workplans. We are contacting all MOs directly involved in funded programmes, where there are changes to funding and deadlines – if you have any specific questions, please contact the relevant Programme Manager.

## **3. We have extended the closure of our World Centres and postponed events**

We have extended the closure of all World Centres until at least the end of June and have accounted in our financial planning that they are unlikely to have international visitors for the rest of the year.

We have delayed the World Conference until 2021 [[communicated via Circular](#)] and we anticipate that the format for this event is likely to change, recognising that our Members will be in a very different position next year. The Planning Committee will start to review various alternative delivery models in September and the Board will meet to agree the new format as the global situation becomes clearer.

All other international face-to-face events and travel remain suspended until the end of 2020.

## **4. We are working on sustainable fundraising initiatives**

We are speaking daily with all of our funding partners and donors to discuss opportunities and review our position to the end of 2020 and into 2021.

As we look to lessen the shortfall in income for the remainder of the year and into next year, we have also launched a dedicated solidarity appeal to WAGGGS sponsors and donors. This appeal will raise vital funds now, which we will put towards projects that will build us back up to capacity in the future. It is not an emergency fund but a sustainability appeal, to ensure that we will be able to offer you our continued support in what will be a very different future.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Throughout this time, we remain committed to you, our Members. We continue to review the situation on a daily basis and we commit to communicating new information and operational decisions at least every two weeks. We also update our website regularly with the latest statements and advice on the evolving COVID-19 situation.

We are constantly reviewing, updating and re-running our scenario modelling. The Board will convene at least every two months from today to make further decisions that will help mitigate risks and maximise the support that we can give to our Members now and in the next 18 months. The Board is also looking to form a business continuity task group to support this work.

Your safety, security and sustainability is our primary concern. Our regional team is working to connect directly with every International Commissioner or Chief Commissioner to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and the support that you need.

## **CONTACT**

As we navigate this period together, please keep in touch with your Regional Committees, regional coordinators or relationship manager and the Membership team at [membership@waggs.org](mailto:membership@waggs.org).

For general concerns or questions relating to COVID-19, please contact Magdalene Thomas, WAGGGS Head of International Operations.

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