

## INTRODUCTION

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In all areas of society, gender equality has become the norm. Universally accepted principles of human rights have set the standard for equality between women and men. This concept extends to the recognition that girls and young women are unique individuals with rights and responsibilities similar to those of boys and young men. In many parts of the world, girls and young women continue to carry the double burden of being both young and female. They often face negative cultural attitudes and practices and gender-biased social and political processes that limit their opportunities and undermine their self-esteem.

In this report will explain the challenges and opportunities girls and young women face today, taking into consideration factors such as access to health, education and employment, as well as values, attitudes and behavior (including violence) towards young women and girls. It is important to examine the specific circumstances that have distinguished the lives of girls and young women from those of boys and young men. For example, in societies in which the economy is based largely on subsistence operations, most of the production takes place in the surrounding fields or through hunting and fishing, and consumption is mainly by the family in the home.

The status of men is higher than that of women in developed societies because women's unpaid household labor is still not seen as an essential and valid contribution to the industrial economy. In other societies, girls and young women are viewed mainly as "reproductive laborers". They have fewer rights to political and economic participation than do boys and young men, and they perform essential work for which they are neither paid nor fully recognized. They still live mostly in the private sphere, as the public sphere remains largely a male domain.

Girls and young women in late-industrial societies are portrayed as those most subordinated to the consumer culture. The majorities construct their femininity according to popular culture; women's magazines and advertising directed at females tend to promote aspects of narcissistic, pleasurable consumption as part of a woman's image. In former communist

countries, prostitution has offered one way to obtain the money necessary to participate in new consumer lifestyles.

Throughout history, young women have been scrutinized with regard to their attitudes, behavior, sexuality and general conduct. The monitoring and setting of cultural and moral standards, in particular the policing of young women's sexuality, is conducted in public, in private and through the media. Moral "panics" are often constructed in Western cultures. For example, young single mothers are identified as a problem group and are discussed as such in an effort to find ways to alleviate the problem they represent. Some countries have experienced periods of moral panic over teenage pregnancy, to the extent that inner-city disturbances and crime rates have been attributed to the growing proportion of young single mothers.

In each of these spheres some girls and young women are far more vulnerable than others owing to a structural lack of resources, primarily in terms of education, vocational training, health and housing. Those girls and young women exposed to a poor quality of life tend to experience higher levels of vulnerability, immigrants and ethnic minorities are the most seriously affected.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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For the purpose of collecting all important data and information required to be processed for establishment of this report-content, secondary data collection is chosen to gather all available information regarding involvement and contribution of youth in promoting as well as applying a concept of Girls and Young Women in both governmental matter and their daily lives. Different sources ranging from journal papers to published news are used to extract and gather all factual information regarding youth-involvement in Girls and Young Women. A similar method is also used to gather all responses from various stakeholders towards youth and Girls and Young Women. The sources are carefully chosen in order to ensure quality of the content, relevance, and ease of comprehension. Reason of choosing secondary data collection is based on a fact that varieties of source are largely available in electronic network.

## LITERATURE AND FACTUAL REVIEW

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### FACT-SHEET AND ITS EXPLANATION

There are 1.8 billion young people in the world and the majority live in developing countries. They are the largest generation of youth in history. Approximately half of them like 900 million are adolescent girls and young women. These girls and young women possess huge untapped potential. When educated, healthy, and equipped with the right skills and opportunities, they hold the key to unlocking many of the world's most pressing problems for instance reducing poverty, advancing gender equality, catalyzing countries' social and economic development, halting the spread of HIV, reducing maternal mortality, and ending violence against women, among many others. As educated mothers, they will invest in the survival, education and success of the next generation. As leaders of today and tomorrow, they can be a force for social change. Below are the facts of youth issues regarding girls and young women globally.

- Global labor market indicators in 2009 revealed that for 15 to 24 year olds, 59.1 per cent of males had jobs as compared to 42.5 per cent of females.
- The female youth unemployment rate in 2009 stood at 13.2 per cent compared to the male rate of 12.9 per cent (a gap of 0.3 percentage point, the same gender gap seen in 2007).
- One in seven girls in developing countries is married before age 15, and 38 per cent are married before age 18.
- Women and girls make up 80 per cent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked across national borders annually with the majority (79 per cent) trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- In 2008, the percentage of females in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs was frequently in the single digits, often stemming from fears of stigmatization.
- Measures to protect girls and young women from violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages, trafficking and sexual abuse are for the most part severely inadequate, and policies often lack legal backing or enforcement.

Yet despite their potential the most marginalized, vulnerable and hard-to-reach adolescent girls are often invisible. They are not prioritized in many development programs. Many youth- serving programs tend to benefit older, educated, urban, and largely male youth. Not only is investing in girls and young women a human rights imperative, but it is one of the smartest investments any country can make.

## **RESPONSES FROM VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS**

### **INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES**

Girls and young women have over the years been prone to social ills compared to their male counterparts. They have been victims of abuse, sexual, physical and emotional. Sexual abuse has led them to go through ordeals such as child or teenage pregnancies, rape, child marriage, forced marriage or arranged marriages, sexual mutilations and forced prostitution etc. Physical abuse on the other side spans from any kind of violence they have to encounter, be it beatings or the before mentioned sexual abuses as they are all physical. Emotional abuse entails the emotional scars they have to carry due to what they are forced to see and all verbal abuse they go through. Empowering Young Women to Lead Change is designed to support the development of young women's skills and to enable them to provide leadership on the issues that concern them. It offers engaging and dynamic activities to motivate and enable young women to believe in the abilities to catalyze change and to mobilize others to do the same. It is a flexible tool for learning and exploring issues from human rights and violence against women to body image, self-esteem and developing leadership skills. Women organizations are now expanding across the globe to represent women and fight for their rights inclusion, offer help for abused women, consultation and counseling. Below are the international responses or actions for the youth issues on girls and young women.

- Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of young women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- Promote young women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all young women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services.
- Ensure the full enjoyment by young women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms.
- Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

## **GOVERNMENTS RESPONSES**

Government committed the most important tasks of youth policy is to improve the situation of girls and young women. Governments therefore should implement their obligations under international human rights instruments as well as implementing the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Programs of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Vienna Declaration and Programs of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights and other programs of relevant United Nations conferences. Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream. Negative cultural attitudes and practices as well as gender-biased educational processes including curriculum, educational materials and practices, teachers' attitudes and classroom interaction, reinforce existing gender inequalities. Below are the responses or actions that have been taken of government in order to overcome the youth issues of girls and young women.

- Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong exclusion from society. Action should be taken to eliminate discrimination against girls and young women and to

ensure their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms through comprehensive policies, plans of action and programs on the basis of equality. Initiatives should be taken to prepare girls to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys at all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership.

- Universal and equal access to and completion of primary education for girls and young women as well as equal access to secondary and higher education should be ensured. A framework should be provided for the development of educational materials and practices that are gender balanced and promote an educational setting that eliminates all barriers impeding the schooling of girls and young women, including married and/or pregnant girls and young women.
- Discrimination against girls and young women should be eliminated in health and nutrition. The removal of discriminatory laws and practices against girls and young women in food allocation and nutrition should be promoted, and their access to health services should be ensured in accordance with the Programs of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
- Girls and young women should be protected from economic and related forms of exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, to interfere with their education or to be harmful to their health or their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, in conformity with the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Equal access for young women to all employment opportunities should be promoted and their participation in the traditionally male-dominated sectors should be encouraged.
- Governments should cooperate at the international level and enact and enforce legislation protecting girls and young women from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, genital mutilation, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography. Age appropriate, safe and confidential programs and support services to assist girls and young women who are subjected to violence should be developed in cooperation with relevant non-governmental organizations, particularly youth organizations, as appropriate.

## PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSES

Private sector recognized that girls and young women are often excluded from interventions which are focused on adult women, on boys and young men, or on children in a gender-neutral way. Private sector concluded that an emphasis on prevention work specifically tailored to the needs, experiences and aspirations of girls and young women is urgently needed, acknowledging the complexities of the current landscape that they are required to negotiate. Private sectors have the right to overcome the problems that occur to girls and young women. Below are the responses or actions of private sector regarding the youth issues.

- Develop, implement and monitor tailored prevention activity with girls and young women that take an empowerment, not protection, approach, and explicitly address their needs and rights, informed by the voices of girls and young women. The onus is often placed on girls and young women to avoid or stop violence from happening to them rather than on developing widespread and embedded activities which challenge the social norms that permeate their lives. Prevention programs should therefore address what is happening around young people (e.g. social pressures, media messaging and so forth) rather than purely on helping young women to ‘manage’ their adolescence (and the risks of violence this is assumed to entail) more effectively.
- Support young people to understand the nature of consent and coercion, and the impact of social and environmental factors on individual ability to truly provide consent. The issue of consent, and especially sexual consent, is complex and is widely misunderstood among many adults. Yet girls and young women are often expected to be able to negotiate this difficult terrain which is focused exclusively on the nature of a ‘no’ rather than the expectation that what is required is a strong, enthusiastic ‘yes’. This in turn reinforces notions of female passivity (the object of pursuit) and male aggressor (the pursuer). Such activities would have relevance to a number of areas from teen relationships to forced marriage.



- Ensure a gender dimension is incorporated into multi-sectorial legislative, policy and programmatic development to prevent violence against children, taking into account the specific needs, vulnerabilities and voices of girls of all ages.

## NGO RESPONSES

Non-governments deployed emergency response teams that included people prepared to implement the activities which helps in youth issues that involved girls and young women. Focusing on young people and youth, as a particular age and social group is of importance. Age and related socio-economic issues call for specific provisions concerning young people, migration and environmental change. Particular areas of concern related to youth include protection needs (unaccompanied minors, separated families, young people migrating alone) and the options available to youth. Protection and assistance to affected mobile populations, reducing vulnerabilities, and long-term management of risks along with efforts to minimize forced migration all directly concern youth populations affected by environmental change. Below are the actions or responses of the non-government regarding the youth issues involved girls and young women.

- Improve knowledge about girls and young women migration and its linkages to environmental change, gather data disaggregated by gender, age and other key factors.
- Ensure that girls and young women have the means (information, education, resources, network etc.) to address the challenges posed by environmental change, and access to different options, in the context of well-informed and carefully managed migration.
- Incorporate girls and youth women in related issues into a comprehensive migration management agenda that takes environmental change into account, to reduce the potential negative impacts of environmental change, particularly forced migration.
- Identify principles and mechanisms to address the rights and protection needs of girls and young women migrating due to environmental change.
- Frame migration and the climate change/environmental degradation nexus within the development agenda, facilitate youth migration, arrange student schemes and temporary

and circular labor migration programs on a bilateral basis to support young people affected by environmental degradation and natural disasters.

### **MEDIA RESPONSES**

The media plays a significant role in perpetuating and challenging social norms that condone discrimination or violence against women. It can objectify women but also showcase strong women leaders and protagonists who can become role models for their audience. During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behavior, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations. Below are the actions by the media for the girls and young women.

- Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women.
- Establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising.
- Develop a gender perspective on all issues of concern to communities, consumers and civil society.
- Increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels of the media.
- Promote extensive campaigns, making use of public and private educational programs, to disseminate information about and increase awareness of the human rights of women.
- Use the media to educate, inform and engage citizens on women's rights, in particular engaging women voters on women's issues.

## YOUTH RESPONSES

A study carried out indicates that, even in countries that have gone through long periods of modernization and acceptance of equal rights for both sexes, young women and girls still have different values and attitudes towards life and society. Education has had some effect on the development of various youth perspectives and philosophies. The study found that a belief in the importance of gender equality in working life was reflected most strongly in the values of girls who had been to upper secondary school. They would not mind if their children went to school where half of the children were of another race. These girls were defined as “humanist-egalitarians” in terms of their attitudes and values. Below are the responses of youth regarding the youth issues involved girls and young women.

- Educate girls and young women  
Ensure that young people have access to quality education and complete schooling, focusing on their transition from primary to post- primary education and training, including secondary education, and pathways between formal and non-formal systems.
- Improve young women and girls’ health  
Ensure that girls and young women have access to age in appropriate health and nutrition information and services, including life skills-based sexuality education, HIV prevention, and sexual and reproductive health.
- Keep girls and young women free from violence  
Prevent and protect girls and young women from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation, and ensure that girls who experience violence receive prompt services and access to justice. Specific attention will be paid to girls in displacement, as they are increasingly prone to abuse.
- Promote girl and young women leaders  
Ensure that girls and young women gain essential economic and social skills and are supported by mentors and resources to enable them to participate in community life.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### CONCLUSION

The literature and data presented here raise a question: Are girls and young women equally liberated from their gender fate the traditional traits ascribed to femininity? Population data show an increasing life expectancy for females, which is leading to a demographic liberation of women. Many girls and young women will live beyond the family and child caring phase of their lives. Post-parental relationships are becoming nearly universal. Even if motherhood is still the strongest tie to the traditional female role, contraceptives, family planning and the legal possibility of terminating pregnancies are freeing girls and young women from the inevitability of taking on this role. In contexts in which these options are available, children and motherhood are no longer the natural fate of a woman. Data show that motherhood without economic dependence is not possible for most young women at the global level (those living in, for example, Scandinavian welfare states would constitute an exception).

However, more and more young women can decide when to have children and how many they want to have. In terms of general health, more reliable international data are needed before anyone can speculate as to the major indicators of health inequalities for girls and young women on a global level. The world is witnessing significant changes, many of which are increasing the level of vulnerability among girls and young women. Depression, eating disorders, suicide attempts and other psychological problems have all become more common in developed countries, threatening girls and young women who are in the process of establishing adult female identities. Girls and young women in developing countries are vulnerable to the health risks that emerge in connection with inadequate food and medical services.

Several indicators show that young mothers face greater pregnancy-related health risks and will have more children than those who begin childbearing later. Many girls and young women continue to face gender-based stereotyping that often has deep historical and cultural roots. While girls are traditionally believed to pose less of a threat to social order than boys (less

likely to get into trouble on the streets or become involved in crime, and more amenable to family authority at home), in many cultures boys have been and frequently still are valued more highly than girls from birth. Gender-based stereotyping and overt and disguised forms of discrimination combine to create risks to the health and well-being of girls and young women that are greater than those faced by boys and young men. In addition to the consequences of 266 early pregnancy and childbirth, females suffer higher rates of accidental death, suicide, victimization by violent crime, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Infection and mental disorders. Female infanticide, inadequate provision of food and medical care, physical abuse, genital mutilation and forced sex threaten the lives of many girls. Violence against women, including young women, cuts across all social and economic strata and is deeply embedded in cultures around the world.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **RESPONSES OF WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH**

In the third Millennium Plan of Action “The Catalyst for Change and Improvement”, World Assembly of Youth (WAY) has set three goals to promote gender equality and ensure women empowerment:

- Globally reduce gender disparity in the work place by 10%.
- Achieve gender equality in education, work force and community by 2014.
- Empower women to participate actively at all levels within the community.

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