

Action for Girls

Newsletter of the Working Group on Girls (WGG) and its International Network for Girls (INfG).

WGG Assesses Challenges and Achievements of the MDGs for Girls

At the WGG monthly meetings eight groups formed to analyze each of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their targets in terms of girls. Each group focused on the Achievements, Concerns, Challenges and Gaps, and Recommendations/ Best Practices of their assigned MDG.



Sophia, Center for the Arts, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, participating in Girl Rising's International Day of the Girl in 2012 copyright Nadia Todres



UN Photo

Connecting Child Marriage and Girls' Education to the MDGs

What is obvious from the informative reports is the intersectionality of the MDGs: making progress on one goal positively affects the others. Conversely, the problem in achieving one goal is often repeated in fulfilling the other goals. For instance, the lack of gender-specific monitoring systems for the indicators makes it difficult to assess progress for girls. In addition, it is estimated 1/3 of all girls born are not registered at birth.

Of particular interest are the recommendations and best practices such as "Boys, as well as girls and parents, should be educated fully on reproductive health" and "In Malawi, cash transfers for schoolgirls for good behavior reduced HIV infections by 60%." The full reports are on the WGG website: girlsrights.org/

Decreasing the number of child brides throughout the world would help achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1-7: #1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; #2 Achieve universal primary education; #3 Promote gender equality and empower women; #4 Reduce child mortality; #5 Improve maternal health; #6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; #7 Ensure environmental sustainability.

In 2010 alone throughout the world 13.5 million girls under 18 were married. One in 7 girls in the developing world is married by 15; 1 in 3 by 18. Today there are over 400 million women ages 20 to 49 worldwide who were married before they were 18.

Child marriage is a traditional practice that continues in some places because it has happened that way for generations, or it may be motivated by poverty because a girl is one less mouth to feed and might bring a "bride price", or it may be an effort by parents to protect a daughter from future sexual assault.

Nonetheless, child brides are neither physically or emotionally prepared to be wives or mothers and the results are devastating for the individual, her children and society as a whole. Child marriage is a human rights violation that denies girls the choice of when and whom they will marry as well as their right to health and education. Moreover, it robs girls of the opportunity to thrive.

There is a strong correlation between high rates of child marriage and low levels of education for girls. Over 60% of



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Fiji Girl Guides speak of their experiences

Fiji Girls Speak Out

Every three years my NGO, Pan Pacific South East Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), which has chapters in 23 countries, sponsors a Triennial International Conference in a different member country. This past year the Conference was in Fiji. As a member of the Working Group on Girls (WGG), and its Girls Against Violence taskforce, I have participated in many programs, including several CSW side events, where girls were given the opportunity to speak out publicly about their lives. So, I thought, "Why not bring such an event to Fiji?"

The topic was "Are We Doing Enough for Girls?" To prepare, I worked with my wonderful Fijian counterpart who interviewed possible participants, and then we selected five 13 and 14 year old Girl Guides to speak on the topic. The resulting "speak out" was a very exciting event attended by Fijian dignitaries, the press, many of the girls' schoolmates and relatives, and the entire PPSEAWA Conference group.

Each of the five girls spoke directly from the heart about her experiences. They were all motivated by the recent attack on Malala for advocating education for girls. They knew that when the Pakistani Taliban shot her, as Ban Ki-moon said, "What they feared was a girl with a book."

To quote 14-year-old Akaia: "We are not doing enough for girls. As young girls we need to not just say this, but we need to walk the talk and say 'enough is enough.' We will no longer tolerate another girl dropping out from school just because a young boy is able to say the words, 'I love you.' We will no longer stand by and watch children having children because this is the time we young girls need to rise and say: 'ENOUGH is ENOUGH.'"

Eleanor Schlesinger, PPSEAWA

Restorative Justice & Indigenous Girls Are Topics of SRSG-VAC

In September 2013, during the General Assembly debate on the Rights of the Child, Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG), presented a new report on Restorative Justice for Children. The overall aim of restorative justice is to repair the harm caused by wrongdoing; its goal is to bring together all persons involved: the victim, the offender, parents or guardians, child protection and justice actors, and the community.



Jean - MarcFerre, UN Photo

The Restorative Justice report was the result of a meeting held in June 2013, when the governments of Indonesia and Norway organized an expert consultation in Bali, Indonesia. Participants included ombudspersons, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, child protection officers, academia, civil society and restorative justice practitioners, governments' representatives, and international and regional organizations.

Important recommendations include "Restorative Justice Initiatives" for national and local levels, including legal safeguards to protect the child's best interests as well as the child's right to freedom from violence and discrimination.

Ms. Pais made major contributions to another report, "Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women: A call to action based on an overview of existing evidence from Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America," a joint effort by UNICEF, SRSG-VAC, ILO, UN Women, and UNFPA.

This report from May 2013 "aims to prevent and eliminate violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women. It offers valuable insights, positive experiences and comprehensive recommendations. It includes a set of guiding principles to accelerate progress and inspire further debate, innovative action to protect girls and women from violence in all its forms and in all contexts where incidents may occur." Ms. Pais says she is "confident that the report will serve as an inspiring reference for consolidating sustainable achievements and building a world where the rights of indigenous children are effectively safeguarded and protection from violence is a reality for all."

More at: <http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/node?page=2#sthash.iYLkb39x.dpuf>

Margery Cohen, League of Women Voters of the U.S.

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Girls Speak Out on International Day of the Girl



UN Photo

Girls' Speak Out, held on The International Day of The Girl (11 October 2013) in the UN ECOSOC Chamber and co-sponsored by WGG and the governments of Canada, Turkey and Peru, featured seven girl activists from around the world. The theme, "Innovating for Girls' Education," was addressed by the seven panelists. WGG Girl Advocates introduced the activists and the respondents from the UN and Member States.

Thirteen-year-old Sophie from the Dominican Republic spoke about teaching girls how to swim with the help of the Mariposa DR Foundation in order to help them feel independent, safe and empowered. From Burkina Faso, Malika, described her project of raising money to purchase 60 bicycles so that the girls in her village could get to school safely. Claudia from Mozambique spoke of leading a girls' group in her community that addresses early marriage and the importance of political participation. Addressing the theme of education, Nessrine and Sihem from Algeria described the organization they started to help girls with their schoolwork and teach them about their human rights and alternatives to early marriage.

Yeimy, a 15-year-old Mayan girl from Guatemala, works with Paz Joven, a local support group, to help girls learn skills to escape poverty. She described organizing a petition drive to have Guatemalan leaders allocate funds to enable girls to attend school. Diana, a Mexican immigrant from the U.S., spoke of her work with the New York State Youth Leadership Council, Undocumented Youth Leading Change, that advocates for educating all youth whether or not they are documented. Diana's courageous proclamation of "I am 'undocumented, unafraid, and unapologetic'" brought her a standing ovation.

The Speak Out enabled the seven girl activists to speak honestly about the devastating issues facing them and their activism to better their futures. It also gave governments and the UN the chance to hear previously unheard, but powerful, voices.

Laila Morgan, NGO Girl Advocate

Welcome New Girl Advocates!



Diana Eusebio is a Junior at Hostos Lincoln Academy of Science. Diana applied to be a Girl Advocate because she is passionate about girls' rights, especially education for all girls. As a member of the Advocacy Task Force, Diana is looking forward to visiting government missions and taking part in the Commission on the Status of Women.



A member of the Post-2015 Task Force, **Siri Uppuluri** is in the ninth grade at Metuchen High School. Siri joined WGG because she believes that the greatest natural resource is our future, and our future includes girls. She believes education for girls is especially important because education gives girls a voice. Siri is excited to have the opportunity to participate in CSW 58 and is looking forward to her first year as a Girl Advocate.



Ameesha Dugal is a sophomore at Ridgefield High School and a member of the Girls' Participation Task Force. Ever since she traveled to India and witnessed the problems facing girls, she has been deeply passionate about girl's rights, which is why she joined WGG. Ameesha believes strongly in education for all. She is looking forward to becoming more involved during this upcoming year. (Ameesha is third from the left.)



Rebecca Gudzy is in the ninth grade at Montclair High School and serves on the Communications Task Force. She joined WGG because she believes that girls need to be treated as equals, not as inferiors. Rebecca believes in the importance of education; she is looking forward to CSW 58 and getting more involved in WGG.

Rebecca Gudzy, Girl Advocate
Laila Morgan, Girl Advocate

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WGG Events for CSW 58

WGG Sponsored Events

Sunday, March 9th

9AM – 5PM | Teen Orientation
St. Jean Baptiste School

Monday, March 10th

9AM – 12PM | Girls' Statement to
CSW 58 Drafting
Salvation Army Basement

10:30AM – 12PM | Generation Stem:
What Do Girls Say about Science,
Technology, Engineering and Math?
Salvation Army Auditorium

12:30 – 2PM | Girls Caucus
Salvation Army Auditorium

4:30-6PM | Walking on the Edge of
Change: The Path Toward MDG
Achievement
Salvation Army Auditorium

Tuesday, March 11th

10:30AM – 12PM | Girls Political
Empowerment
Salvation Army Auditorium

Thursday, March 13th

12:30PM – 2PM | Girls Teaching
Human Rights: Bringing the MDGs
into the Classroom
Salvation Army Auditorium

WGG is sponsoring 7 events for girls during the NGO CSW Forum 2014 as well as co-sponsoring 11 events during which at least one of the speakers will be a girl.

The priority theme for CSW 58 is “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls,” and the review theme is “Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work.” There will be several sessions on the MDGs – how to achieve them and how to bring them into the classroom – and a session on What Do Girls Say about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Other events for girls are a Teen Orientation, a Girls’ Caucus, a workshop on drafting a girls’ CSW 58 Statement and a Political Empowerment session. Except for the Teen Orientation, which will be held at St. Jean Baptiste School, all events take place at The Salvation Army on E. 52nd St.

Connecting Child Marriage and Girls’ Education to the MDGs, cont.

child brides in developing countries have no education at all and child brides who have been attending school drop out.

Education for girls has been shown to be a powerful and transformative force for girls, their families and the societies in which they live. It is also a crosscutting factor in achieving the MDGs, for educating girls leads to improved poverty reduction, reduced maternal and infant mortality, lower rates of HIV infection, more concern for the environment and to the empowerment of girls to assume a more vital role in their families and communities.

Child brides frequently do not have access to health information and services for themselves or their children. The more education a girl has, the lower the morality rate of children under 5 and the lower the infection rate from HIV.

According to the United Nations Foundation, every year of school increases a girl’s individual earning power 10-20% and when girls and women earn an income, they invest 90% in their families. Child brides do not have the educational and economic opportunities that help lift them and their families out of poverty.

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Please address questions about the articles to the authors at wggcontact@gmail.com Reprinting of articles is encouraged with credit given to Action for Girls. We welcome articles by NGOs.

Among the organizations dedicated to ending child marriage worldwide is Girls Not Brides (www.girlsnotbrides.org). Girls Not Brides was founded in 2011 by The Elders, a group of independent leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela and includes Kofi Annan, Mary Robinson and Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Elders use their collective experience and influence to bring about peace, justice and human rights throughout the world. Girls Not Brides encourages members to organize national and regional partnerships that work to end child marriage.

Jackie Shapiro, ECPAT-USA