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PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

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SCOUTS South Africa wins Greening the Future Award for Schools and Institutions 2012

On the 28th of June 2012 SCOUTS South Africa was awarded the Mail & Guardian's Greening the Future Award for Schools and Institutions. The award is an annual celebration of efforts to create a cleaner planet without compromising progress.

"Environmental training has always formed part of our Scouting programme. With climate change being a hot topic of discussion these days, our annual climate change challenge was a good way to empower our members and get them involved in community based projects," said Milly Siebrits, chief executive officer of the SCOUTS South Africa.

Throughout 2011 approximately 2730 South African cubs and scouts- aged between seven and 18, as well as 329 rovers and adults and 2500 German scouts, participated in more than 120 climate change-related projects. These ranged from setting up food gardens at crèches and schools to a clean-water project in a township and removing alien vegetation. Risk mapping for potential environmental disasters, planting indigenous trees and recycling were also part of the project that addressed two of the Millennium Development Goals namely promoting food gardens as part of the community based projects to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and also contributing to ensuring environmental sustainability. Three local youth also formed part of the World Scouting Organisation's delegation at the COP17 climate change negotiations.

"Apart from the consistent dedication and hard work it required from the young members, the fun climate challenges also mobilised their ingenuity and passion for our environment. This year the young people are building solar devices such as water heaters and solar updraft towers," explains Mrs Siebrits.

"Scouts show consistency and ingenuity in tackling climate change"

As part of the annual challenge the youth had to accomplish three tasks: an individual activity, taking part in a structured programme and assisting in a community project. Water and energy efficiency were key components in their activities. The children had to harvest water at home and reuse it. Scouts brought the recycled water to weekly meetings to water trees they had planted, and older scouts learned about the water cycle. As part of their energy audit members had to measure how much water they could save at home by changing their daily habits. Additionally to these activities booklets were printed and climate change information was posted online.

According to the Mail & Guardian "the Greening judges said they were impressed with the consistency and ingenuity of SCOUTS South Africa's environmental programmes. Its climate change projects were tackling an urgent problem among age groups that would have to live with the consequences in years to come, they wrote".

SCOUTS South Africa is a volunteer based organisation founded by Robert Baden-Powell. He strived to inspire a movement that would "leave this place a little better than we found it". The children, youths and adults that are members of SCOUTS South Africa still live by the Scout Promise and laws that impact their lives and that of their families, school-friends, communities and environment. The climate change challenge fed into this too. Previously in 2004, SCOUTS South Africa won the award for environmental education camps in the North West and in 2007 we received the special commendation for a pilot climate change project.

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Photo: Gavin Withers – children participating in the climate change challenge