

# **Platform for Girls**



**The Working Group on Girls**  
**NGO Committee on UNICEF**

**May 2006**

## **Mission Statement of the Beijing Platform for Action.**

The girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. The skills, ideas and energy of the girl child are vital for full attainment of the goals of equality, development and peace. For the girl child to develop her full potential she needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs for survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights safeguarded. If women are to be equal partners with men, in every aspect of life and development, now is the time to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child and to ensure the full enjoyment of her human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights assured by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, universal ratification of which is strongly urged. Yet there exists world-wide evidence that discrimination and violence against girls begin at the earliest stages of life and continue unabated throughout their lives. They often have less access to nutrition, physical and mental health care and education and enjoy fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than do boys. They are often subjected to various forms of sexual and economic exploitation, paedophilia, forced prostitution and possibly the sale of their organs and tissues, violence and harmful practices such as female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, incest, female genital mutilation and early marriage, including child marriage. (39)

*Article 39 Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing China, 4-15 September 1995*

# **The Working Group on Girls**

## **NGO Committee on UNICEF**

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

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

- Ensure that national governments implement, through policy statements, legislation, program development, and resource allocation the commitments to girls' rights made through international declarations and conventions;
- Advocate for the ongoing inclusion and development of girls' rights in the work of the United Nation 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.

In the winter of 1993-94 the Working Group on Girls 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 more than eighty 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 inclusion of girls' in *The Beijing Declaration* and in the addition of Section L, "The Girl Child," to the *Platform for Action*.

The International Network for Girls (INfG) was born from caucus sessions at that 1995 Beijing Conference and now numbers some 800 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.

This document identifies and analyzes some of the most critical needs and concerns facing girls today and outlines recommendations to national governments, intergovernmental bodies and to civil society at large.



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

State parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. . . (Article 27)

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women**

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women , for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. (Article 3)

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Poverty has various manifestations including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. (47)*

# **The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living Poverty and the Girl Child**

Poverty has been a global concern for decades, and an important issue before the United Nations and its various funds and programmes from its inception. Girl children especially are among those most adversely affected by the impoverished circumstances of their families and nations.

In the year 2000, the world leaders met at the United Nations and pledged to put an end to poverty and to put in place conditions designed to ensure sustainable development for all. Their commitments, spelled out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), include the reduction by half of the number of the people who live in conditions of extreme poverty – earning less than one US dollar a day. The achievement of this goal would benefit the children of the world greatly.

#### **Facts to Consider**

- Children are disproportionately represented among those living in impoverished conditions and girls are among those most negatively affected by poverty.
- Poverty is among the greatest threats to childhood today.
- Girls are the first to be pulled out of school when help is needed in the home or to support parents' livelihoods.
- Children living in poverty, especially girls, are more likely to engage in labour and miss out on education and the opportunity to escape poverty.
- Over half the children in the developing world still live without the basic services, commodities and protection that are critical for their survival and development.
- Women, and especially girls, bare the brunt of poverty and must carry the biggest burden.
- Families who live in impoverished conditions must often rely on their daughters to search out and carry fuel wood and water for the family. Performing these critical survival tasks prevents these girls from attending and completing school.

## **A World Fit for Children**

*Chronic poverty remains the biggest obstacle to meeting the needs, protecting and promoting the rights of children. It must be tackled on all fronts, from the provision of basic social services to the creation of employment opportunities, from the availability of microcredit to investment in infrastructure and from debt relief to fair trade practices. Children are the hardest hit by poverty because it strikes at the very roots of their potential development—their growing bodies and minds.*  
(18)

### **MDGS**

**MDG 1:** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

**MDG 2:** Achieve universal primary education.

**MDG 3:** Promote gender equality and empower women.

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### **Actions to End Poverty of the Girl Child**

- Ensure that all children enjoy their right to education. Programmes and practices must be developed that move the right to education from a legal norm to a cultural norm that is honored in every city and village.
- Ensure that schools are “girl-friendly,” with more female teachers and a curriculum free of gender bias and stereotyping.
- Develop incentives to encourage families to send their daughters to school. These could include the elimination of school fees and uniforms, and providing scholarships, free lunches, cash for school.
- Improve access to water. So that girls could have the time to attend school since she often has to spend many hours a day traveling to collect water. Providing close, free, drinking water would also help improve the health of the girl child and her family.
- Invest in infrastructure and sanitation in order to improve the girl child’s health. Safe latrine facilities would help to prevent sexual harassment and encourage parents to send their daughters to school.
- Adjust poverty-reduction strategies and expand or reallocate resources to social spending and capacity building, particularly for girls.
- Confront discrimination and implement initiatives to address the exclusion faced by women and girls forced to live in impoverished conditions.
- Reduce poverty in the least developed countries by focusing on:
  - National development strategies;
  - Full debt cancellation;
  - Fair trade;
  - Enhanced official development assistance; and
  - Enhanced technical assistance from donors.

### **Source and Resources**

UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, New York: UNICEF, 2005.

May 2006



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*
- (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education*
- (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means. Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates. (Article 28)*

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education. (Article 10)*

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training. (Section L4)*

## **The Right to Education and the Girl Child**

Education is the right of every girl everywhere and key to transforming her life and the life of her community. Without education, girls are denied the opportunity to develop their full potential and to play a productive and equal role in their families, their societies, their country and their world.

Increased education is one of the most important tools available to empower women within the family and within society. Furthermore, educating girls has cascading benefits. Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have smaller, healthier and better educated families; and better able to protect their families and themselves from HIV/AIDS, trafficking and other forms of violence.

Unfortunately, girls continue to be locked out of school and locked into inequality. The obstacles, both cultural and societal, girls face are huge. Barriers to quality education include poverty, poor quality education, child labour, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, remote geographic location, inadequate infrastructure, discrimination, mother's lack of education, civil conflict, natural disasters, and violence.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has clearly identified girls' education as an urgent development priority for the entire UN system:

*If we are to succeed in our efforts to build a healthier, more peaceful and equitable world, classrooms must be full of girls as well as boys. By educating girls, we will help raise economic productivity and reduce both maternal and infant mortality. By educating girls, we will improve nutrition, promote health, and fight HIV/AIDS. By educating girls, we will trigger a transformation of society as a whole—social, economic and political. (Video message to the Conference on Gender Parity in Education, Washington, D.C., 2 March 2005.)*

### **Facts to Consider**

- On 1 January 2006, the world missed the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) deadlines—gender parity in primary and secondary education; 86 countries are at risk of not achieving gender parity even by 2015.
- None of the MDGs will likely be met unless significant progress is made in girls' education.
- Approximately 100 million children are still not enrolled in primary school, 55% of them are girls.
- 65 million girls in the global south do not go to school at all.
- Women and girls are less literate than men; worldwide, only 88 adult women are considered literate for every 100 men.
- The most effective way to ensure quality education for all children is to eliminate the barriers for girls.

## **A World Fit for Children**

*Promote innovative programmes that encourage schools and communities to search more actively for children who have dropped out or are excluded from school and from learning, especially girls and working children, children with special needs and children with disabilities, and help them enroll, attend, and successfully complete their education, involving governments as well as families, communities and non-governmental organizations as partners in the educational process. (Declaration 3, 40, 2)*

### **MDGS**

**Goal 2:** *Achieve universal primary education.*

**Goal 3:** *Promote gender equality and empower women. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005.*

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- While education for both boys and girls leads to increased income for individuals and for nations, the education of girls leads to greater gains; for every year of school, wages for women increase by 10-20 percent.
- Education of girls may be the single most effective weapon to prevent HIV/AIDS.
- Total aid to basic education accounts for only 2.6% of all official development assistance.

### **Actions to Ensure Girls' Right to Education**

- Undertake the systemic reform of education systems including creating gender sensitive curricula, infrastructure, and pedagogy and ensuring safety for girls.
- Mobilize the political will necessary to ensure quality education for all girls:
  - Create a national and international ethos that clearly identifies the importance and value of educating girls as well as boys;
  - Make the education of girls a priority recognizing the key role it plays in the accomplishment of all the promises of the Millennium Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action.
- Develop comprehensive national education strategies and include education in all development plans and poverty reduction strategies.
- Mobilize national and international resources for education.
  - Encourage developing nations to increase national funding for basic education to at least 3% of Gross Domestic Product.
  - Insist that donor nations demonstrate their political and financial commitment to "Education for All," as well as, the "United Nation's Girls Education Initiative" and the World Bank's "Fast Track Initiative" by canceling the onerous debt of impoverished countries and increasing donor aid for basic education to at least US\$7 billion per year.
  - Support non-governmental organizations' efforts to educate civil society about the importance of girls' education and to fight those cultural taboos and traditional practices that keep girls from exercising their right to education.

### **Sources and Resources**

- UNICEF, *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Gender Parity and Primary Education 2* (April 2005).
- Secretary-General's video message for Conference on Gender Parity in Education-Washington, D.C., 2 March 2005.
- *State of the World's Children 2004: Girls, Education and Development*, (NY: UNICEF, 2003).
- *Girls Can't Wait: Why Girls' Education Matters, and How to Make it Happen* (Brussels, Belgium: Global Campaign for Education, 2005)
- UNICEF, *The GAP Report: Gender Achievement and Prospects in Education*, <[www.ungei.org/gap](http://www.ungei.org/gap)>.

May 2006



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality, and as far as possible the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. (Article 7)*

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning. States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. (Article 12)

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition. (Section L.5)*

## **The Right to Health and the Girl Child**

In the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000, world leaders committed unprecedented efforts and resources to meeting the needs of those living in conditions of poverty. World leaders promised to halve extreme poverty; to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS; to provide universal primary education; to improve maternal health and cut child mortality; to increase transparency and democratic decision-making—all by the year 2015. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, which flow from it, reaffirm States' responsibility to ensure the health and welfare of children, previously stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and to provide a universal blueprint for the guarantee of those rights.

### **Facts to Consider**

- Escalating violence perpetrated on children threatens children's health and well-being. In 2002, UNICEF reported that, "violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation threaten children throughout their life."
- The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that girls are at the highest risk of infanticide, sexual abuse, neglect and being forced into prostitution.
- Cultural practices, such as son preference, threaten the development of the full potential of girl children.
- Girls are more vulnerable than boys to the consequences of unprotected and premature sexual relations and often face pressure to engage in such sexual activity.
- In its *2002 World Report on Violence and Health*, WHO pointed to the devastating effects sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/ AIDS, have on children's health. Still, HIV/AIDS is only one among many contagious diseases that place the girl child's life at risk.

### **Actions to Ensure Girls' Health**

- Every girl should be treated with dignity and respect and be registered at birth, "without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 2).
- Special attention needs to be paid to the physical, psychological and social transition of girls from adolescence to adulthood.
- Breaking the cycles of poverty, violence, discrimination and impaired human development, requires a comprehensive approach to girls' health.

## A World Fit for Children

*Children must get the best possible start in life. Their survival, protection, growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition is the essential foundation of human development. We will make concerted efforts to fight infectious diseases, tackle major causes of malnutrition and nurture children in a safe environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn. (Declaration, 7.4)*

### MDGS

**Goal 3:** Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women

**Goal 4:** Reduce child mortality

**Goal 5:** Improve maternal health

**Goal 6:** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

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- The girl child's health status is generational in nature and impact. Her own health is dependent on her mother's health and it also predicts her children's health. Thus, it is imperative to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted and accompanied by primary family education at all ages and levels, and that every birth is safe and carried out in the presence of a skilled birth attendant.
- Reducing children's mortality rates requires a multi-pronged approach. Primary family education and services must include vaccination for preventable childhood diseases; the promotion of breastfeeding practices; appropriate nutrition; and the provision of access to clean water.
- The escalating violence perpetrated on children requires particular attention. Governments, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, businesses and local communities must work to protect every child so that all children can grow up free from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination.
- It is essential that governments provide appropriate educational guidance about a variety of contagious diseases which threaten children. Additional measures such as, providing quick oral HIV screening tests and supplying anti-malaria sleeping nets, can enable children to thrive in a disease-free environment.
- Special attention should be given to the girl child and to the elimination of discriminatory cultural attitudes and practices that make her more susceptible to disease.

### Source and Resources

- UN Doc. A/Conf. 32/8, cited in Steven D. Jamar, *The International Human Right to Health*, 22 S.U.L REV. 1, 2 (Fall 1994).
- United Nations Children's Fund (2002). UNICEF's Priorities for Children 2002-2005, New York.
- World Health Organization (2002). *World Report on Violence and Health: Summary*, Geneva, Switzerland, (p. 4).
- United Nations Children's Fund (2002), UNICEF's Priorities for Children 2002-2005, New York.
- Friedman, S. A.. (n.d.). *Keeping Promises to Girls: Following Up on the UN Special Session for Children* [Brochure]. NGO Committee on UNICEF/ Working Groups on Girls.
- *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20 (1995) and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1 (1995), especially Section L.
- For WHO activities visit: [http://www.eho.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/](http://www.eho.int/violence_injury_prevention/) (under "Injury Prevention Collaborative Activities).
- For UNICEF issues on violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation threatening children, see UNICEF's Priorities for Children 2002 – 2005 – website: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).
- For further information on Girls and HIV/ AIDS, see in particular, UNICEF's *Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS* (2005), <http://www.unicef.org/uniteforchildren/index.html>.

May 2006



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

*States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*  
(Article 12, 1)

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life. Actions to be taken by governments and international and non-governmental organizations:*

- (a) Provide access for girls to training, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues an enable them to articulate their views;*
- (b) Support non-governmental organizations, in particular youth non-governmental organization, in their efforts to promote the equality and participation of girls in society.*  
(Section L.8, 284)

## **The Right to Participate and the Girl Child**

At the Opening of the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children, 8 May 2002, the delegates representing the Children's Forum presented *The Children's Statement* in which the children of the world declared:

***We are the world's children.***

*We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.*

*We are street children.*

*We are the children of war.*

*We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.*

*We are denied good quality education and health care.*

*We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination.*

*We are the children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account.*

*We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.*

The children went on to describe a world fit for children.

*In this world, we see the active participation of children:*

- *raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child's right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,*
- *children actively involved in decision-making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.*

In order to promote the active and universal participation by all the children in the global family as agents of social change, we need to ensure that there are viable forums and structures in place that encourage and facilitate the appropriate involvement in decisions that affect their lives.

### **Facts to Consider**

#### **Model Practice from India**

The Neighbourhood Community Network initiated a system for participation in India's southernmost district of Kanyakumari whereby children are organized into more than 7,000 neighbourhood parliaments and are federated through representative structures at the village, panchayat (an inter-village civil governance structure), block and the district levels. UNICEF, Chennai, India, has been very much involved in this effort.

## **A World Fit for Children**

*Children including adolescents must be enabled to exercise their right to express their views freely, according to their evolving capacity, and build self-esteem, acquire knowledge and skills, such as those for conflict resolution, decision-making and communication, to meet the challenges of life....*  
(32, 1)

## **MDGS**

**Goal 2:** *Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling*

**Goal 3:** *Promote gender equality and empower women*

## **2005 World Summit**

*We commit ourselves to respecting and ensuring the rights of each child without discrimination of any kind...*  
(Outcome Document, 142)

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Each neighbourhood parliament includes about thirty families and the children and adolescents hailing from these families. Children and adolescents in these neighbourhood parliaments come together to respond to the problems affecting their own neighbourhoods and the other levels of the federation. The parliaments focus on children's rights and help children to discuss their visions and plans for a better world.

We have seen from this experience that children, when encouraged to dream, can accomplish a great deal. Their commitment to the ideals of fraternity and justice is obvious. We believe that a global, multi-tier federation of such neighbourhood parliaments could be an effective strategy for the promotion of the participation of children as agents of change in their own lives, families, communities and nations, and help them feel they are part of a growing global community.

The experience of the Neighbourhood Community Networks in Kanyakumari is echoed in practices such as the Basic Communities of Latin America, community-based monitoring through the "neighbourhood clustering approach" in the Philippines, and the "ayalkkootams" or neighbourhood assemblies organized by the Government in Kerala, India.

## **Actions to Promote Girls' Participation**

- National governments should develop viable, small neighbourhood forums and networking structures at the local and national levels to ensure the active and universal participation of children in decision-making so that they develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary to become active agents of social change in their own communities.
- The United Nations should develop global forums in which children can contribute to shaping policies and programs which affect their lives, their families and their communities.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should welcome the participation of children, especially girls, in their activities and contribute to the establishment of a global, multi-tier federation of neighbourhood parliaments to promote participation of children as agents of change.

*May 2006*



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.*

*States Parties shall:*

- (a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;*
  - (b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;*
  - (c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present.*
- (Article 32)*

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights . . . (Article 13)*

## **The Right to Protection Labour and the Girl Child**

The International Labour Organization (ILO), estimates that 211 million children worldwide between age five and fourteen engage in some form of illegal, hazardous, or exploitative child labour. More than half of these are girls. Some 120 million children work full time, every day, all year round. This number includes the many children whose work does not show up in government statistics. The ILO estimates that 95% of the children who work are employed in the informal sector.

Child labour is most prevalent in the agricultural sector, where children are widely used as day labourers. Working long hours, children working in agriculture are often exposed to harmful pesticides, dangerous machinery, backbreaking loads, and many other hazardous conditions. They are also found working in the commercial sex industry, domestic servitude, mining, pyrotechnics production, and in many other harmful activities. Some children are also engaged in armed groups as child soldiers, messengers, porters, cooks, or sexual slaves.

The vast majority of working girls perform jobs that are hidden, unvalued and uncounted. They are found among the tens of millions of girls who work as child domestics in the homes of other families and among the millions more who perform household or farm chores for their own families. Some assist their families in home-based work for wages, such as embroidering, basket making or gem polishing.

The "invisible" nature of this work causes this vast and painful situation to remain unaddressed. These girls are restricted in mobility, confined largely to the domestic sphere, frequently work hours that are twice as long as boys, and comprise the majority of the "very young" workers of the world. These situations have a deleterious effect on their growth, development and health and most seriously affect the ability of the child to pursue an education.

The need exists to identify, examine and expose the common myths or "excuses" that prevent us from moving forward to ensure justice and equality for girls, particularly in the area of economic exploitation.

## **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work. (Section L6)*

### **A World Fit for Children**

*Promote innovative programmes that encourage schools and communities to search more actively for children who have dropped out or are excluded from school and from learning, especially girls and working children, children with special needs and children with disabilities, and help them enroll, attend, and successfully complete their education, involving governments as well as families, communities and non-governmental organizations as partners in the educational process. Special measures should be put in place to prevent and reduce drop out due to, inter alia, entry into employment. (40, 2)*

### **MDGS**

**Goal 3:** Promote gender equality and empower women.

**Goal 8:** Develop a global partnership for development. In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth.

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### **Facts to Consider**

- The work performed by girls has a high economic value but remains unmeasured and unvalued in the gross domestic product. Yet girls often perform valuable child rearing and home maintenance tasks and free one or both parents for more remunerative work. Some may also produce goods for market which add to the family income but also serves to depress wages paid, even to adults, for such work.
- Domestic service, generally performed by girls, can be among the most exploitative and intolerable forms of child labour. Many girls involved in domestic service earn no wages but merely work for a very meager keep. Even if employers would permit girls to go to school, the school would need to be structured to accommodate their work schedules.
- Burdens that strain a girl's mental and physical capacity violate her right to a healthy development and prevent her from making her maximum potential contribution to society.

### **Actions to Ensure Girls' Rights**

- Societies need to be made aware of the contribution of girls' labour and the waste of their potential that early exploitation and resultant lack of education cause.
- Caring people must work to document the hidden work of girls and the traditional thinking that undervalues it and fails to recognize the danger to the young worker.
- Communities and nations must work to support families and create economic alternatives that will make it possible for the girl to be given her right to self-development.
- Methods must be developed to document the number of children who are not in school. The reason for their failure to attend school should be analyzed and steps should be taken, by law and by community services to prevent the exploitation of these children.
- The amount and type of home-based work of all types should be recorded and regulated.
- The community-at-large, women, and especially girls should be consulted in the development of instruments to assess the above situations.

### **Source and Resources**

- *Girls at Work*, UNICEF, NY, 1998.
- *A New Tool to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 1999.



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*Each State Party shall ensure that, as a minimum, the following acts and activities are fully covered under its criminal or penal law . . .*

*Offering, delivering or accepting . . . a child for the purpose of:*

- a. Sexual exploitation*
- b. Transfer of organs of the child for profit;*
- c. Engagement of the child in forced labour;*

*(Optional Protocol, Article 3)*

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.*

*(Article 6)*

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, have a devastating effect on children's health, and girls are more vulnerable than boys to the consequences . . .*

*(Section L, 269)*

### **A World Fit for Children**

*Children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Societies must eliminate all forms of violence against children. Accordingly, we resolve to: Protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation including pedophilia; trafficking, and abduction (43c)*

## **The Right to Protection Trafficking and the Girl Child**

Trafficking in human beings is a modern form of slavery and a serious human rights violation. Indeed, it has become one of the most lucrative illicit businesses in the global economy. This new slave trade has a variety of causes including, extreme poverty, lack of access to resources, unemployment, poor education, and dysfunctional families. It is also fuelled by the clear demand for the services provided by trafficked persons.

### **Facts to Consider**

- The United Nations estimates that every year, approximately 1.2 million children are trafficked, both internally and across international borders. Girls under the age of 18 trafficked for prostitution constitute 10-30% of the total number of the trafficked women.
- Girls are particularly vulnerable because of their marginalization in society. They may be abducted by traffickers, sold by parents unable to feed them, or given to a relative or person who promises employment. In some cases, the girls may have already been sexually abused within the family or neighbourhood.
- Organized prostitution is the social structure through which millions of men solicit and buy sex acts. Additionally, because many of those who demand sex are afraid of contracting AIDS and some exhibit aberrant sexual behavior, the victims seem to be getting younger and younger.
- Trafficking is damaging to personal development. It affects a girl's sense of dignity, self-worth, ability to trust, and capacity for developing relationships. A girl's neurological system is shaped by these terrifying experiences that, for the remainder of her life, directly affect her way of thinking, feeling, and acting.

### **Actions to Eliminate Trafficking of Girls**

- Condemn trafficking in minors and make it a crime against humanity. Provisions on combating trafficking should be incorporated in relevant law of national governments and the resolutions and reports of UN bodies and the topic of trafficking in human beings should be included on the agenda of the UN General Assembly.
- Eliminate the root causes of girls' vulnerability to trafficking such as poverty, gender inequality, unemployment, social exclusion, lack of educational opportunities, and dysfunctional families.
- Build a global partnership against slavery and trafficking in human beings that includes governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.
  - Establish of an inter-agency working group, to coordinate the planning and implementation of pragmatic means of combating this form of modern slavery.

**Convention against Transnational Organized Crime—Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons**

*Trafficking includes: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*  
(Articles 1-3)

**MDGS**

**Goal 1:** *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*

**Goal 3:** *Promote gender equality and empower women*

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- Develop and deliver programmes which help to reintegrate trafficking victims into their homes and societies.
- Provide training for law enforcement personnel and child protection workers that ensures an adequate understanding of the special needs of girls who have been victims of trafficking.
- Launch a global campaign to eradicate the harmful cultural practice of prostitution, in all its forms—pornography, sex tourism, internet and phone sex and put an end to the lucrative sex industry that fuels the demand for trafficked girls. Such a campaign would:
  - Call upon the media, especially internet media, to craft a code of ethics in order to prevent the growth of the global sex industry and to eliminate advertising which stereotypes girls and treats them as mere commodities.
  - Propose and support legislative measures criminalizing the buying of sexual acts and participating in the sex industry in all its forms and at all levels.
  - Demand equal and fair enforcement of the law ensuring that those law enforcement and government officials who are directly participating in the trafficking of girls are held accountable for their actions.
  - Ensure that men are included in all efforts to abolish prostitution and trafficking. Male-oriented NGOs must play a more visible and pro-active role in changing the concept of masculinity and the patriarchy, fostering new models of male/female relationships built on mutual respect and understanding.

**Source and Resources**

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- Scarpa S., *Child Trafficking: The Worst Face of the World*, Global Migration Perspectives, September 2005, available at: <http://www.gcim.org/attachements/GMP%20No%2040.pdf>
- United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm>

May 2006



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent, legal guardian or any other person who has the care of the child (Article 19,1)*

### **Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

*Violence against women shall mean: Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm, or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.*

Recognizing that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position . . .

## **The Right to Protection the Girl Child and Gender-Based Violence**

Despite the protections guaranteed by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, gender discrimination and violence against women and girls persists everywhere and is a growing phenomenon in many parts of the world. In spite of the promises of the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, girls continue to be exploited by individuals and victimized by laws that fail to adequately protect them. Too often and in too many parts of the world, the girl child is still denied societal protection while the perpetrators of violence against her proceed with impunity. Xenophobia, misogyny and related intolerances continue to plague women and girls and are especially lethal for girls. They can lead to a life time of poverty, denial of human rights, bodily harm and even death.

### **Forms of Violence Against the Girl Child**

**Violence against the girl child takes diverse forms including:**

Infanticide and pre-natal sex rejection ▪ Denial of adequate nutrition ▪ Denial of education ▪ Domestic violence ▪ Incest /Rape ▪ Commercial sexual exploitation ▪ Trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation ▪ Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS ▪ Use as objects in pornography ▪ Psychological and physical punishment ▪ Slavery ▪ Abduction and recruitment as child soldiers ▪ Sexual exploitation by military systems ▪ Social discrimination ▪ Economic discrimination ▪ Denial of access to health care ▪ Early exposure to environmental hazards such as cooking fires ▪ Denial of employment opportunities ▪ Hazardous work ▪ Subject to harmful traditional practice such as female genital mutilation ▪ Early marriage ▪ Forced marriage ▪ Fistula ▪ Failure of protective law ▪ **Judicial use of physical punishment** ▪ Extra judicial execution ▪ Torture

### **Facts to Consider**

- Gender violence against girls and women is deeply ingrained in cultures around the world.
- Poverty persists as a feminized phenomenon across the globe. Where people are poor, over 70% tend to be women.
- The majority of the 121 million out-of-school children are girls. This can be attributed to such factors as customary attitudes, child labor, early marriage, lack of funds or adequate schooling facilities, teenage pregnancy and gender inequality in the family and in society.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 40 million children below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect, and require health and social care. Most of them are girls.
- Girls suffer higher mortality rates linked to gender-related norms and customs such as infanticide, or fetal sex selection.

## **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*The girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. ... Yet there exists worldwide evidence that discrimination and violence against girls begin at the earliest stages of life and continue unabated throughout their lives.*

*(Article 39)*

*Eradicate violence against the girl child. (Section L.7)*

## **A World Fit for Children**

*Create, with children, a child-friendly learning environment, in which they feel safe, are protected from abuse, violence and discrimination, and are healthy and encouraged to learn.*

## **MDGS**

**Goal 2:** *Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling*

**Goal 3:** *Promote gender equality and empower women*

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- Currently, 50% of all new HIV/AIDS sufferers are young people between the ages of 15-24 and over sixty percent are girls.
- Girls are the main procurers of fuel and water collection.
- In some areas of the world men outnumber women by 5 per 100 as a result of violence or gender discrimination that results in death.
- 120 million women have undergone some form of female genital mutilation; another 2 million are at risk each year.
- 2 million girls between ages 5 and 15 are introduced each year into commercial sexual exploitation.
- More than 15 million girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year as a result of early marriage and early pregnancy. This can severely curtail educational and employment opportunities and has a long-term adverse impact on their own and their children's quality of life.
- Millions of girls work as domestic servants and unpaid household help and are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
- Gender discrimination and lack of empowerment underpins early marriage, where abuse is common.
- Discrimination can cause girls themselves to internalize gender stereotypes and perpetuate the perverse cycle of violence.

## **Actions to Eliminate Violence Against the Girl Child**

- Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; withdraw any reservations to that Convention.
- Enact and enforce legislation to protect the safety and security of girls and to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment of girls at work and in educational and other institutional settings.
- Take legislative, law enforcement, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the girl child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
- Undertake gender sensitivity training for those involved in healing and rehabilitation and other assistance programs for girls who are victims of violence and promote programs of information, support and training for such girls.
- Require gender-sensitivity education and training for all males and females at all levels of schooling.
- Initiate programs to expose and critique patriarchal traditional structures and systems that under-gird gender-based violence.
- Ensure girls' participation in all decisions related to policies and programs designed for their protection and empowerment.
- Ensure that all data is disaggregated by age and gender.

## **Sources and Resources**

- [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)
- [www.unicef.org/programme/education/index/html](http://www.unicef.org/programme/education/index/html)
- [www.undp.org/gender/docs/mdgs-genderlens.pdf](http://www.undp.org/gender/docs/mdgs-genderlens.pdf)
- [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)
- <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm/>
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May 2006



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment, which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child. (Article 39)*

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Develop and disseminate research on the physical, psychological, economic and social effects of armed conflicts on women, particularly young women and girls, with a view to developing policies and programmes to address the consequences of conflicts. (E4.146.c)*

### **Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocol**

*The special protection provided by international humanitarian law to children who have not attained the age of 15 years remains applicable to them if they take a direct part in hostilities (Protocol II, Article 4,d)*

## **Right to Protection and Reintegration for Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Groups**

Although there is a greater public awareness of Children Associated with Fighting Forces (CAFF), relatively little attention has focused specifically on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Groups ('girl soldiers'). Both national governments and multi-lateral demobilization programs are complicit in overlooking the issues relating specifically to the girl soldier, rendering DDR gender-biased and exclusive.

The girl child's function as a "soldier" might vary according to any of the following experiences: armed fighting, combat trainers, mine sweepers, spying, forced marriage, informants, early motherhood, sex slavery, nursing, looters, messengers, and food gatherers/cooks. Not acknowledging the gender specific needs of girl soldiers causes them to be at risk of maintaining their identity of a soldier, as well as subjecting them to social stigmatization that would prevent positive prospects with respects to livelihoods, social roles, and other opportunities. In addition to the various roles the girl child soldier has, the causes of her incorporation are equally important. Not all girl soldiers have been abducted, some chose to join for a variety of reasons: to avoid poverty, to ameliorate their livelihood, to develop skills, to escape other forms of violence, or to participate in a unified entity (*see Voices, Keairns*).

Governments and humanitarian aid organizations need to presume the girl soldier exists in all armed conflicts. This will ensure her incorporation in the DDR process, addressing her gender-specific and individual experiences of abduction, forced marriage, prostitution, and early motherhood, forced contraception and/or abortions, in addition to armed fighting roles. Traditional DDR programs have inhibited the protection and gender development needs of the girl soldier. They need to expand and to include Prevention, Release, Rehabilitation, and Integration (PRRI), (*see Actions on next page*).

PRRI programs that are gender-specific are necessary for the prevention of continual harm by men and boys on the girl soldier and their children, as well as attention to gender-specific issues. For successful reintegration, the girl soldier needs programs to address job training, education, literacy, medical attention that includes traditional healing, child agency building, religious rituals, and facilitation of community support and mediation of family conflict.

### **Facts to Consider**

- A survey from 1990-2003 found that girl soldiers existed in 55 countries and girl soldiers were involved in armed conflict in 38 of the countries (girls younger than 18 years old were surveyed). In 27 countries girl soldiers are forcefully recruited. In 14 countries girls were abducted and transported for participation in armed conflict. (*Where are the Girls, 21-26*)

## **The Cape Town Principles**

*Child Soldier: Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members.*

## **International Conference on War-Affected Children Winnipeg, Canada**

*There is an urgent need of more research into the gender dimension of armed conflict, particularly as it pertains to girls and armed conflict. (2000)*

### **Where Are The Girls?**

The kinds of tasks and roles girl soldiers are allotted and in some cases forced to undertake are part of a larger planning process deliberately created by those looking to sustain and gain from armed conflict. Thus, the roles of girl soldiers must be considered as an integral part of the conflict... (p18)

### **WGG on Girl Soldiers** *Christian Children's Fund (CCF)*

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- Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocols I and II of 1977: protections are granted to female soldiers without discrimination; provisions detail gender consideration in order to reduce sexual violence and a provision of separate accommodations from males.
- Girl soldiers (and their children) are the people-groups at the greatest disadvantage in armed conflict because of their vulnerable age, their exposure to heightened sexism, and their lack of inclusion in DDR.
- Girl soldiers' (and their children's) inability to reintegrate in society is compounded by lack of access to education and to reproductive health care, by community stigmatization and familial or "husband" abandonment, which can be additionally compounded by single parenting.

### **Actions to Ensure effective PRRI**

- Assessment: Reassess official DDR programs to include PRRI. Implement a mandatory vulnerability analysis process. Establish a holistic prevention policy on all levels from family to societal.
- Research/Training: Fund and conduct comparative gender studies to document community-based program responses and outcomes for reintegrating girl soldiers and their children as well as incorporating gender, reproductive health, market analysis, vocational and business skills, and population issues in PRRI and training of PRRI implementers (including protection monitoring).
- Capacity-building: provision of interim care and community-based reintegration programs that are gender sensitive (including conflict resolution, dialogue, and mediation), that ensure social reintegration (restorative justice), and that meet girl soldiers' holistic needs (education, job-training, health, psycho-social care, non-threatening spiritual rituals, and family planning).
- Advocacy and Co-ordination Mechanism: Form NGO partnerships and community groups for establishing effective PRRI programs.

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*August 2006*