

# Action for Girls

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

## WGG Recommendations to CSW56 Reflect Rural Girls' Needs



Girls walk to school in rural Botswana. Maire Ni Shuilleabhain/Passionists International

To improve the conditions of rural girls, WGG urges all stakeholders to:

**1. PROMOTE A HUMAN RIGHTS - BASED APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY:** Strengthen the implementation and monitor progress of all existing commitments, in particular the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including Article 14 which focuses on those in rural communities, and the goals of the Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular Section L.

**2. SUPPORT ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT VIA EQUAL ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES:**

Fulfillment of human rights is a precondition for girls to successfully transition to adulthood and to become empowered economically and socially. Barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights persist in practice (e.g., gender stereotypes, patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory practices) and in law (e.g., land, property, inheritance rights) and must be removed with urgency. Intensive reforms must promote the economic empowerment of girls through the adoption of policies and strategies that ensure

equal access to education, physical and mental health care, employment opportunities; and economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies.

**3. INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO REDUCE POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY:** The feminization of poverty requires investing sufficient resources for gender equality and the empowerment of girls, taking into account the diversity of needs between those in urban and rural areas. Promoting gender equality and empowerment within rural communities helps to reduce poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and violence. There must be greater investment in rural development and agriculture, labour-saving technology, and clean and renewable energy in rural communities.

**4. INVEST IN QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** Enhanced investment in quality education and training in rural areas, including vocational and literacy training, is a central intervention with strong multiplier effects. Comprehensive national education strategies must be developed that include long-term funding that ensures adequate education infrastructure and prioritizes girls' education in all development and poverty reduction plans.

**5. IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS:** The development of effective policies and programmes for girls' empowerment and rural development will require strengthening countries' capacity to collect and analyze data that are disaggregated by sex and age, as well as by rural and urban population. Better use of existing data, such as available time-use surveys, should be made by policy makers. Gender markers and indicators should be used to measure the impact of policies on girls in rural areas.

**6. LAUNCH PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS TO CREATE AWARENESS:** Public campaigns are vital to eliminate discrimination based on the notion of girls' inferiority and support positive attitudes and behaviors that encourage girls' full partnership. Such campaigns must utilize the media and address the active role of men and boys by establishing gender equality and emphasizing the societal benefits for all of girls' empowerment.



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The full text of the WGG Talking Points is on the WGG website: <http://girlsrights.org>

Yvonne Rafferty  
--Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

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## Andres Guerrero-Feliu, UNICEF, Speaks on an Equity-Based Approach to Development

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Andres Guerrero-Feliu  
Partnerships Manager, UNICEF

**A**t the December 2011 WGG membership meeting, Andres Guerrero-Feliu, Partnerships Manager, UNICEF, spoke of the necessity of addressing the increasing gap between children who have and those who have not by means of an equity-based approach to development. WGG's long-time friend also took the time to congratulate the WGG on its new status as a non-profit organization. Below are some of the main points raised by Guerrero-Feliu.

Disadvantaged children suffer multiple forms of deprivations, reinforcing their marginalized position; for instance, a girl may be denied education, health care and protection because of her gender. The consequences of these deprivations span through the life cycle, preventing the child's potential to develop his or her full capacities into adulthood



Girls wait in a line to receive medical treatment from the members of the Brazilian contingent of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. UN Photo/Marco Dormino

For example, girls from the poorest quintiles in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are three times more likely to marry before age 18 than girls from the richest quintile. In sub-Saharan Africa, young women

from lower quintiles and rural areas are less likely to have accurate knowledge of HIV and AIDS.

In May 2010, UNICEF conducted a study entitled "Narrowing the Gaps to meet the Goals", which challenges the assumption that more lives are saved in poor countries — and the cost is cheaper — by focusing on the easiest people to reach.

Researchers examined data from 26 countries and developed a computer model to test whether a programming approach based on equity considerations could be cost effective. In short, the study demonstrated that the adoption of an equity-based approach for providing services to the world's poorest children is not only just in principle but also right in practice, and it is also more cost-effective than the current policy of mainly helping the less poor in areas that are easier to reach.

Equity for children can be defined as all children having an equal opportunity to realize their rights, to survive, and to develop and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favoritism, with the most disadvantaged receiving the extra care and support needed.

A focus on equity addresses discrimination through attention to diversity and differences in background, culture, race and identity. It is tied to the notions of fairness and social justice, and requires the redistribution of resources and power to enable disadvantaged groups to realize their potential.

The implementation of an equity-based approach requires doing a better job of identifying the families and groups in greatest need — looking beyond averages and disaggregating the data so as to better target the most disadvantaged. It will demand working with many actors, including community-based organizations, so as to better reach the community. It will require better integration of the delivery of essential services, like leveraging immunization campaigns to distribute bed nets and administer Vitamin A supplements.

Investments in services for deprived regions or groups and building capacities and participation at all levels need to be accompanied by structural changes in governance as well as changes in attitudes, practices and social norms. The situation of deprived children, and the structural causes of exclusion and poverty, cannot be addressed without providing those children with a voice and space to participate in decisions affecting them. Those with the power to shape lives must be accountable to the most deprived, if inequities are to be overcome.

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## UN Designates 11 October as International Day of the Girl



**I**t's time to start planning: The General Assembly has designated 11 October as the International Day of the Girl beginning in 2012, and invites all Member States, and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as civil society, to observe the day and raise awareness of the situation of girls in the world.

The resolution recognizes “that despite progress achieved, discrimination and violence against girls and violations of their human rights still persist, and that intensification of efforts is therefore needed, and recognizing also that the empowerment of girls is key in decreasing discrimination, violence and poverty, and in promoting and protecting the full and effective enjoyment of their human rights and that empowering girls requires the active support and engagement of their parents, legal guardians and families, as well as boys and men and the wider community.”

## Hope and Empowerment for Girls in Rural Philippines



**G**iselle exudes inspiration as she shares her quilting skills to other children survivors of abuse and exploitation. A few years ago, she was just like them – recovering from a painful and traumatic experience. Born into a broken family and raised in the province of Bohol (Philippines) surrounded by rice fields and Chocolate Hills, Giselle dreamed of serenading the world with her soothing voice. But that dream was enveloped in darkness along with her mother's tragic death. She also had to stop schooling due to lack of resources. Vulnerable and searching for a way to make a living at a tender age, she was recruited to become a child soldier.

Trapped in armed conflict, Giselle's childhood was short-lived as she worked as a runner for a paramilitary group. She was always in hiding and constantly scurrying for her life and safety. But since a bullet could fly faster than she could run, danger caught her soon enough. She was shot in an attack. Although she survived, she suffered an injury that resulted to the deformity of her right arm.

This disability and near-death experience, however, did not dishearten Giselle. Instead, she saw it as a second chance of living. For her, the terrible events she went through served

as a catalyst for her freedom and awareness of rights. Even without a family to turn to, she strived to survive. She soon discovered the therapeutic art of quilting and learned to fight back terrible memories by entertaining only the good images and translating them into art. She sells her handmade quilts, and they eventually serve as supplementary income for her monthly salary at a company. More importantly, she uses her quilting skills to inspire other children survivors. In the *Survivor's Quilt* workshop organized by Asia Against Child Trafficking (Asia ACTs), Giselle taught the children how to paint beautiful pictures using cloth, scissors, needle and thread. In this way, with every finished quilt, the children feel the sense of accomplishment that leads to the path of their recovery.

Today, just like the quilts she creates, Giselle is an image of hope and empowerment. Once a vulnerable little girl in an exploitative condition, she was able to heal her wounds and live a better life. Hopefully, with the fight towards reducing risks and strengthening equal access to opportunities, children like Giselle will not have to suffer from traumatic experiences to feel hopeful and empowered.

Amihan Abueva  
-- Asia Against Child Trafficking (Asia ACTs)

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## WGG Girl Advocate Speaks Out!



WGG Girl Advocate Caroline Christie reads Girls' Statement at CSW55.

**I**n 2007 when I was 12 years old I attended my first CSW Session. I was in the 7th grade, one of the youngest delegates in attendance, and excited to experience the Commission for the first time. CSW 51's primary theme was, *The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence Against the Girl Child*. As a girl myself, I was eager to hear about how the Commission was going to address girls' human rights.

Six years later, I am 18 years old, completing my final year of high school, and still attending the CSW. I have participated in every CSW session since 2007 and each year, I learn about new and emerging issues involving girls around the world.

This year at CSW56, I would like for girls to be a key part of the Commission discussions and meetings. However, I am a little concerned that they will be forgotten. The theme for CSW56, *The Empowerment of Rural Women and Their Role in Poverty and Hunger Eradication, Development and Current Challenges*, does not specifically mention girls – and yet girls are absolutely critical to this priority theme.

### Action for Girls

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

One thing I have learned in my years attending the CSW is not only do girls need to be heard from, but we also deserve a seat at the table! I am calling upon all attending Girl Delegates and Our Allies to make sure girls' voices are heard loud and clear this year.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of girls everywhere.

Caroline Christie

-- WGG Girl Advocate

Caroline Christie is a senior at a high school in Montclair, NJ. Next year she plans to study International Relations.

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