



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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More Information

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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/
- www.unicef.org/programme/education/index/html
- www.undp.org/gender/docs/mdgs-genderlens.pdf /
- www.unfpa.org
- <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm/>
- <http://www.crin.org/violence/index.asp>

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