

Action for Girls

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

Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives at CSW 52: How Do They Matter For Girls?

Members of the Working Group on Girls and the International Network for Girls (INfG) are preparing to discuss financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (25 February-7 March, 2008). Although we are at the midway point in the time allotted to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2007 MDGs Report indicates that targets still can be achieved in some countries, we need to mobilize a greater response in order to achieve more of our goals.

Women and girls are the central concern of the MDGs, in particular those goals associated with health and education. For example, the 2007 Report highlights the feminization of the HIV/AIDS epidemic with increasing numbers of girls and young women being infected. In 2006 women comprised 48% of those living with HIV.

Although the data reveal that there is an increase in the number of children enrolled in school, the picture in education is not much improved from when the MDGs were adopted. Data collected in 2005 indicate that girls constitute 57% of the 72 million children of primary school age who are not in school. The MDGs report points to the need for a stronger political will to achieve the targets.

How will this political will be mobilized and demonstrated? Should gender budget initiatives be promoted as technical instruments as well as demonstrations of the political will to achieve gender equality through public financing?

Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives focus on how gender concerns are addressed and how they impact women and girls as compared to men and boys. For instance, the gender gap between boys and girls in government spending may not be an indication of government policy specifically to target boys and leave out girls. A 2002 UNIFEM study conducted in Côte d'Ivoire on public spending in education explains that household behavior has direct implications on government spending. The decision to keep girls out of school, even at the primary level, may be the main cause of why girls are not equal beneficiaries of public education spending.

However, the study indicates that being aware of the facts and underlying causes does not initiate change. What we do next is important. Government spending and household behaviors are inseparable facts; governments have a major responsibility to initiate a change of behaviors and attitudes. This change can be brought about through government subsidies, education and public awareness. Partnerships with civil society and the participation of girls still remain key elements in mobilizing changes that will benefit today's girls who are tomorrow's women.

If you need more information, go to the UNIFEM sponsored Web site:
<http://www.gender-budgets.org>.

Fulya Vekiloglu
--Bahai International Community and
Co-Chair, Working Group on Girls



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How will girls participate in CSW 52? How will WGG follow up on CSW 51?

Members of the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF seek to once again make girls visible in the upcoming 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Last year, over 200 NGO girl delegates under the age of 18 attended the CSW51 as highly visible and active participants and advocated for girls. Many went home with defined

projects to engage their communities. This year, the WGG hopes to attract many girls to its events.

Throughout CSW 51, girls stated that they did not want to be seen as a 'theme', but rather as integral and equal participants in the conversations and decisions that affect their lives. This year the WGG will organize a girls' only evening event focused on helping the girl participants understand the theme of Financing Gender Equality. The event will include a girls' networking session, a country resource game (where girls will learn how governments allocate funds in their countries), and the drafting of a statement listing their suggestions on how governments might finance and support gender equality. There will be panels with girls expressing their views on education and health.

As the CSW 52 quickly approaches, the WGG encourages all NGOs and governments who have not included girls in their attending delegation to arrange to have girls attend side events and watch the government sessions which will be web cast at www.un.org/webcast. Girls are not a 'theme' to be focused on for two short weeks, but rather powerful agents and voices which need to be heard in order to create sustainable change.

Emily Bent
--Girls Learn International, Inc.



This fall the members of the WGG Task Force on CSW 51 follow-up was busy planning for their side event for the 52nd session of the CSW in 2008 which will give Member States and NGOs an opportunity to review and discuss the Agreed Conclusions adopted last year at the 51st Commission under the theme: "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child."

Our team has worked hard to design and develop a user friendly toolkit which focuses on the rights of girls to

education. The toolkit will be distributed at the CSW 52 side event and is designed not only to help collect data to measure the progress towards the realization of the rights of girls, but also to reinforce the partnerships between governments and NGO's. During the design phase the team held a luncheon for representatives of the UN agencies in New York where our plans for the side event and toolkit were introduced. This get together was a good opportunity for the WGG to receive feedback and for the agencies to reinforce their partnerships with the Working Group on Girls.

Rima Salah
-- Former UNICEF Deputy Exec. Dir.

Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: What do we want Governments to do for Girls?

Below is an excerpt from the statement submitted for the 52nd session of the CSW by members of the WGG and the INfG that builds on the negotiated document from CSW 51 on ending discrimination and violence against girls. Approximately 30 NGOs signed on in support.

We, the NGO Committee on UNICEF's Working Group on Girls, are ready to partner with all member States, all UN agencies, especially with UNICEF, to make the world fit for the girl child. We look toward effective policy and determined implementation from the 52nd session of CSW.

We recommend that governments

- ♦ Institute effective and transparent measurement of previously set goals and targets related to the girl child. (Targets can be found in documents including the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Beijing Platform for Action, Section L; MDG #2 and MDG #3; Education for All; A World Fit for Children, Plan of Action; and CEDAW.)
 - ♦ Develop comprehensive education strategies that will allocate dependable funding for universal education for all with particular attention to the prioritization of girls' education in rural areas and poverty-afflicted regions; development of pedagogy and methodology that is gender and age appropriate; provision of education infrastructure appropriate to girls including improved sanitation and latrines; and mentoring program for girls in skill development and training.
- ♦ Develop gender responsive budgeting that explicitly allocate monies for girls' health, including adolescent and HIV/AIDS issues; programs to end the trafficking of girls for labor and for sexual exploitation; and programs to end all forms of violence against the girl child, including incest,

prenatal sex selection, and infanticide.

- ♦ Create processes and venues in policy and decision-making bodies where the voices of children, particularly of girl children, will be heard.
- ♦ Ensure that policy makers have access to national research data that is disaggregated by gender and age so that appropriate resource allocations can be made.

We recommend that international and multilateral sources of financing for gender equality

- ♦ Integrate funding for girls and women throughout the lifecycle in all allocations of funds for gender equality.

We recommend that UN agencies and NGOs

- ♦ Integrate a lifecycle approach in all gender-related programs, policies and initiatives.
- ♦ Engage in action that draws attention to their governments of the promises made for girls' human rights and demand accountability and evaluation
- ♦ Ensure that girls are partners in identifying their own needs and in developing, planning, implementing and assessing policies and programs to meet these needs.

The official text of the statement in the six UN languages will be posted at <http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm> at the end of February.

Lauren Vater

--Dominican Leadership Conference

Clare Nolan

--Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd



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Girls Participate at World Fit for Children +5

The Closing Session of the 62nd General Assembly was devoted to the five-year review of A World Fit for Children commitments made by States at the historic Special Session on Children in 2002. Children were invited to participate, specifically at the two round tables that were held parallel to the Plenary Session. Each of them included five boys and five girls, in addition to ten NGO representatives, in interactive dialogues with governments and UN officials. One girl, one boy, and one NGO representative also addressed the General Assembly at the Closing Plenary.

Although the five-year review was not specifically devoted to girls, their presence was evident. Of the approximately 90 children participating, more than half were girls. A Side Event, organized by the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, highlighted the particular plight of girls being trafficked and exploited as slave labor. In her address to the General Assembly the NGO speaker cited the plight of 140 million women and girls who have undergone some form of female genital mutilation.

The WGG was involved in the commemorative event in another substantive way. Ana Maria Martinez da Luco and the members of the World Fit for Children task force produced a brochure to deliver the message: A World Fit for Children Must Ensure a Just and Equitable World for Girls. The group moved forward in building a better partnership with UNICEF, by working with Pamela Shifman, a UNICEF child protection specialist, with whom we share the special interest of creating a safe world for all children, but most especially for girls.

A number of reports were prepared for the five-year review, including *Children and the Millennium Development Goals*, *Progress for Children*, and the Secretary General's Report, *Follow-Up to the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children*. The latter notes areas of specific concern for girls such as adolescent health, education (some 48 million girls are not attending primary school), trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation.

Since the 2002 World Fit for Children commitments, there has been increased awareness and some progress, but much more needs to be done to create an environment that is truly fit for all children, especially girls.

Elisabeth Koffler Shuman
--SOS Kinderdorf International

Ana Maria Martinez da Luco
--Unanima International



The Task Force for the Resolution on the Girl Child co-sponsored a side event in November with the Mission of Zambia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on "Educating for the World's Progress: Keeping Girls in School". The three speakers were Cheryl Gregory Faye of the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), Judith Bruce of the Population Council, and Auxilia Ponga, who represented the Zambian Mission. There will be a follow-up report provided to the missions and posted on the website.

Adwoa Aidoo - Girl Scouts of the USA

Special Representative on Violence Against Children to be Named

The Third Committee of the General Assembly has agreed to ask that the Secretary-General appoint a high level Special Representative on violence against children for a period of three years. This comes more than four years after the Independent Expert, Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, received his mandate to complete the UN Study on Violence against Children.

On 27 November, the decision to create the new position was made under the General Assembly's annual Resolution on the Rights of the Child and was adopted by a vote of 176-1.

The Working Group on Girls was active in getting the new Special Representative position. Beginning this past July, the WGG joined other NGOs to advocate for a Special Representative on Violence against Children. Many INFG and WGG members signed a petition organized by the NGO Advisory Council for follow-up to the UN Study. In addition, WGG members in New York visited over 20 missions alerting governments early on to the need for a Special Representative, and suggesting the possible details of the mandate including voluntary funding. In November the WGG co-organized with the Permanent Mission of Zambia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) a panel, "Education for Development: Keeping Girls in School."

On 27 November, the decision to create the new position was made under the General Assembly's annual Resolution on the Rights of the Child and was adopted by a vote of 176-1. Voting against the resolution was the United States, which is not a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and which considers that the resolution makes too many references to the Convention.

The specific paragraph on the Special Representative reads: "Requests the Secretary-General to appoint for a period of three years a Special Representative on violence against children, at the highest possible level, after which the mandate should be evaluated, including regarding its funding, and ensure that the necessary support is made available to the Special Representative for the effective and independent performance of his/her mandate, and encourages the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization to cooperate with and provide support to the Special Representative, including financial, and calls upon States and institutions concerned, and invites the private sector, to provide voluntary contributions for that purpose."

The Special Representative is requested to

- + act as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children;
- + promote the implementation of the UN Study recommendations;
- + identify and share good practices; work closely with all UN treaty bodies and mechanisms and with the UN agencies;
- + establish a mutually supportive collaboration with civil society, including relevant NGOs and the private sector, and work to promote the increased involvement of children and young people in initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against children; and
- + Collaborate and coordinate the activities with the SRSG on children and armed conflict

Cristina Barbaglia
--Co-Chair, Working Group on Girls and Save the Children



About The Working Group on Girls (WGG)

In the winter of 1993-94, the Working Group on Girls (WGG) of the NGO Committee on UNICEF was established to engage interested non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both national and international, in developing an advocacy network on behalf of girls. In a very short time the number of NGOs involved in New York and Geneva grew to 80 or more and was quickly engaged in addressing girls' issues at the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995. A remarkable collaboration between UN Member State delegates and NGOs resulted in the addition of Section L, "The Girl Child," to the Platform for Action.

The International Network for Girls (INfG)

The International Network for Girls (INfG) was born from caucus sessions at the 1995 Beijing Conference and includes local, national and international organizations, as well as, individuals. In partnership with the WGG, the INfG is committed to promoting girls' rights and to facilitating communication between those working on behalf of girls at the local and international level.

Mission Statement and Objectives

The Working Group on Girls (WGG) of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and its International Network for Girls (INfG) are dedicated to promoting the rights of girls in all areas and stages of their lives, advancing the rights and status of girls and assisting them to develop their full potential as women.

The activities of the WGG and the INfG support the following aims:

- Ensure that national governments implement, through policy statements, program development, and resource allocation the commitments to girls' rights made through international agreements
- Advocate for the ongoing inclusion and development of girls' rights in the work of United Nations systems and structures and in international agreements
- Promote the active participation of girls as agents of change in their own lives, families, communities and societies

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