

Action for Girls

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

UNICEF Links CRC and CEDAW to Further Rights of Women and Children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are mutually reinforcing human rights instruments for promoting, protecting, and fulfilling the human rights of children and women and preventing gender-based discrimination. The struggles to realize the human rights of women and children are similar because

women and children have historically had similar disadvantaged legal and social positions. These struggles also need to be understood from the perspective of women's and girls' individual and collective rights, and the implications that their unequal status have for the achievement of human development goals, beyond those associated with women's reproductive and caring functions.

Women's rights activists use the CEDAW to protect and promote the rights of women while the children's rights activists mostly focus on the CRC. Although the two groups have collaborated on some issues, they are not yet taking full advantage of the ways they can support each other's agendas and use both Conventions together powerfully.

A UNICEF paper by Prof. Savitri Gooneskere and Rangita de Silva, entitled "Linkages between Women's Rights and Children's Rights and its Practical Implication for Human Rights Based Programming," written in 2005, looks at the practical significance of both the CRC and CEDAW. The paper provides guidance on how the synergy between the CRC and CEDAW can be translated into concrete action and encourages a comprehensive approach for translating these links into action. This paper has been central in revitalizing UNICEF work on CRC and CEDAW, both in terms of understanding the mutually reinforcing links between the two and using them to prioritize girls' issues.

The women's and children's rights' struggles are about recognizing human dignity, human capabilities, and access to opportunities and eliminating inequality and discrimination that deny life chances. Both groups are struggling to transfer women and children's rights into legislative reform, budgets, and policies at the national level and harmonize domestic development efforts with the human rights norms of the CRC and CEDAW. A human rights approach with gender equality at its centre recognizes that the status of women and the extent to which they are able to exercise their rights is fundamental to the development of societies and is



Mother & Child - Randam, India
Jeffries Foale - Passionists International



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indispensable to the achievement of children's rights and the girl child in particular.

There is still, however, a lack of understanding of the significance of women's rights to children's well-being and a lack of awareness that women's rights can bring multiple benefits for women and their families, communities, and societies and help break the cycle of discrimination against girls. The challenge lies in articulating the mutually reinforcing nature of achievements of rights of women and children, in building capacity, and in enabling collaboration between the entities concerned with women's and children's rights, including government agencies, academics, NGOs, as well as women's and children's rights activists.

efforts on stimulating a better understanding of the intersections between women's and children's rights and encouraging partnerships and alliances between women's and children's rights advocates. The conference provided a platform for constructive discussion on the possibilities of linking the two rights agendas and an open debate on the tensions and conflicts in both agendas and ways to resolve them.

It is important to bear in mind that the struggle to achieve a just society is about the importance of creating strategic partnerships and alliances and merging overlapping agendas. The journey should be taken collectively in order to create positive changes in the lives of women, men, girls, and boys all over the world.

Noreen Khan
--Gender Specialist, Gender and Rights Unit
Division of Policy & Practice, UNICEF HQ

Hague Girl Child Conference Produces Outcomes

The International Girl Child Conference held in The Hague on March 9-10, 2009, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, focused on the protection of girls from all forms of violence. Sub-themes discussed at the conference were child abuse, parenting, the internet, domestic violence, FGM/C, forced and early marriage, honor-related violence, and son preference.

The possibility of girls transforming themselves from victim to empowerment was also featured. Formerly a nine-year-old bride of an older man, Nujood Ali, the poster child for the conference has obtained a divorce, returned to school, and aspires to become a lawyer.

Newly appointed WGG Co-Chair, Catherine Moore, of the International Federation of University Women, participated in the conference. "The conference created an enabling message for us all," she said. "It should motivate us all to review, select and commit to some of the recommendations." The conference outcomes are available on the WGG website at <http://girlsrights.org> Click on *What's New, then Recent Projects, and finally Outcomes.*



Goglime Girl Wearing Bilum Dress
Vivat International

UNICEF is working with other agencies to enhance children's rights and women's rights by strengthening knowledge and understanding of the UN and its partners concerning conceptual and practical links and tensions between women's and children's rights, as well as reinforcing complementarities between the CRC and CEDAW. It is also trying to strengthen advocacy efforts to promote the interconnectedness and simultaneous realization of the rights of women and children through the work of the CRC and CEDAW Committees as a framework to influence action at the national level.

The rights of the girl child are determined by the rights that women possess; therefore, all rights that are enshrined in the CEDAW Convention address all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child. To enable UNICEF and its partners to engage actively in the CEDAW process at all levels and advocate for the implementation of the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations in national processes, as well as in the CRC reporting process, a Guide has been developed and disseminated. (<http://www.crin.org/docs/CEDAW.pdf>)

In addition, UNICEF, in partnership with the Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW), convened in Bangkok in 2007, an Asian regional conference, Women and Children: the Human Rights Relationship. This conference was organized as part of UNICEF's

WGG Forms Task Force to Protect Girls: Help from NGOs Requested

The Working Group on Girls (WGG) has formed a Task Force to Protect Girls From Violence. We hope to collect the efforts by NGOs to change the laws of their countries to comply with existing UN treaties that have clauses that relate to violence against girls. We are particularly interested in protecting girls who are often the most vulnerable in society and may not realize that they have human rights.

Some of the types of violence that affect girls are infanticide; abuse in the home, both sexual and nonsexual; traditional practices such as female genital cutting, stoning girls to death and other forms of honor killings; child marriage of girls sometimes as young as two years old; and trafficking in which girls are stolen, sold or falsely persuaded to go with traffickers to become sex slaves in brothels away from home and often in other countries. While boys and girls can be forced to be child soldiers, girl soldiers are further abused by having to become “wives” to the combatants against their will. For more details see the WGG fact sheets at <http://www.girlsrights.org/girls.php>

193 countries have ratified the UN treaty **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**. 186 countries have ratified

another treaty, **The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**. These treaties have clauses that relate to violence against girls; governments that have ratified these treaties are obligated to change their laws to comply with the requirements of the treaty. This may be done by enacting new legislation, writing or rewriting a constitution, or by the courts recognizing the obligations of the treaty

The goal of the Task Force is to compile models of what works and does not work so that we can share them with NGOs in other countries. Many NGOs around the world have used these treaties to persuade their governments to comply with these agreements when it comes to violence against women and girls. We are hoping to find examples from many cultures and types of governments so that NGOs looking for examples can pick and chose what best meets their culture and type of government.

YOU CAN HELP US WITH THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT. If your NGO has engaged in such a project or knows of such a project, please share it with us. Send the information to wggs@girlsrights.org We look forward to receiving your information on best practices.

Doris Schapira --US League of Women Voters

Pais Appointed as Special Representative on Violence Against Children

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Ms Marta Santos Pais as Special Representative on Violence against Children. Ms Pais has been the Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre since July 2001. From 1997 – 2001 she was the Director of UNICEF’s Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning. Author of many publications on human rights and children’s rights, Pais served as Special Adviser to the Graça Machel UN Study on children affected by armed conflict, to the UN Study on Violence against Children, and was a member of the UN Drafting Group of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols.

The new post of Special Representative on Violence against Children was established by the General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child in December 2007. The Resolution asked Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to appoint a Special Representative on Violence against Children who would act “as a high profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, ensuring the involvement of key actors concerned, including children and young people, and in cooperation with Member States.”

The Working Group on Girls under the leadership of Cristina Barbaglia, Save the Children, and formerly Co-Chair of WGG, organized WGG members to lobby the missions of the countries that were on the Third Committee during the summer of 2007 to persuade them to vote affirmatively for the Special Representative on Violence against Children.

In a letter to WGG Co-Chairs Catherine Moore and Mary Ann Strain, Special Representative Marta Santos Pais said, “I look forward to collaborating closely with you and benefiting from your long experience and wide network. Promoting a gender sensitive approach and enhancing the safeguard of the human rights of girls will be critical dimensions of the work ahead. Achieving a process of social and behaviour change to ensure girls’ protection from all forms of violence remains an important challenge, and your support in identifying good practices guided by human rights standards will be a significant contribution that I very warmly welcome.”

Susan O’Malley
--International Federation of Business and Professional Women

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Over Two Hundred Girls Participate at CSW 53

NGOs sponsored more than two hundred girls from various countries and U.S. states to attend caucuses, film screenings, panel discussions and workshops during CSW 53. The Working Group on Girls (WGG) sponsored a day-long Girls' Orientation during NGO CSW Consultation Day that offered girls the opportunity to analyze the CSW 53

priority theme and discuss their own experiences with gender inequality, care-giving, and HIV/AIDS. As one girl stated, the Girls' Orientation "allows people to hear out the girls."

Recognizing that girls are actors for social change and that their experiences must guide and inform research and policy, the WGG Task Force for Girls' Participation prepared for CSW 53 by considering the following questions: What does "the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men" mean to girls? How do girls' responsibilities in their families and communities shape their sense of self and their access to opportunities? What impact does gender inequality have on girls' lives? How do girls envision equality between the sexes? What policies do girls identify as necessary to achieve gender equality? In order to gain insight into these questions, the Task Force recruited girls to participate in CSW 53 and created opportunities for girls' experiences to be heard.

During the CSW 53 girls served as panelists, shared personal caregiving stories in workshops, and drafted the CSW 53 Girls' Statement. CSW 53 gave girls the opportunity to think critically about gender equality and also afforded others the opportunity to learn about the impact of gender equality on girls by hearing directly from girls.



Girls Participate at CSW 53

Allison Attenello -- Girls Learn International, Inc.

Catherine Moore and Mary Ann Strain to Chair WGG

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Editorial Committee
Carolyn Donovan
-- American Association of
University Women
Susan O'Malley
-- International Federation of
Business and
Professional Women
Zelia Cordeiro
-- VIVAT International

*Please address questions about
the articles to the authors at
wgg@girlsrights.org
Reprinting of articles is
encouraged with
credit given to *Action for Girls*.
We welcome articles by NGOs.*

Catherine Moore and Mary Ann Strain have been chosen to chair the Working Group on Girls (WGG) from June 2009 through June 2011.

Catherine Moore, a former elementary school principal and the International Federation of University Women's coordinator at the United Nations in New York, has had over ten years of NGO experience. She is known for building strong ties with Member States and with UN agencies such as UNIFEM and UNICEF.

Mary Ann Strain, Passionists International, joined the WGG two years ago. She brings a quick wit and extensive experience as the associate director of a retreat center in Hartford, CT. Strain is especially talented in transforming words into visual representation. She is working on our new website, power point presentations, and an improved Action for Girls.

Catherine Moore and Mary Ann Strain take over from Fulya Vekiloglu and Hourig

Babikian. Fulya Vekiloglu, formerly of the Bahai International Community, has returned to Turkey. She greatly increased the activity of the WGG by reaching out to more agencies and spearheading our current efforts to institutionalize girls' rights. We honor Fulya as visionary, energetic, and kind. Hourig Babikian, who is stepping down after serving out the term of Cristina Barbaglia of Save the Children, also served as co-chair from 2005-2007. As a former UNICEF employee, she has emphasized advocacy at UNICEF board meetings and with agency staff. Representing the Partnership for Global Justice, she has always urged us to review the political as well as fiscal implications of our proposed actions. We honor Hourig as grounded, quick-witted, and dedicated.

While the four leaders have their individual special skills, all are passionate in their dedication to girls and their rights and all are deserving of our great appreciation.

Carolyn Donovan
-- American Association of University Women