

School-based Scouting: concept and key features

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Executive Summary

Across the world, Scouting operates in widely different social, institutional, and legal environments. Scouting has evolved into multiple delivery systems shaped by national education structures, volunteer cultures, public policy, and civic infrastructure. A central distinction that consistently influences organisational performance is whether Scouting is organised primarily as a school-based or a community-based system.

This difference is not cosmetic. It strongly affects where and how Scouts meet, how adult leaders are recruited supported and retained, which institutions “hold” local groups, what resources are available, how programme time is scheduled, and how membership transitions across age sections. It also shapes how dependent an National Scout Organisation (NSO) may be on ministries, municipal authorities, and public budgets, and therefore what risks and opportunities the NSO faces when policies change. This is particularly relevant as we see increased tendencies to question or sideline the role of civil society.

This report focuses on school-based Scouting not because it is inherently “better” or “worse” but because it is (a) widespread in many regions and (b) structurally distinct in ways that determine what support is appropriate. The report also explores differences in models within School-based Scouting, as they range from voluntary school-delivered partnerships to government-controlled curriculum-like approaches, offering progressively greater scale, legitimacy, and access, but also increasing considerations around programme quality, volunteer identity, roles, which also shapes the relation with the Scouting’s non-formal educational method.

This matters for policy and strategy because the delivery model influences:

- reach and growth (access to large numbers of young people through school systems)
- adult leadership (teacher-based volunteering and institutional recognition)
- programme quality (how the Scout Method and the group life are experienced within school routines)
- inclusion and retention (pathways for out-of-school youth and continuity after school transitions)
- partnerships and enabling environment (relationships with responsible ministries like Ministries of Education, and other authorities, as well as community actors)

WOSM’s role is to support National Scout Organizations (NSOs) in every model. A model-aware approach allows WOSM to offer more precise diagnostics, resources, and partnership guidance without favouring one model over another.

1. Introduction: why this report

1.1 Scouting's educational identity in different institutional contexts

The WOSM Constitution defines the Scout Movement as “a voluntary non-political educational movement for young people”. And the Mission Statement reinforces this profile by saying that Scouting “contributes to the education of young people (...)”. Scouting is therefore an environment that provides meaningful learning experiences that make young people flourish as human beings and active members of their communities.

An important vehicle to bring young people to experience those transformative experiences is the Scout Method (used mostly in group life), the way Scouting Education takes shape, defined as a system of progressive self-education through a defined set of elements (including learning by doing, team system, adult support, nature, and community involvement). Two other defining educational elements are the purpose of the experiences (Why do they aim to develop) and What they consist of (the activities). One can say that this educational identity is stable across the Movement, but the delivery is not.

Besides those core educational elements, there is a whole institutional, social and cultural context that shapes how Scouting is experienced by young people. Around the globe, we can see Scouting happening around institutions such as schools, community centres, faith organisations, clubs, workplaces, or sponsors. These types of institutions provide the support structures to create the learning environments that enable young people to develop and grow. In school-based Scouting, the school system provides that foundation.

Schools (in the sense of formal education institutions) can offer an organisational continuity, access to young people, and a safe and familiar environment, while Scouting contributes with experiential, peer-based and values-oriented learning that goes beyond classroom instruction. Through the Scout Method, young people practice responsibility, cooperation, leadership, service, problem-solving and personal progression in real situations. This can make school-based Scouting most effective when it is understood not simply as another school activity, but as a non-formal educational opportunity within or alongside the school environment, where young people learn by doing and gradually take greater ownership of their own development.

1.2 Why focus on school-based Scouting now

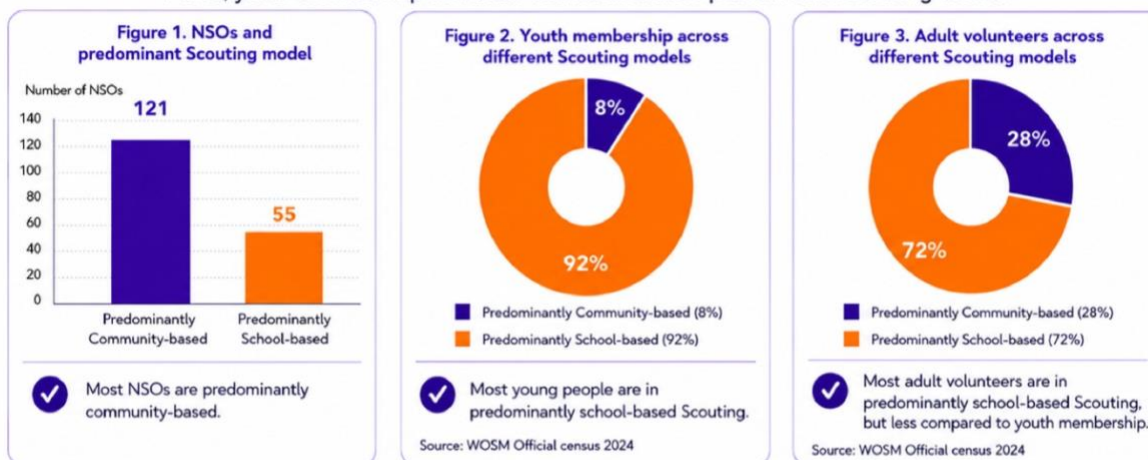
World Scouting does not require NSOs to report whether their membership is school-based or community-based. However, some estimations based on information collected at regional level, show that school-based Scouting is a very strong reality in many countries. A better understanding of this model may open the door for expansion and growth. And it will help World Scouting to better tailor support, resources, training models, or partnership approaches.

1.2.1 Membership distribution across different scouting models

While the majority of the NSOs are operating in a community-based model, most of the World Scouting membership (individuals) is actually operating in a predominantly school-based model. The word “predominantly” is deliberately chosen to suggest that many NSOs operate in both school and community-based scouting settings, and whether they are predominantly school or community-based serves an analytical purpose, and it is an estimation rather than a definitive determination.

Key figures on School-based scouting

NSOs, youth membership and adult volunteers across predominant Scouting models



Key insight: Fewer NSOs are predominantly school-based, but school-based models account for the large majority of youth members and adult volunteers.



Illustration 1: Key figures on school-based Scouting

The distribution reveals a notable contrast within different NSOs. Although community-based Scouting is the predominant organisational model among NSOs (121 NSOs compared to 55 predominantly school-based NSOs), the overall distribution of people within Scouting points in the opposite direction. Approximately 92% of youth members and 72% of adult volunteers experience Scouting in predominantly school-based settings.

This suggests that school-based Scouting models tend to operate at a significantly larger scale, often reaching large numbers of young people through integration or close cooperation with educational institutions. This also happens to be the case in some countries with a large population. By contrast, community-based models are more numerous as organisational approaches across different countries, but generally represent smaller membership bases on average. In other words, the “predominant” type of NSO is community-based, but the “predominant” type of Scout member globally is more likely to participate in a school-based environment.

The difference between youth and adult volunteer distributions is also noteworthy. While school-based systems account for the overwhelming majority of youth membership, their share of adult volunteers is relatively lower (72% adult membership compared to 92% youth membership). Community-based models, despite representing only 8% of youth membership, account for 28% of adult volunteers. This can indicate differences in volunteer motivations, recruitment and retention approaches, or adult-to-youth ratios between the two models. Community-based Scouting may rely more heavily on sustained local volunteer engagement, while school-based models may benefit from existing institutional structures and access to educators or school-supported adult leadership.

Taken together, the census data suggest that Scouting models are associated not only with different organizational settings but also with different patterns of scale, volunteer engagement, and pathways for youth participation.

1.3 Purpose and stance of this report

This report has two functions:

1. Analytical: to provide a usable framework and typology for understanding school-based Scouting as a spectrum of models.
2. Practical and policy-relevant: to highlight the “diagnostics that matter” so that support to NSOs is differentiated and realistic especially where Scouting depends on a national education policy.

The report does not argue for one model over another. Instead, it treats the delivery model as a context variable that must be surfaced explicitly in strategy, support, and partnership design.

One fundamental question to be asked is “How does this model enable young people to go through transformative learning experiences organised in the Scouting way?”

2. Data sources and approach

This report is intentionally closer to a primary-source analytical review than an institutional narrative history. Its core evidence base includes WSB materials developed in the last 15 years for diagnosis, training, and internal reflection, including:

- A School in Scouting seminar summary from the 39th World Scout Conference (Brazil, 2011), including the “four dominant models,” rationale for focusing on schools and evaluation report from a Scouting in schools Pilot project in Africa Support Centre.
- An internal mapping of NSO patterns across regions, including indicative ranges of school-based membership shares and observations about Scout Method implementation and funding patterns.
- Reflections within the WSB and discussions with WSB staff and World Scouting volunteers.

To connect these internal sources to policy realities, the report also references selected secondary sources and public information available from countries where school-based scouting NSOs operate.

3. Conceptual framework

3.1 Two macro models of Scouting

Zooming out, national variants are numerous, but two macro platforms stand out as the main organisational realities:

- School-based Scouting: where schools or the school system play a critical organising role in shaping the learning experiences (recruitment, leader sourcing/approval, scheduling, recognition, and/or programme design and delivery).
- Community-based Scouting: where community volunteers and institutions are the primary platform to create Scouting learning environments, even if schools sometimes host meetings.

These platforms shape, differently, leader supply, the programme experience, unit governance, resource access, the extent of government reliance, partnership access, membership growth and retention. In some cases where Scouting is school-based, policy decisions in education systems may directly affect Scouting. Where Scouting is community-based, growth is more sensitive to volunteer recruitment capacity, community trust, and local civil society ecosystems.

3.2 Working definition: what this report means by “school-based Scouting”

Because “school-based” can be used loosely, this report adopts a definition that captures what is structurally distinctive across contexts:

School-based Scouting is a model in which the school or the school system plays a critical role in organising and delivering Scouting. The word “critical” matters in this case. It differentiates school-based Scouting from cases where Scouting merely uses school premises.

3.3 School-based Scouting vs “Scouting operating in schools”

A common diagnostic error is to treat any unit meeting in a school as “school-based.” In reality, there is a major difference between institutional embedment and facility use:

- Scouting operating in schools (facility-hosted): a community group meets on school premises; schools may permit access or recruitment, but do not control leader appointment, programme delivery, or recognition. The school may not even track whether a pupil is a Scout.
- School-based Scouting (institutionally embedded): schools are part of the organising chain, through leader sourcing/approval, scheduling, recognition (co-curricular/extra-curricular), or programme oversight, meaning Scouting’s delivery is dependent on school engagement.

This distinction is policy-relevant: facility-hosted groups require relationship management and safeguarding coordination; institutionally embedded systems require education-policy alignment, ministry frameworks, and formal agreements that protect Scout identity and voluntariness.

3.4 A typology of school-based variants

A policy-relevant typology should be based less on geography and more on governance and delivery features:

- Scouting as an after-school option, chosen among others
- Co-curricular / extra-curricular recognised school Scouting
- Compulsory extracurricular Scouting
- Curriculum-like / government-controlled Scouting

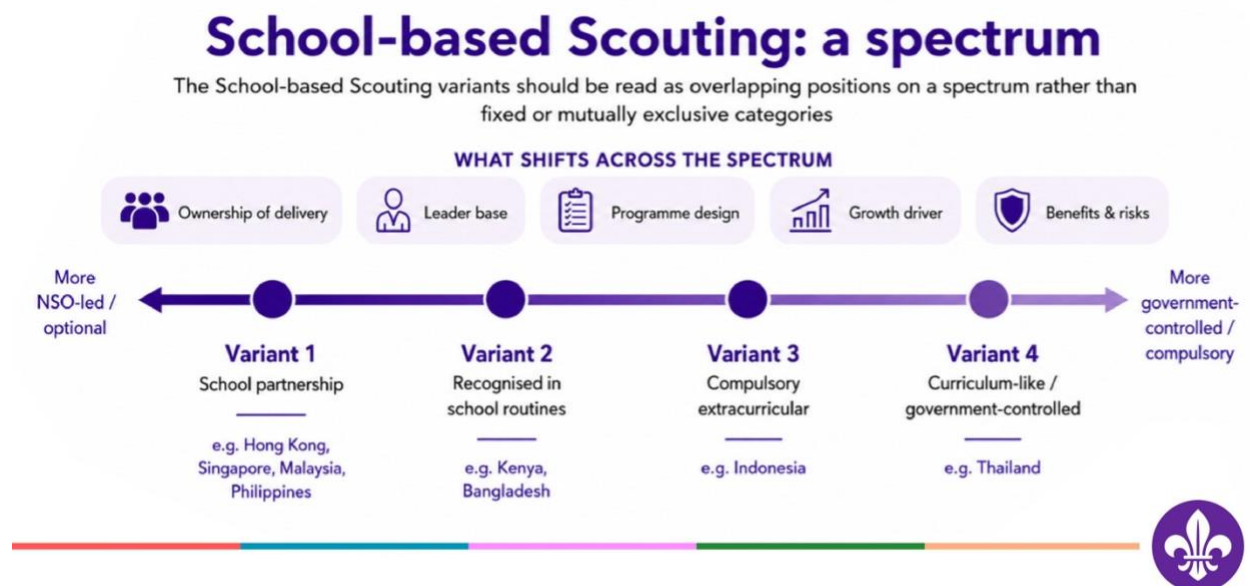


Illustration 2: School-based Scouting variants and key characteristics (summary)

These variants should be read as overlapping positions on a spectrum, not fixed or mutually exclusive categories. They offer a framework for identifying the dominant form of school-based Scouting in each context, while recognising that features may cut across models. For example, Malaysia is shown as a school-partnership/co-curricular option, though some features may also appear in Kenya’s more institutionally recognised model. Similarly, Thailand is placed nearer the curriculum-like, government-controlled end because this is its strongest defining feature, even if other characteristics may also be present.

Table 1: Overview of variants of school-based Scouting (with examples)

Variant 1 - Scouting as an after-school option, chosen among others						
Who “owns” delivery?	Typical leader base	Programme design	Primary growth driver	Benefits	Primary risk	Method
School + NSO Partnership	Teachers or volunteers	Shared	School entry pipeline	Lower participation barriers; consistent venue/time; easier recruitment and visibility	Quality drift; retention cliffs; role confusion	The school is mainly a venue, sponsor, recruitment channel, or delivery partner. The Scout unit may meet on school premises’ leaders can be volunteers, school staff, or a mix. Participation is normally optional. Programme identity remains mostly with the NSO
Examples: Hong Kong - troops can run in schools or communities, subject to availability Singapore – co-curricular (CAA) participation is compulsory for secondary students, but students choose among CCA groups such as clubs, sports, uniformed groups, and performing arts. Scouts is one school CCA option. Malaysia - co-curricular participation is formally part of the national curriculum; students are expected to take part in at least one uniformed body, one club/society, and one sport/game, with participation, attendance, and achievements recorded. Scouts/Pengakap is one uniformed body option, not necessarily the only compulsory choice. Philippines - The Department of Education recognises Boy Scouting as an effective co-curricular programme and encourages membership campaigns and school units, but the DepEd order explicitly says the Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) membership is voluntary and not a condition for enrolment, transfer, or clearance. Egypt - Scout troops are commonly associated with schools and universities, but also with clubs, youth centres and churches. The school is one important delivery base among several others, rather than the exclusive owner of the programme.						
Variant 2 - Co-curricular / extra-curricular recognised school Scouting						
Who “owns” delivery?	Typical leader base	Programme design	Primary growth driver	Benefits	Primary risk	Method
Education system recognises; NSO supports	Teachers (often)	Shared	Institutional legitimacy + routine scheduling	Predictable scheduling; legitimacy with parents/admin; easier alignment with student development goals	Teacher workload; “compliance mode”	Scouting is institutionally recognised by the education system and embedded in school routines. Delivery is often teacher-heavy, but the NSO still supplies programme identity, badges, training, and events. This is stronger than “just meeting in a school,” but weaker than formal curriculum control.

Examples: Bangladesh - government recognised co-educational/co-curricular activity alongside general education and a supplement to formal institutional education, with government-linked expansion projects in primary and secondary education. Cameroon - many Scout groups are based in schools, colleges, high schools, and universities, with schools serving as regular meeting places and key partners in programme delivery. Scouting is supported through a close partnership with the Ministry of Education and is sometimes integrated into the weekly timetable, with 1–2 hours dedicated to Scouting. Teachers make up a significant part of adult Scout leadership, helping connect Scouting with formal education and civic development. Kenya – Most membership in primary/secondary schools with most adult Scout leaders are teachers; it works closely with the Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission. A county education official is also quoted supporting integration of Scouting into school co-curricular activities. In the Rover sections, some universities and colleges provide support to Rovers to organise activities. Qatar - Scout units are school-based, with regular meetings held during activity periods or breaks, while camps, trips, badge workshops, and community service may take place off-site. Leaders are usually school staff, especially Physical Education teachers, with schools providing facilities and resources and the NSO supplying the programme framework, training, transport, materials, and equipment.						
Variant 3 – Compulsory extracurricular Scouting						
Who “owns” delivery?	Typical leader base	Programme design	Primary growth driver	Benefits	Primary risk	Method
Education policy mandates participation	Teachers + designated leaders	Often structured / regulated	Policy mandate	Rapid scale and reach; equity of access (everyone included); stable resourcing and timetable space	Volunteerism and identity tensions	Education policy requires schools, and in some periods students, to participate in Scouting/Scout education as an extracurricular activity. This can produce rapid scale, but creates tension with Scouting’s voluntary, non-formal identity.
Example Indonesia - Permendikbud No. 63/2014 made Scout education a compulsory extracurricular in basic and secondary education. In 2024, the ministry clarified that schools still had to provide Scouting (Pramuka), but student participation in extracurriculars, including Scouting, became voluntary. In 2025, Indonesia amended the 2024 curriculum regulation in July 2025 that formal basic and secondary schools must at least provide Scouting or another extracurricular.						
Variant 4 – Curriculum-like / government-controlled Scouting						
Who “owns” delivery?	Typical leader base	Programme design	Primary growth driver	Benefits	Primary risk	Method

Government authority	Teachers	Government-led	System-side scale	Universal coverage; standardization of delivery; long-term continuity through the system.	Non-formal identity erosion; Scout method delivery	Scouting is treated like a formal learner-development or curriculum component. Teachers deliver it during school time; student participation and assessment may be tied to progression or graduation. Programme control shifts toward government curriculum standards, which raises the highest risk of method dilution.
Examples Thailand - the Basic Education Core Curriculum includes “Learner Development Activities”; “Student Activities” include Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Junior Red Cross, social service, territorial defense, and clubs. The curriculum requires learner-development participation/assessment for graduation and grades participation as pass/fail. Scout/Girl Guide activities are in the learner-development group that all students must attend and pass according to school criteria. Bhutan - Scouting is positioned by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development as a core co-curricular activity in government schools and reaches the vast majority of students. Teachers lead delivery within the school system, with the programme integrated into school structures and supported as part of the national approach to student development, while community-based Scouting has been introduced to provide continuity beyond school. Cambodia - Cambodia Scouts is closely integrated with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, with strong government leadership and teacher-led school delivery.						

4. School-based Scouting - practices and tensions

4.1 Teachers as leaders

In school-based systems, leaders are frequently teachers. This can be a powerful advantage: teachers already have daily contact with young people, pedagogical skills, and an institutional role that legitimises educational activity. Schools offer great opportunities for recruiting of adult volunteers, not only teachers, but also head teachers as supporters, school inspectors as coordinators, and senior education officers as commissioners or board members.

But the same dependency is also the model's fragility. In some cases the teachers can experience Scouting as an "extra burden". Policy choices about teacher workload, incentives, and recognition therefore directly affect how sustainable Scouting will be in a given context. Another aspect is the teacher's ability and willingness to shift between formal and non-formal pedagogies to ensure that the key pedagogical components relevant to Scouting remain.

This is why it is important for Scouting not only to ensure "access to schools," but also policy instruments that value volunteering, such as ministry circulars encouraging Scouting, recognition systems for teacher-leaders (promotion points or benefits), time release, secondment of staff, and budget allocation. Having these reflections in consideration is important to better understand and support volunteering in terms of recruitment, training, retention, and recognition. It is important in this context to highlight the importance of the voluntary nature of Scouting as an imperative characteristic regardless of the model varieties.

4.2 Co-curricular vs extra-curricular: the hidden determinant of leader supply and youth membership

Whether Scouting is treated as co-curricular (formally recognised within school life) or purely extra-curricular (outside core educational routines) changes both the "labour economics" of volunteering and patterns of youth participation. Co-curricular positioning can normalise time allocation, create institutional legitimacy, and support broader membership reach through integration into school structures. By contrast, extra-curricular positioning is likely to reduce participation levels because involvement depends more heavily on individual initiative, available time, and family support. However, it may also foster a different level of engagement and commitment to learning opportunities, as participation is more clearly voluntary and driven by personal motivation rather than institutional expectation.

4.3 Programme quality and the Scout Method

School-based Scouting can reach large number of members quickly, which if driven by numbers only, may bring risks of superficial Scouting and irregular meetings in some settings. And this "mass effect" can affect the quality of implementation of the Scout Method if the tendency is simply to see the school environment as a provider of a pre-determined set of activities or "one-to-many" lessons/lectures. The Scout Method is defined as a system requiring the interaction of its elements. When school constraints turn Scouting into classroom-style instruction, uniform inspections, or adult-directed compliance, the method's core mechanisms, such as learning by doing, team system, personal progression, and youth agency, are at risk of being weakened. However, even if Scouting is part of the curricula (e.g having a weekly slot of time just as Math or History) the allocated time can still be used in a "Scouting way": active, relational, fun, participative.

4.4 Retention and age-section continuity require hybrid pathways

School-based Scouting frequently faces discontinuity: teachers transfer; students graduate; school rules sometimes can prevent continued membership if a young person changes school. One particular aspect is the discontinuity that may happen after a young person graduates from a school which doesn't allow the Scout to stay in the group if the student leaves the school. A way to address this is through hybrid pathways that link

school entry to community continuity so that older sections, out-of-school youth, and mobile populations remain included. Many NSOs already explore and experiment with community-based solutions where is possible to involve scouts that completed school, parents or out-of-school youth.

5. Regional patterns and what they imply for NSO support

This section summarises patterns across different regions as a way to provide further context and understanding of the varied implementation of School-based scouting.

5.1 Africa Region

In the African region, school-based Scouting is integrated with community-based, including faith-based Scouting, with many countries having all three realities at the same time. School-based Scouting is a dominant model in 20 out of 55 NSOs and National Scout Associations (NSAs)¹ and a secondary model in 9 NSOs and NSAs in the region. Scouting is overwhelmingly school-based in Southern and Eastern Africa (some larger NSOs include Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi), while West and Central Africa tends to show a more diverse mix of community-based and faith-based delivery. Smaller island states often lean more strongly toward community-based delivery.

In much of the continent, schools remain the most reliable and scalable gateway to young people. Where Scouting is clearly anchored in the formal education system through school clubs, units, or recognised extracurricular structures, it tends to achieve broad reach, public legitimacy, and a stronger national footprint. In these contexts, school-based Scouting commonly operates alongside community units to reinforce continuity and inclusion.

A key enabling factor is leadership. Where school-based Scouting is dominant, leaders are frequently teachers, which strengthens predictability, safeguarding capacity, and alignment with national education and citizenship priorities. Education partnership guidance also notes practical considerations such as supporting teachers in shifting from classroom roles to Scout leader roles, navigating academic pressures, and addressing resource constraints through constructive agreements and shared planning.

Table 2: Summary of school-based scouting variants in the Africa region

Aspect	Summary
Dominant delivery pattern	Mixed ecosystem: school-based, community-based, and faith-based Scouting coexist
School-based Scouting	Primary in 20 of 55 NSOs/NSAs; secondary in 9
Strongest school-based concentration	Southern and Eastern Africa
More mixed/community-oriented areas	West and Central Africa
Typical adult leader base	Frequently teachers
Main opportunity	Scale, legitimacy, regular access to young people, Scouting as a trusted partner as education provider when the formal system doesn't have the infrastructure
Main challenge	Balancing educational demands, teacher workload, and continuity

¹ A WOSM Member Organisation (NSO) may consist of more than one Scout Association (NSA) operating in the same sovereign state and participating in a Federation.

Examples	Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Cameroon
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5.2 Arab Region

Across the Arab Region, school-linked Scouting is widespread, although the model differs from country to country. Out of the 19 NSOs in the Arab region, only five NSOs in the Arab Region do not operate any form of school-based Scouting, while the remaining NSOs have some degree of school involvement, albeit through different models and levels of integration. If Palestine is included as a partial school-based case, this rises to 17 out of 19 countries, or 89%.

Two broad patterns of school-based scouting can be identified. The first is an education-system anchored model, where Scouting is closely connected to schools, education ministries, teachers, or official school programmes. This approach is visible in countries such as Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, where schools play a central role in organising or supporting Scout activities.

The second is a mixed delivery model, where Scouting is primarily delivered through schools, while community-based groups continue to play an important role in providing Scouting. Schools often provide meeting spaces, support recruitment, engage teachers as adult leaders, or include Scouting as part of student activities. This model is found in Jordan, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

An additional model in the Arab region is a Mixed model (predominantly community-based) where Community or open Scout Groups remain the primary delivery model, but schools provide an important secondary (or, in some cases, comparable) pathway by offering meeting spaces, supporting recruitment, involving teachers, or hosting Scout activities (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Palestine, State of, and Sudan). The rest of the NSOs in the region are operating in a community-based model.

A common feature of school-linked Scouting in the region is the involvement of adults from the education sector, particularly teachers and ministry-linked staff. This can help Scouting reach more young people, reduce barriers to participation, and build trust with parents and school authorities. At the same time, it creates a risk that Scouting may become too closely associated with formal school methods and governmental or school administrative compliance. Maintaining the voluntary, youth-led and non-formal character of Scouting is therefore essential, even where schools are an important delivery partner.

Table 3: Summary of school-based scouting variants in the Arab region

Aspect	Summary
Dominant delivery pattern	School-linked Scouting widespread, but mixed models common
School-based Scouting	Primary in 8 of 19 NSOs
School-linked as secondary pathway	Additional 8 of 19 NSOs
Overall school-linked presence	84% of NSOs (up to 89% including Palestine as partial case)
Main model types	Education-system anchored models and mixed ecosystems
Typical adult leader base	Teachers and ministry-linked staff
Main opportunity	Scale, institutional legitimacy, easier youth access
Main challenge	Risk of excessive formalisation and loss of non-formal identity
Examples	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

5.3 Asia-Pacific Region

In the Asia-Pacific region, school-based Scouting is a widespread and often dominant delivery model, reflecting the strong role of formal education systems in youth engagement across much of the region. School-based Scouting is the primary delivery model in approximately two-thirds of National Scout Organizations (18 out of 33), with community-based Scouting dominant in the remaining contexts. In several countries, school-based delivery is complemented by community-based units as a secondary pathway, creating mixed ecosystems that support continuity beyond the school environment.

School-based Scouting is particularly prevalent in South and Southeast Asia, where large student populations (some of the largest include Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, Thailand), centralized education systems, and national extracurricular frameworks provide a scalable and institutionally supported entry point for Scouting. In these contexts, participation is often facilitated through Ministry of Education circulars, formal recognition of Scouting within co-curricular structures, and coordination with school leadership. On the other hand, parts of the Pacific and Australasia show a stronger emphasis on community-based Scouting, reflecting different education governance models, population distribution, and traditions of voluntary youth participation.

Where school-based Scouting is dominant, adult leadership is frequently drawn from the teaching profession. This supports scale, regularity, and safeguarding capacity, while also aligning Scouting with national education, citizenship, and youth development priorities. At the same time, reliance on teachers as leaders can introduce constraints linked to academic calendars, workload pressures, and role transition between classroom instruction and youth led activities, requiring tailored leader support and flexible training approaches.

Table 4: Summary of school-based scouting variants in the Asia-Pacific region

Aspect	Summary
Dominant delivery pattern	Strongly school-based overall
School-based Scouting	Primary in 18 of 33 NSOs
Secondary/community pathway	Often complemented by community-based groups
Strongest school-based concentration	South and Southeast Asia
More community-oriented areas	Pacific and Australasia
Typical adult leader base	Frequently teachers
Main opportunity	Large-scale reach through education systems
Main challenge	Teacher workload, academic pressure, maintaining youth-led approach
Examples	Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, Philippines, Thailand

5.4 Europe and Interamerica: mostly community-based with targeted school partnerships

The European Region is predominantly community-based, although Türkiye has substantial and institutionally embedded school-based membership. More targeted school-related initiatives also exist elsewhere, including the UK's "[extended schools](#)" pilots and Croatia's [Scouting in School program](#) that was launched as part of the NSO Growth Strategy. The Interamerican Region also includes examples of [school-linked programming tools](#), notably in Brazil. In primarily community-based regions, schools may be best treated as "access multipliers" (partnership and inclusion), rather than as the primary organizational backbone.

6. Policy relevance and Strategic implications for WOSM Support and World Policies

A model-aware approach strengthens WOSM's ability to support NSOs in ways that align with the Strategy for Scouting, especially around relevance, quality, safeguarding, and sustainable growth.

Key policy-relevant considerations include:

6.1 Maintaining Scouting's educational identity in partnerships

Partnerships between Scouting and the school system may operate at two main levels depending on the educational and governance model in the country:

- Local level – where schools or local authorities have greater autonomy, partnerships are often established directly between local Scout structures and individual schools or municipalities.
- National level – where education systems are more centralised, partnerships may require engagement with ministries, national education authorities, or government bodies, typically involving more formal processes, alignment frameworks, and long-term coordination mechanisms.

Education partnership guidance emphasises that cooperation with the school system should strengthen delivery while maintaining Scouting's identity (including core educational elements) and independence, often supported through MOUs and clear role definitions.

6.2 Recognising the policy sensitivity of school-based delivery

Because delivery can be closely tied to education policy and school routines (timetables, uniforms, fees, teacher workload, administrative rules), even small policy changes can shift participation and public perceptions. Thailand's recent changes and debates on [Scout uniform requirements](#) illustrate how school-linked Scouting can intersect with broader affordability and administrative-burden concerns. This highlights the importance of maintaining strong partnership particularly at national level.

A practical implication is that NSOs operating in school systems often benefit from maintaining a simple "policy watchlist" (uniform/fees, timetable space, safety rules, transport/field activity permissions, teacher workload rules) and pre-agreed (for example, via [MoU](#)) adjustment options with education counterparts.

6.3 Investing in scalable adult leadership pathways

Teacher-leaders are a major asset in many school-based systems, but scalability depends on treating adult leadership as a deliberate pipeline, not an informal add-on. The Strategy for Scouting places strong emphasis on valuing volunteering (in the broad sense of the adults that support the existence of meaningful learning experiences in Scouting). This implies having a closer look and care about recruiting, training, retaining, and recognising volunteers and on making learning opportunities for these adults more flexible and accessible.

Policy instruments that repeatedly help in school contexts include:

- Recognition and incentives for teacher-leaders (such as credit for training/awards in promotion or professional recognition systems, extra leave days, etc). For example, the guidance linked to Scouting participation and recognition from the Philippines' Department of Education [guidance](#) linked to Scouting participation and recognition.
- Voluntary nature of participation being preferred, to promote and reiterate the volunteering nature of adult membership.

- Time release / secondment-style arrangements (where systems allow) to protect quality at scale by ensuring trained leaders have time and capacity to lead as per the WOSM Adults in Scouting policy.

6.4 Using evidence on extracurricular participation and youth outcomes

The benefits of having young people immerse themselves in more structured learning environments (like traditional schools) can be identified in terms of discipline, organization, hard knowledge, or perseverance, just to mention a few. But broader research on [extracurricular activities](#) consistently links participation with other positive cognitive and socioemotional outcomes, which can support WOSM's policy dialogue with education stakeholders when appropriately contextualised for Scouting. Capabilities such as cooperation, autonomy, confidence, agency, initiative, or creativity are often associated with non-formal education (as Scouting) and are a powerful leverage for a dialogue to be established with the formal education system, being at the local or national level. On a practical level, it is often the case that Scouts take on many leadership positions within the school setup as a direct result of leadership development in Scouting.

6.5 Aligning safeguarding standards across school and Scouting systems

School-based Scouting models require clear alignment between WOSM safeguarding standards and the safeguarding, child protection, and risk-management frameworks already present within education systems. While schools often provide established procedures related to child protection, supervision, reporting, and staff conduct, these may not always fully align with Scouting's educational approach, volunteer structures, outdoor activities, or peer-led learning environment. This creates a need for clear role definition, shared protocols, and mutual recognition of responsibilities between NSOs and education authorities.

In practice, effective school-based systems often rely on jointly agreed safeguarding arrangements that clarify areas such as reporting procedures, vetting and training requirements for adult leaders, supervision during activities outside school premises, data protection, and escalation mechanisms. Alignment is particularly important where Scout leaders are also teachers, as responsibilities may overlap between institutional and volunteer roles. A model-aware (a model that takes into consideration the model of delivery: school-based or community-based) safeguarding approach can help ensure that partnerships strengthen rather than dilute safeguarding standards, while maintaining compliance with both WOSM's Safe from Harm framework and national education regulations.

In this context, World Scouting should recognise and build on safeguarding systems that already meet its standards, avoiding duplicated procedures and unnecessary administrative burden.

6.6 Implications for WOSM Services

For school-based and teacher-led systems, the most relevant support areas are likely to include Adults in Scouting, Youth Programme, Youth Leadership, Safe from Harm, External Relations, Growth, and the Governance and Strategy service. Practical support could include teacher-friendly training pathways, guidance on applying the Scout Method in schools, safeguarding standards for school settings, and templates for agreements with education authorities.

For highly integrated or curriculum-like models, support should focus on strengthening the essential characteristics of Scouting in a school setting. It is not advocating for radical change but rather exploring how to use the school system's time and willingness to improve some methods and approaches so that the core elements of Scouting education (namely its method) are fully expressed. This may include guidance on clarifying roles between NSOs and education authorities, quality-assurance tools, advocacy materials, and practical resources to help leaders avoid turning Scouting into a classroom-style subject. The Global Support

Assessment Tool and related WOSM support can also help NSOs reflect on governance, programme quality, and organisational capacity in these more complex partnership environments. In the future, World Scouting may explore whether the Global Support Assessment Tool (GSAT) should include additional considerations or adjustments for school-based models.

Overall, the most resilient models are those that combine access and scale with quality and continuity. School-linked arrangements can significantly expand reach, while community-based structures can strengthen identity, progression and long-term belonging. WOSM Services can play an important role by helping NSOs diagnose which model they are operating, identify the main risks in that model, and access targeted support to strengthen delivery.

6.7 Implications for WOSM policies

In World Scouting, policies aim to guide the life of its members, the National Scout Organisations, in particular key themes so that programmatic coherence and unity of the movement are preserved. But that guidance needs to take into account that Scouting is delivered in different ways across NSOs, including school-based, community-based, and mixed models. This is important because the delivery model can affect how a policy is understood and applied in practice. In school-based Scouting teachers may act as leaders, schools or education authorities may influence programme time and delivery, and safeguarding responsibilities may be shared between the NSO and the school system. These factors can shape the Youth Programme, Youth Involvement, Adults in Scouting, and Safe from Harm policies in different ways. Any policy should then be flexible enough to work across these realities, while still protecting the core of Scouting: its educational purpose, the Scout Method, youth participation, adult support, and safe environments. This does not mean creating a separate policy for school-based Scouting but ensuring that the four educational policies recognise these realities and provide guidance that NSOs can adapt to their own context. The important thing is that, whatever the environment or delivery model, NSOs continue to provide transformational learning experiences for young people under the Scouting approach.

7. Model-specific opportunities and considerations

This report does not position any delivery model as inherently preferable to another. School-based, community-based, and mixed models can all support strong Scouting by creating meaningful and transformative learning experiences. To do so, they need to be well aligned with the local context, the role of the National Scout Organization, and the expectations of education and community partners. The key issue is therefore not which model is “best”, but what type of support each model needs in order to protect programme quality, sustain adult leadership and maintain Scouting’s non-formal educational identity. For School-based Scouting (the focus of this report) a number of final considerations may be useful to bear in mind:

Leader recruitment and sustainability

School-linked and teacher-led systems can support rapid scale, regular delivery, and strong institutional visibility. However, they also depend heavily on the motivation, workload, and availability of teachers or education-sector staff. These systems benefit from structured recognition, manageable responsibilities, and training formats that fit school calendars. Modular training, short-cycle learning, and partnerships with teacher training institutions can make leader development more realistic and scalable. In community-based systems, the priority may be broader volunteer recruitment, succession planning, and support for adult leaders outside the school environment.

Programme quality and integrity

Schools can provide stable meeting spaces, predictable schedules, and easier access to young people, which can improve consistency. At the same time, there is a risk that Scouting becomes treated as a formal school activity rather than a youth-led, non-formal educational movement. Programme quality improves when adult leaders have easy access to practical Scout Method resources, section-specific programme tools, and clear guidance on how Scouting should be delivered in school settings. Agreements with schools should clarify roles, expectations, safeguarding responsibilities, and the distinction between Scouting and ordinary classroom instruction.

Retention and continuity

School-based models can be effective for recruitment, especially when Scouting is visible within the school day or offered as an after-school or co-curricular activity. However, they may face retention challenges when young people change schools, graduate, or move beyond the age sections supported by the school. School-based models may also face barriers to recruiting and involving volunteers, particularly where school policies restrict non-teaching adults from delivering activities perceived as part of the curriculum. In these cases, delivery responsibilities can fall heavily on teaching staff, creating additional workload and affecting the sustainability of the model. Dual-pillar systems, combining school-based entry points with community-based groups, can help young people continue their Scout journey across age sections. They also support inclusion by reaching both students in school and young people who are outside the formal education system.

Partnership governance

Where Scouting works closely with education authorities, schools, or ministries, clear partnership governance is essential. MOUs, joint planning processes, and shared implementation guidelines can help align expectations while protecting the autonomy and identity of Scouting. These arrangements should define who is responsible for leader training, programme quality, safeguarding, reporting, recognition, and resourcing. Strong governance is particularly important in contexts where Scouting is embedded in education systems, as it helps balance institutional support with the voluntary, youth-centered, and non-formal character of the Scout Movement.

Overall, the most resilient models are those that combine access and scale with quality and continuity. School-linked arrangements can significantly expand reach, while community-based structures can strengthen identity, progression, and long-term belonging. The strongest approach is often not a single model, but a well-managed ecosystem in which schools, communities, volunteers, and National Scout Organizations each play a clear and complementary role.

8. Conclusion

All over the world, more than 1.5 billion children aged 6-18 go to school regularly. Many hours of their week are spent in dedicated spaces in which they learn, interact with one another, explore concepts, or develop skills. Sometimes, in some countries, Scouting is invited to be associated with this learning environment, which can be seen as a recognition of the value of its positive impact on young people's development.

This partnership between the formal education systems and Scouting may be seen as a tremendous opportunity (for both sides). For Scouting, it may increase its reach in fulfilling its Mission of "contributing to the education of young people".

In this context, School-based Scouting can be understood as a spectrum of institutional arrangements shaped by education policy, volunteer management systems, and governance structures. It can be the Movement's

most scalable access route to young people, especially where schools are the most stable youth infrastructure, but it can also create structural vulnerabilities: dependence on policy, method dilution, teacher overload, and retention cliffs.

As in any other partnership, the collaboration and interaction between the two systems require flexibility, without losing sight of the common purpose: to provide transformational learning experiences that help young people grow and develop. Each of the systems may need to adapt some of its practices without compromising its core identity, while being mindful that identities evolve. The result of those partnerships can be part of that evolution.

For Scouting, in this domain, two main reflections may emerge at this point of its evolution:

- How flexible are we ready to be in our policies (and practices) to cater for this model of delivery, while keeping our essence?
- What support can/should be provided to NSOs that have the school-based model as the dominant one (in all its variants)?

An open dialogue between several stakeholders (internal and external), plus learning from the experiences, may bring some answers to these questions.

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