



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.

WGG Poverty Group

Elisa Bresba,
Loretto Sisters
Joan Burke,
Notre Dame de Namur
Mary Peter Bruce,
Loretto Sisters
Mercedes Roman,
Maryknoll
Avis Sri-Jayantha
Defense for Children
International
Janet Markarian
Armenian Relief Society, Inc

More Information

Working Group on Girls
NGO Committee on UNICEF
UNICEF House, Room 1142
New York, New York 10017
wggs@girlsrights.org
www.girlsrights.org

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