

**Equality,
development and peace**

**Égalité,
développement
et paix**

**Igualdad, desarrollo y
paz**

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WOMEN 2000**



United Nations Children's Fund
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Women 2000: Leading in a new era

The closing decade of the 20th century marked a turning point in the struggle to guarantee the human rights of women and children. Women and girls became a major force for change. In communities around the world, fuelled by passionate commitment, they worked together to preserve their local environments, safeguard their forests and hold schools accountable for quality education. They waged campaigns to protect themselves and their children against violence, ran for political office and took the lead in peace movements.

Today, in almost all countries, women are increasingly aware of their rights and are demanding change in their status. They are no longer willing to accept the lack of power, knowledge and self-esteem that has for so long been their lot.

Further propelling these changes is the emerging global consensus that when women and girls fully claim their rights and become equal partners with men and boys in their homes, communities and in society, the world gains.

Now, as we look at the achievements made for girls and women since the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in 1995, we have a new opportunity to build on this momentum, to learn from what has worked and to seek breakthroughs in areas that are especially resistant to change. This publication highlights some of the key issues that must be tackled in order to accelerate progress for women and girls.

Pervasive and persistent discrimination

Discrimination against girls and women is so profoundly entrenched in the home and workplace, in classrooms and courtrooms, at worship and at play, that its elimination will require the transformation of the societal structures that tolerate it.

Millions of women still live in poverty, 600,000 women still die annually during pregnancy or childbirth, 600 million cannot read or write and of the more than 110 million children out of school, approximately 60% are girls. Pregnancies take the lives of nearly 146,000 teenage girls each year. Another 2 million girls and women are subjected to female genital mutilation/cutting every year.

At least one in three women and girls worldwide has been beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime. Women and girls are still especially vulnerable to violence, including sexual violence, by police, military and others during emergencies and armed conflict. Because so many women and adolescent girls lack the power and confidence to negotiate protection or to refuse coerced or unwanted intercourse, they are on the front line of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Millions of girls work in their own homes or in the homes of others, in factories and in bars, deprived of their full right to education and often at the risk of physical and sexual abuse by their employers and others. Many are kidnapped, taken from their villages and towns, often across borders, and then sold to work in brothels, bars, restaurants and massage parlours, where they are sexually exploited.

These are statistics of shame, which cast a long shadow over the future of nations. They are a striking reminder that persistent and widespread discrimination stalks girls and women from cradle to grave. In virtually every culture, women are valued less than men.

Discrimination is evident:

- **from birth** – and even before, as we know from sex-selective foeticide – when girls are less valued and receive less care than boys.
- **within the family**, when girls learn early the inferior and stereotyped roles deemed acceptable for girls and women. They are given less food and fewer economic resources than boys and men and are denied access to educational, employment, recreational and other opportunities. They shoulder a disproportionate burden of domestic work and childcare, are denied an equal right to own property and are denied equal participation in decision-making.
- **in schools**, when girls are exposed to teachers, curricula, textbooks and teaching methods that reinforce gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices; to sexual harassment and insecurity; and to inappropriate school facilities.
- **in communities**, when girls and women are subjected to violence and abuse that not only is tolerated but also goes unpunished.
- **everywhere** – in households, communities and national and international arenas – when women and girls are left out of the decisions that define the conditions in which they live.


An agenda for change

Change is possible. We have learned that there is an important connection between the rights of girls and the rights of women and between the aims of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the aims of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The extent to which a girl's environment supports each stage of her development, and the extent to which her rights to survival, development, protection and participation have been met or violated as she is growing up, determines what her life will be as a woman. On the other hand, the rights of girls are determined by the extent to which the rights of women have been fulfilled. Support of women's efforts to achieve and exercise their rights is therefore essential both for women themselves and for girls.

For these reasons, we must start early to address the factors that lie at the root of gender and inequality. A growing body of evidence shows that care during the early childhood years – including access to a stimulating, affectionate, safe and healthy environment at home and in the community – is pivotal to how a child develops from birth and greatly influences a child's continued learning and psychosocial development.

These early years are also the time when children develop attitudes about gender roles through their interaction with their families and social environments. We must make specific interventions to provide parents, schools and social institutions with the knowledge and skills to create an environment in which girls and boys are cared for equally and with respect. This is the first step in breaking intergenerational cycles of discrimination and disadvantage and in ensuring the equal rights of girls.

Good early childhood care also prepares children to learn. In some cultures, girls face specific obstacles in taking advantage of education, which is key to attacking poverty, equipping all children with the skills and confidence to make the most of their abilities. Only when our schools become truly 'girl-friendly' – safe places where girls can learn, participate, feel respected and develop confidence and self-esteem – will girls be able to realize their right to education and to capitalize on their potential.



When girls receive a quality basic education, they are better able to cope with the challenges they will face during adolescence and to become healthy, literate and productive women. Adolescent girls need and deserve a chance to finish school. They need the space to be able to critically analyse their situation and to determine how they want to change it. Equipped with self-esteem and confidence, they will then be able to say “no” in the face of pressure towards behaviours that undermine their well-being. For this they need the support of caring adults and a connection with family and community. Finally, adolescent girls must be given the opportunity to participate in developing solutions to the problems their generation faces, among them HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy, dropping out of school, substance abuse and violence.

The lives of girls and boys are deeply entwined, and so must be the solutions to their problems. For the rights of girls and women to be fulfilled, boys and men must be educated – in schools, health clinics, youth clubs, religious institutions, businesses, the military and police – to ‘unlearn’ negative patterns of behaviour and learn positive new behaviours based on tolerance and equality. This will complement and strengthen the work of women’s groups throughout the world in their struggle for equal rights.

Turning words into action

The world has a framework for global action. International human rights treaties, including CRC and CEDAW, make it possible to confront the entrenched discrimination in societies that marginalizes women and girls. These treaties recognize that women and children are ‘holders’ from birth of rights that States have a binding obligation to fulfil. By ratifying such treaties, States commit themselves to respect and achieve the standards the treaties establish. Individuals and institutions, therefore, are accountable when human rights are not realized or are wilfully violated.

Furthermore, these rights – economic, social, cultural, civil and political – are indivisible and interrelated. A poor child, for example, does not die simply from disease or because a health care system functions poorly. The fact that her mother has been denied her right to education, health care, credit, jobs, land, participation in public life and control over food and other resources all contribute to a child’s preventable death. This is why integrated measures to implement CRC and CEDAW are required for the effective realization of the human rights of all women and children.

In recent years, commitments made at world conferences have built on human rights guarantees. The 1990 World Summit for Children changed the way governments keep their promises. The Summit’s Plan of Action translated broad goals and objectives into time-bound, doable and measurable targets and actions, designed to be monitored and periodically reviewed. The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development followed suit.

The goals, objectives and strategic areas for action in the Beijing Platform for Action serve as a crucial template to translate words into deeds in guaranteeing women and girls their human rights. Governments have begun to do so by adopting national plans of action. The focus must now be on ensuring their implementation, building on the work that has already begun.

Strengthening partnerships for change

We have entered a new era in fulfilling the human rights of women and girls. Women's groups, stimulated by the transformation that is already taking place, have broken new ground in forging links with child rights groups, environmental groups and other groups working for economic and political change. Throughout the world, women's groups are making outstanding contributions to the understanding of emerging global economic policies, political structures and responsible governance. Drawing upon their research and analysis, these women have encouraged policy makers at the global and national levels to implement the commitments of the recent world conferences.

Through persuasion, communication and analysis, these groups are linking up with religious leaders, media, academics, activists, political leaders, village elders, schoolteachers and others, providing tools and methods for bringing about change at the community level. At the same time, through their negotiating skills and advocacy, women are resolving conflicts and brokering peaceful solutions in communities torn apart by bullets and bombs. They are breaking down gender stereotypes and creating new role models and opportunities for girls.

Development, equality and peace are no longer elusive goals. We can create a world where women and girls are not violated or exploited, where they are able to develop to their fullest potential and to participate in their community. Girls must be free to expand their capacities and horizons, to voice their opinions and achieve their dreams. Women must be able to enter and participate in halls of power in government bodies, political parties, labour unions and community organizations so that their concerns and interests are integrated into plans and actions.

Having come this far in the struggle for equality for girls and women, governments must continue to move forward, for neither commitment nor spirit should flag. Strong partnerships among governments, civil society and United Nations agencies must be forged to promote the rights of all women and girls. We must pool our efforts and find resources to honour the global commitments made and basic principles agreed to at the world conferences. We know what needs to be done, yet the barriers are still there. We have both the capacity and the moral imperative to bring about such a world. We can do this. And we must.



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Girls to women: A struggle to survive

“When it’s a boy, everyone is very happy and there is the famous expression, ‘se ganno la gallina’, which is roughly the same as saying ‘you won the lottery’; yet when it’s a girl, people say with satisfaction yet less fanfare, ‘Now your home’s little servant has been born’.”

– Carolina Leonor Ruiz Herrera, age 18, Guatemala City (from the 1996 UNFPA International Youth Essay Contest, Promoting Responsible Reproductive Health Behaviour)

Prejudice against girls starts early and continues throughout their lives. The path to adulthood is so perilous that for many girls, surviving this transition is a victory in itself.

Pre-birth and birth

- More than 100 million women are ‘missing’ from global population figures, a majority of them from South and East Asia, victims of foeticide, infanticide, malnutrition, neglect, abandonment and, more recently, misuse of technologies for prenatal sex determination.
- A study in Maharashtra, India, of 8,000 hospital-based amniocentesis tests and foeticides afterwards indicated that all but one were of a female foetus.
- Two thirds of children in China’s one-child families are boys and over 80% of the babies born in rural areas are boys.

Early childhood

Where boys are preferred, girls are nurtured less than boys, enjoy less nutritious food, including fewer months of breastfeeding and shorter feedings, fewer visits to the health centre and lower rates of vaccinations.

- An estimated 450 million adult women in developing countries are stunted, a direct result of malnutrition in early life.
- In Bangladesh and India, boys are more likely than girls to receive oral rehydration therapy when they have diarrhoea.
- In India, more females than males die in every age cohort, up to the age of 35.
- In Pakistan, the under-five child mortality rate for girls is two-thirds higher than for boys.



UNICEF/96-1240/Pirozzi



UNICEF/5912/Lemoyne

Adolescence

As girls grow older, their increased nutritional and health needs are often not adequately met. Anaemia is a critical health problem for adolescent girls and women. Iron deficiency anaemia, resulting from inadequate diet, increases susceptibility to illness, the risk of complications in pregnancy and the chance of maternal deaths. It also reduces physical productivity and the capacity to work and learn. Iodine deficiency can also retard foetal development and in severe cases result in physical and mental retardation and even foetal death.

- In Nepal, 80% of girls aged 15-19 are anaemic.
- Anaemia affects between 75% and 95% of girls aged 15 and older in Africa.
- At least 25% of adolescent girls in developing countries are affected by iodine deficiency.

Beijing commitments

- Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.
- Increase women's access throughout their lives to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.
- Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health.
- Give particular attention to the needs of girls, especially the promotion of healthy behaviour, including physical activities; take specific measures to close the gender gaps in morbidity and mortality where girls are disadvantaged, while achieving internationally approved goals for the reduction of infant and child mortality.
- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices such as prenatal sex selection and female infanticide.

Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF supports programmes that research the situation of girls, encourage national plans, build alliances among local NGOs, advocate for the adoption and implementation of national legislation on rights issues, including minimum age of marriage and property rights. Specific interventions are promoted to meet the special nutritional and health needs of girls.

- UNICEF supported regional, national and local surveys of the situation of girls in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa and Zambia, among others.
- In South Asia, UNICEF continues to support the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in its programmes related to the Decade of the Girl Child (1990-2000).
- In Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria and the Philippines, among others, UNICEF has expanded and improved the collection and analysis of data related to children, disaggregated by sex and age.
- Nutrition promoters in Bangladesh are working in more than 1,000 community centres to support better caring practices for women and children, giving special attention to girls.
- Immunization rates between 80% and 90% in many countries have benefited the health of millions of children around the world.
- UNICEF supports programmes to ensure that iron folate supplements are available to women and girls in developing countries. Between 1993 and 1996, UNICEF shipped 2.7 billion iron folate tablets to 122 countries.
- Meena, the heroine of a 13-episode animated film series and multimedia communication, advocacy and mobilization package, has become extremely popular among children throughout South Asia and is a catalyst for reflection and discussion on gender discrimination. A recent survey in Bangladesh showed that 87% of school-going boys and 85% of school-going girls know about Meena. As many as 38% of boys and 40% of girls not in school also know about Meena. The series covers such issues as son preference, unfair treatment of girls in the family, girls' unequal access to health and education, and sexual harassment.

Recommended actions based on lessons learned

- Disaggregate data by sex and age and use this information to develop policies and programmes, including communication strategies.
- Empower women and girls through education, life skills training and peer education to demand their rights.
- Make information about girls available to communities and encourage them to monitor what is happening to their girls and to enforce laws that prohibit discriminatory practices against girls, including female genital cutting and early marriage, and to take actions to fulfil their rights to survival and development.
- Set goals and develop and implement gender-sensitive strategies to address the rights and needs of girls, in accordance with CRC and CEDAW. Ensure that governments include information on girls in reporting on implementation of human rights treaties.

Sex ratios in selected countries of South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, 1995

Country	Males per 100 females	Females per 100 males
Bangladesh	105.5	94.7
Cambodia	93.0	107.5
China	106.3	94.1
Fiji	103.1	97.0
India	106.8	93.6
Indonesia	99.5	100.5
Lao PDR	97.2	102.9
Malaysia	101.8	98.2
Nepal	102.2	97.8
Pakistan	107.2	93.3
Papua New Guinea	106.6	93.8
Philippines	101.3	98.7
Sri Lanka	98.8	101.2
Thailand	100.0	100.0

Source: ESCAP, 1998.

Early childhood: Creating equality in families

“The role of the girl child is to be demure, accommodating, and a respectful homemaker. A ‘good’ girl of six is one who listens to and respects her adults, helps mothers in household chores, and one who stays and plays at home. A ‘good’ boy, on the other hand, is expected to be naughty, to have many friends to play with (outside the home), and to not always listen to parents.”

– *A parent in India (from Both Halves of the Sky:
Gender socialization in the early years by Judith Evans)*

The first years of life set the foundation for the child’s physical, emotional and cognitive development. These are also the years when children develop their attitudes about gender roles.

- During the first three years of a child’s life, neural connections in the brain are at a crucial stage, ready to be developed through social and physical interactions and good nutrition and health. In regions where girls are discriminated against and not valued as much as boys, girls are at a high risk of not receiving either the adequate social and physical interaction or the proper nutrition and health services that are critical to healthy development.
- From birth, boys and girls are socialized to assume their respective gender roles – girls to care for children and perform domestic chores, boys to be providers. While both boys and girls are affected by such socialization, girls are particularly disadvantaged. From their earliest years, girls are socialized to submit to others. Shouldering a heavier share of household duties and child-care responsibilities than her brother, a young girl is often denied access to school, as well as a chance for self-development, freedom for recreation and the choice to determine her own future.

Discriminatory gender patterns continue into adulthood. Women bear an overwhelming share of child-care and domestic responsibilities as well as an increasing share of financial responsibilities for their families. The pressures of balancing multiple roles without support have negative consequences for women and their children, particularly their daughters.

- More than 45% of the world’s women between ages 15 and 64 are economically active.
- In developing countries, women spend 31-42 hours per week doing unpaid work (in the home), while men spend between 5 and 15 hours in unpaid work.
- For a majority of these women, there are no child-care facilities.
- Women must often ask older children, particularly adolescent girls, to meet household demands and care for children. These domestic obligations often come at the expense of the girls’ education, recreation and other opportunities for development.
- In the absence of child-care options, many children accompany their mothers to work, taking time away from their education and recreation and exposing them to workplace hazards.



Beijing commitments

- Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.
- Encourage men to share equally in childcare and household work and to provide their share of financial support for their families, even if they do not live with them.
- Develop policies that reduce the disproportionate and increasing burden on women who have multiple roles within the family and the community.
- Enable women and men to work together with children and youth to break down persistent gender stereotypes.
- Educate and encourage parents and caregivers to treat girls and boys equally and to ensure shared responsibilities between girls and boys in the family.

Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

Comprehensive child development programmes help counter discrimination by giving girls a fairer start in life while, at the same time, supporting women's economic activities. Early child development programmes that treat boys and girls equally and provide a stimulating environment for both girls and boys can help break negative models of gender socialization that traditionally marginalize and devalue girls.

International NGOs, together with UNICEF, have formed the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). The Group focuses on advocacy and the exchange of information about early child development programmes in developing countries. New programme initiatives focus on creating an enabling environment for child development and childcare through family-centred, community-based strategies that are participatory and locally developed. The information, education and communication strategy of ECCD emphasizes gender-role socialization. It encourages boys and girls to break away from stereotyped behaviours and, at the same time, reaches parents with similar messages for the sharing of child-care responsibilities.

- In Cuba, the preschool education programme Educa a tu Hijo (Educate Your Child) is for all children six years old and younger not enrolled in school. The nationwide programme includes children living in remote areas as well as children with special educational needs. The programme is also designed to decrease gender gaps at a young age. From 1992 to 1997, coverage of the country's under-six population expanded from 18% to 70%.
- Through home visits in Jamaica, the Roving Caregivers Programme encourages parents to treat girls and boys equally and to be positive role models for young people.
- In 1997, UNICEF worked with Peru's national women's organization to establish affordable community-based day care to foster children's creativity and development. In one year, the centres reached 50,000 children. UNICEF also assisted in the production of educational materials for non-formal pre-schools across the country, benefiting about 360,000 girls and boys.



- The Impilo Project in the Gauteng Province in South Africa links pilot projects that are developing new multi-service approaches to early childhood care and development. Crèches are linked to mother-child health clinics that offer care to children, their families and the community and to projects that increase employment opportunities and improve neighbourhood safety. Through its Community Partnership component, the project targets the poorest and the normally excluded children, such as girls and those with disabilities.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Develop early childhood care programmes that are child-centred, family-focused, community-based and gender-sensitive. They should be based on the principle of equal sharing of family responsibilities and be consistent with the policies for promoting women's employment and protecting the rights of the child.
- Intervene early to stem the negative consequences of discrimination against girls, stereotyping of male and female roles and models of behaviour, and the belief that male domination and violence against women and girls are natural, all of which start very early in the family, school and community.
- Promote parent and caregiver education programmes that incorporate components of behaviour change and development, in order to develop attitudes and practices that demonstrate and promote gender equality and respect for the rights of women and girls.
- Encourage fathers to become involved in child-rearing and provide them with parenting skills to change gender stereotypes in the family.



Educating girls: Bridging the gap

“I spin wool in the morning to sell to a local shopkeeper. In the afternoon, I cook, clean and wash clothes. I went to school for one year but had to leave after my mother got sick. I’d like to go to school like my brothers, but I have to work to help my family.”

– *Usa, age 13, Nepal*

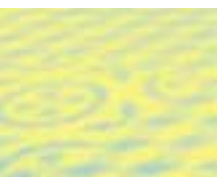
- Of the estimated 132 million 6- to 11-year-old children not in school, nearly 60% are girls.
- By age 18, girls have received on average 4.4 years less education than boys.
- Of the world’s 875 million adults who are illiterate, nearly two thirds are women.

Girls’ education has been extensively documented as an investment that, overall, has the largest returns for economic and social development. Too often, however, discrimination and poverty keep girls out of the classroom. In many regions, there is a strong belief that sons should be educated because they will need to support aging parents and establish a household. A daughter, on the other hand, will eventually marry and serve another family. When a poor family considers how much a girl can help with caring for younger siblings and with domestic chores in her own home and how little opportunity there will be for her to get a paying job even if she is educated, the returns rarely seem to justify the expense.

Yet when asked, many families say they want their daughters to be educated. In many families, girls don’t go to school because parents feel the education received is inappropriate or because the risks are too great. If schools are too distant from home, girls are vulnerable to sexual harassment and rape by their fellow students or by strangers as they walk to school. If there are no female teachers, parents may be reluctant to send their daughters to school. If classrooms are overcrowded and poorly supervised, girls feel threatened and parents fear for their safety. When there are no separate school buildings or separate toilets for boys and girls, some parents withdraw their girls from school at the onset of puberty.

Even when girls do make it to school, they tend to drop out earlier than boys. They leave because of early marriage, early pregnancy or work. In the classroom, girls are repeatedly reminded that they are less valued than boys by curricula, textbooks and teachers’ attitudes that reinforce gender stereotypes. Teachers, both male and female, often pay more attention to boys.

Evidence is overwhelming that when girls and women are educated, the benefits multiply. Educated women are less likely to be oppressed or exploited and more likely to participate in civil affairs and make economic contributions to the family. In addition, they are likely to have smaller families and healthier, better-educated children. Educating girls educates nations.



At the 1990 World Summit for Children, more than 150 Presidents, Prime Ministers and senior government officials agreed upon and eventually endorsed 27 specific goals to be achieved by the end of the 1990s. In the area of education, the year 2000 goals included the provision of universal access to basic education for all children, completion of primary education by at least 80% for girls as well as boys and the reduction of adult illiteracy. Commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 supported, as well as built on, these goals.

Beijing commitments

- Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.
- Eradicate illiteracy among women.
- Ensure universal and equal access to and completion of primary education for all children and eliminate the existing gap between girls and boys.
- Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.
- Develop non-discriminatory education and training.
- Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.
- Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.

Five years later ...

Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF's Global Girls' Education Programme, operating in more than 60 countries, is designed to transform education systems so that they are gender-sensitive and are strengthened to achieve equitable and quality education for both girls and boys. As part of the global programme, the African Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI) is using innovative approaches to help close the gap between boys and girls as well as to improve education systems overall in 30 African countries.

- In AGEI project zones in Chad, the drop-out rate decreased from 22% in 1997 to 9% in 1998, while the number of female teachers increased from 36 to 787 during the same period.
- In Egypt, community schools and improved teacher training have contributed to higher girls' enrolment rates. In northern provinces, their enrolment increased from 30% to 70% in communities served by such schools. Girls have also achieved consistently high attendance rates (between 95% and 100%) and do better on national exams.
- In Eritrea, 13 community-based schools have been established in remote areas to educate 4,500 children, 35% of them girls. The programme has also trained 30 female teachers from local ethnic groups.
- In South Africa, child-friendly schools are being developed and materials on CRC, CEDAW and HIV/AIDS are being systematically introduced and institutionalized in education policies and programmes.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Work with partners and communities to make possible full access to quality basic education for all girls as well as all boys.
- Until full access is assured, encourage flexible schedules to allow children, who might otherwise be excluded, to participate; locate schools closer to children's homes; and provide facilities, including adequate sanitation facilities, to respond to girls' needs.
- Offer girls and boys the same opportunities for careers and vocational guidance and training.
- Pay attention to education for girls in need of protection: those who work, who are affected by emergencies or by HIV/AIDS, those who live in rural areas or in urban slums, are indigenous, have disabilities, are orphaned, pregnant, married or who are teenage mothers.
- Promote 'girl-friendly' schools by removing gender bias and discrimination from textbooks, teaching methods, classroom interactions and curricula, at all levels of education; and by recruiting and training teachers, principals, supervisors and other administrators to be sensitive to gender and human rights. In some areas, recruit and train more female teachers to provide girls with role models and to ensure that parents are comfortable with the classroom environment.
- Create spaces for self-expression and meaningful interpersonal communication with peers in schools. This will help girls acquire leadership skills, gain confidence, learn to negotiate and make informed choices and to be equal partners in transforming inequitable structures and systems.



Adolescent girls: Today's hope, tomorrow's leaders

“Changing the way women are treated (especially sexually) and the way they treat themselves would have to start with changing the way society as a whole thinks and acts, which can be difficult but possible if we focus on the present generation.”

– *Tabitha, age 17, Trinidad and Tobago (from Voices of Youth)*

For far too many girls, the second decade of life – adolescence – is a period of great vulnerability and lost potential. Often forced to shoulder household and economic responsibilities and to take on roles as wives and mothers, adolescent girls are denied their rights to education and health services and prevented from developing to their fullest potential. Denying adolescents their rights undermines their health, limits their opportunities and capacities as adults and threatens the survival and development of the children they may have.

Adolescents can successfully take charge of their lives when they are ensured access to information on reproductive and sexual health; information and opportunities to develop life and vocational skills; education/learning, health services, recreation and juvenile justice; a safe and supportive environment; and opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Full of energy and ideas, they are an extraordinary resource to their communities in overcoming the problems their generation faces – including HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and violence.

High drop-out rates

- By age 18, girls have received on average 4.4 years less education than boys.
- In some countries, girls may spend 80% more time than boys at domestic tasks.

Girls who work

- In Guatemala, girls who work spend an average of 21 hours a week on household duties, on top of a 40-hour working week outside the home.
- Girls, on average, earn less than boys doing the same work.
- 90% of child domestic workers, the largest group of child workers in the world, are girls, the majority between 12 and 17 years old.

Early marriage

- In Bangladesh, the median age of first marriage for women is 14.7; in Niger, 14.9; in Mali, 16.1.
- 20%-50% of women in developing countries marry or enter a union by their 18th birthday, while 40%-70% do so by their 20th birthday. The age gap between wives and their husbands tends to be greater when a bride is an adolescent.

Early childbearing

Children who bear children are likely to remain physically underdeveloped and are therefore at a greater risk for obstetric complications, obstructed labour or perinatal death. Similarly, the children born to young mothers are at an increased risk of suffering low birthweight, which can lead to death and conditions such as cerebral palsy, autism and learning disabilities.

- Approximately 15 million adolescent girls aged 15-19 give birth every year, accounting for more than 10% of all babies born worldwide.
- At least 60,000 adolescent girls die from health problems related to pregnancy and childbirth each year. Pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of mortality among adolescent girls in many countries.
- Each year, up to 4.4 million girls aged 15-19 undergo unsafe abortions.

Vulnerable to STIs and HIV/AIDS

Adolescent girls are both biologically and socially more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV infection.

- Every day 7,000 young people, 50% of all new sexually transmitted cases, become infected with HIV. In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls have HIV rates up to five times higher than adolescent boys.
- In Thailand, an estimated 800,000 commercial sex workers are under 20 years of age. Of these, one quarter are below 14 years old and approximately 3 in every 10 are infected with HIV.

Beijing commitments

- Promote girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.
- Provide leadership and self-esteem training to assist women and girls, particularly those with special needs, those with disabilities and those belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, to strengthen their self-esteem and to encourage them to take decision-making positions.
- Enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage, and raise the minimum age for marriage where necessary.
- Ensure education and dissemination of information to girls, especially adolescent girls, regarding reproductive and sexual health, sexually transmitted infections, HIV infection and AIDS prevention.
- Provide education and skills training to increase girls' opportunities for employment and access to decision-making processes.
- Promote the full and equal participation of girls in extracurricular activities, such as sports, drama and cultural activities.



Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

- School-based education, peer education and special youth health programmes are beginning to show results as practical strategies for implementation of national policies on adolescents in, for example, Malawi, Thailand, Uganda and Ukraine.
- The project Meeting the Development and Participation Rights of Adolescent Girls, funded by the UN Foundation, focuses on developing innovative programmes in collaboration with adolescent girls and boys. The project, initiated in 16 countries (Bangladesh, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Jamaica, Jordan, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Zambia), is designed to protect the development and participation rights of adolescent girls, foster their abilities and enhance their social and economic capacity and contributions.
- The 'Sara' Adolescent Girl Communication Initiative, developed in 10 countries of eastern and southern Africa with UNICEF assistance, uses radio, animated films, comic books, story books, audio cassettes, posters and guides to educate adolescent girls and their parents about the importance of staying in school. The series skilfully weaves information on issues such as sexual harassment, AIDS, early marriage, genital cutting and girls' domestic workload into entertaining plots about Sara and her friends.
- The Women's Education Programme in Jamaica, which reaches more than half of all teen mothers in the country, provides vocational training, parenting skills, self-esteem and confidence-building for both teen mothers and the 'baby fathers'. The programme has reduced the chances of relapse to another pregnancy in a two-year period to less than 2%.
- The UNICEF-supported Girl Child Project, launched in selected rural areas and urban slums throughout Pakistan, reaches out to secluded adolescent girls by empowering them with information and skills. The participating girls become role models in their communities. The project demonstrates that, given equal opportunities and with encouragement and support, girls can contribute to improving the health and welfare of their families and communities. By 1999, the project had been initiated in almost 180 locations. The project will be expanded to 500 locations, reaching out to more than 25,000 adolescent girls.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Expand programmes and projects for adolescent girls beyond reproductive health concerns and actively promote girls' leadership skills and build their capacities so as to promote confidence, assertiveness and economic independence to allow them to participate equally in decisions affecting them, including those relating to education, marriage and childbearing.
- Increase adolescent girls' access to quality services and opportunities to participate in education, health, sports/recreation, employment and cultural activities.
- Involve girls, including those with special needs, as full and active partners in identifying their own needs and in designing, planning, implementing and assessing policies and programmes to meet those needs.
- Create safe and supportive environments for adolescent girls in their families, among their peers, in schools, in youth centres and in the wider community, and provide girls with the skills and opportunities to communicate with boys and parents.

Girls and women dying to be mothers

“Because of the [low] status of women, there is a very high mortality rate. Even though there are no statistics showing how much mortality there is, so many women die. And in those parts [the far west of Nepal] a special word is given for delivery, ‘Jatkal’. It means second life. After every delivery, if you live, it’s not your life, it’s your second life.”

– Aruna Uprety (from *Breaking the Earthenware Jar*, by Ruth Hayward)

Maternal mortality is more than a health problem – it is a social injustice, an infringement of women’s human rights. Every minute, a woman somewhere in the world dies from pregnancy-related causes or childbirth. Almost 600,000 a year. Pregnancy and childbirth complications, mostly from obstructed labour, infection, haemorrhage, abortion and anaemia, are the leading cause of death and disability for women of reproductive age in developing countries.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, a woman faces a 1 in 13 chance of dying in childbirth. In Western Europe, the risk is 1 in 3,200.
- Each year, almost 8 million stillbirths and early neonatal deaths occur due to women’s poor health and nutrition during pregnancy, inadequate care during delivery and lack of care for the newborn.

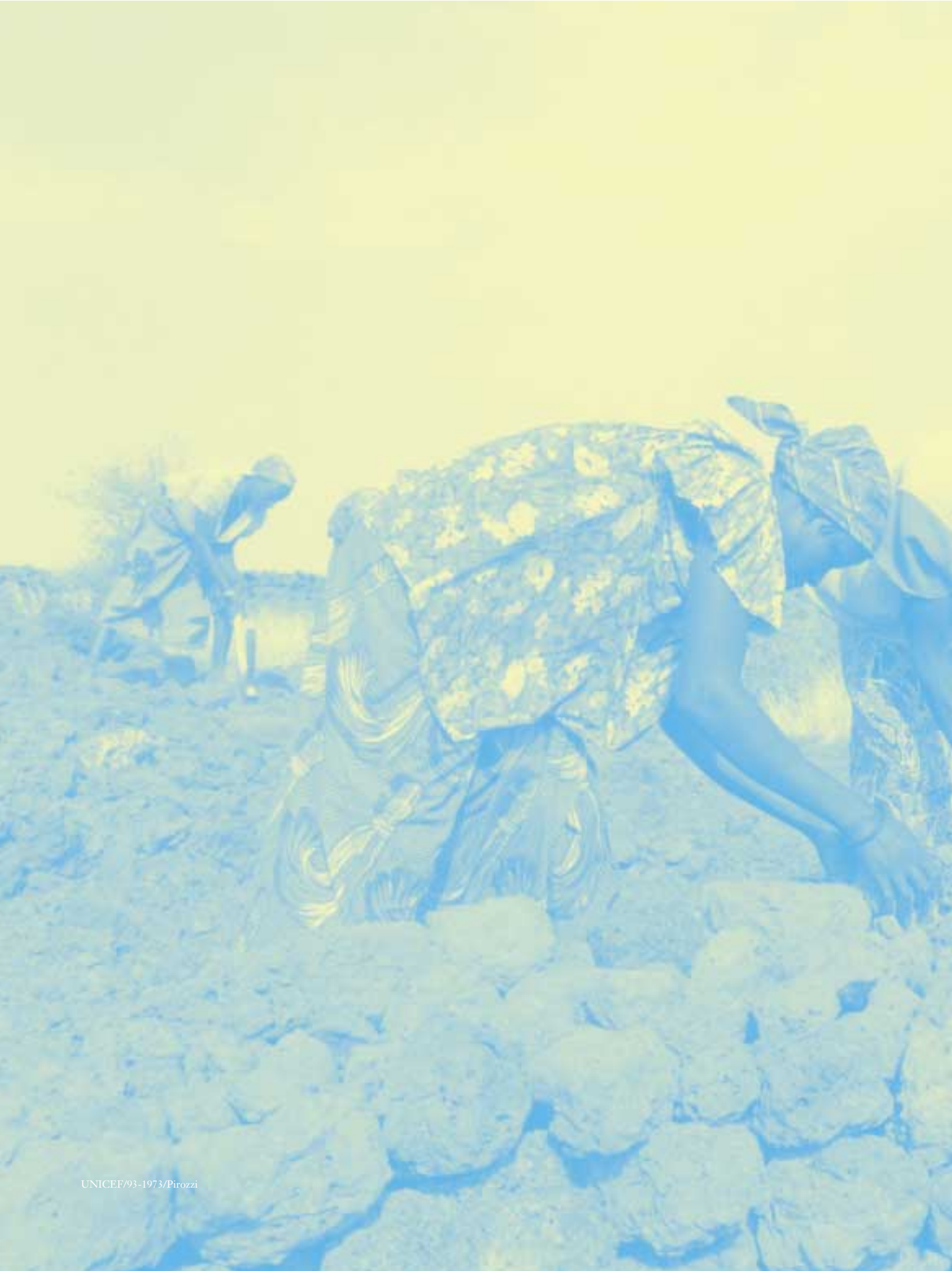
Girls aged 15 to 19 account for more than 10% of all births worldwide. Their young, immature bodies are not ready to have babies, which dramatically increases their risk for complications and death. In addition, babies born to young mothers are more likely to suffer from low birthweight and to die from infections and malnutrition before their first birthday.

- More than half of all women in Africa and about one third of women in Latin America give birth in their teens.
- Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-old girls worldwide. The risk of death from pregnancy-related causes is four times higher in this age group than for women older than 20.
- Every year, at least 60,000 adolescent girls die from health problems related to pregnancy and childbirth.

For every woman who dies, approximately 30 more incur injuries, infections and disabilities, which are usually untreated, and which are often humiliating and painful, debilitating and lifelong. Many of the injuries sustained during pregnancy and childbirth, such as a rupture or prolapse of the uterus, pelvic inflammatory disease, lower genital tract injuries and fistula, make life miserable for millions of women.

Women continue to die during childbirth because they are denied their right to quality and timely health care, information and counselling. Yet the root causes of maternal mortality include poverty, society’s low regard for women and unequal power relations between men and women. Young women in particular face the additional problems of forced marriage and unwanted motherhood.







Women in the village of Tschinkakki, Niger building a terrace to prevent soil erosion.

Domestic violence against pregnant women

Battering of women during their pregnancy is widespread but largely not regarded as a maternal or neonatal health care matter by medical staff. One study in Asia indicated that 20%-65% of battered women were also beaten at least once during pregnancy. Battered pregnant women are twice as likely to miscarry and four times as likely to have a low-birthweight baby. Children born to battered women are 40 times more likely to die in their first five years of life than children whose mothers are not battered.

Harmful traditional practices

Girls and women who have undergone female genital cutting experience severe problems during childbirth such as obstructed delivery and complications related to blood loss and infections, all of which can be fatal.

Beijing commitments

- Increase women's access, throughout their lives, to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.
- Strengthen programmes that promote women's health.
- Promote research and disseminate information on women's health.
- Formulate policies favourable to investment in women's health and, where appropriate, increase allocations for such investment.
- Strengthen and reorient health services, particularly primary health care, in order to ensure universal access to quality health care services for women and girls.
- Reduce ill health and maternal morbidity and reduce maternal mortality by at least 50% of the 1990 levels by the year 2000 and a further one half by the year 2015.



Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF recognizes safe motherhood as a human right. To improve maternal health, UNICEF supports women-friendly health care programmes to increase the number of births attended by skilled medical staff; expand access and upgrade services for prenatal and obstetrical care; strengthen midwifery practice through training of traditional birth attendants; and improve access to prenatal and postnatal care and counselling for pregnant women, their families and communities so they are able to recognize warning signs that require immediate assistance.

- In Bangladesh, a women-friendly hospital initiative was expanded to include the development and testing of training protocols for the management of violence against women.
- In Bolivia, the National Insurance for Maternity and Childhood Programme, which provides free services to pregnant women and children, has succeeded in making health services more accessible to everyone by addressing financial barriers to care. The scheme is co-financed by the central Government and municipal councils. In its first year of implementation, prenatal visits increased by 80%, deliveries at health facilities by 48% and treatment of emergency cases by 90%.
- In Burundi, the rate of maternal infections has dropped since health centres began selling inexpensive and simple home delivery kits to pregnant women and their families.
- A special project in the low-income urban community of Pavas, Costa Rica, focused on the prevention of teenage pregnancy and care of pregnant adolescents. The clinic there respected the rights of adolescents to information, taking their opinions into account in building adolescent-friendly health services.
- In Indonesia, UNICEF has supported government efforts to build a network of young, literate, village-based midwives, or *bidan di desas* (BDDs), one for each of the 55,000 villages. BDDs are trained in life-saving skills and provide both maternal care and primary health care. District hospitals are also being strengthened with equipment, supplies and drugs to provide comprehensive emergency obstetrical care.
- In Pakistan, UNICEF supported five separate studies on mother-and-child health care. The studies were designed to identify the interventions needed to bring about changes in care practices.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Promote legal and regulatory reforms to support women-friendly health services so that women are assured access to quality essential health services.
- Ensure that skilled attendants are on hand at delivery to prevent, detect and manage major obstetric complications.
- Mobilize communities and expand their participation in the planning and management of health services to improve women's nutrition, general health and birth preparedness, to ensure timely and safe deliveries.
- Encourage husbands, parents, in-laws, families and neighbours to become active partners in supporting women to make choices that will improve their lives and health.
- Support research and develop information materials that show the relationship between violence and maternal death to educate medical professionals and other health care workers.



Preventing HIV/AIDS: Focus on women and girls

“If we are the future and we’re dying – then there is no future.”

– Mary Phiri, *Editor-in-Chief, Trend Setters, Zambian newsletter for young people*

Women and girls are increasingly at the centre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Of the 5.6 million people newly infected in 1999, 40% were women. By the end of 1999, 14.8 million women were living with HIV/AIDS.

- The overwhelming majority of people with HIV or AIDS – some 70% of the global total – live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- UNAIDS/WHO estimate that, at the end of 1999, 12.2 million women and 10.1 million men in sub-Saharan Africa were living with HIV.
- Transmission of HIV from men to women is two to four times more likely than from women to men. The risk is especially high in the case of unwilling sex with an infected partner, since condom use is unlikely and cuts and dryness are likely to lead to infection.

Around half of all people who acquire HIV become infected before they turn 25 and typically die of the life-threatening illnesses called AIDS before their 35th birthday.

- Five young people become infected with HIV every minute – more than 7,000 each day. Altogether, some 10 million adolescents are living with HIV.
- Studies from several countries in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that adolescent girls aged 15-19 are five to six times more likely to be HIV positive than are boys the same age, since girls are mostly infected not by boys their own age but by older men.
- The rate of HIV infection among South African teenaged girls rose 65% between 1997 and 1998.

Millions of young people are denied access to information about HIV and life skills, fuelling a culture of silence in which misconceptions are widespread.

- One half of urban young people aged 11-20 surveyed in Cambodia thought HIV could be transmitted via coughing, sneezing and mosquitoes. Only 1 in 10 surveyed correctly named HIV/AIDS as a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Persistent and pervasive gender inequality and discrimination make girls and women especially vulnerable to HIV. Women often lack the power and the confidence to negotiate safety and protection and to refuse coerced or unwanted intercourse. Many don't dare bring up the issue of safe sex with their partner for fear of violent reactions or of being abandoned. In some regions, women rarely get tested for HIV, either because they lack access to testing and counselling services or because they fear that if they test positive, they will be ostracized by their families and communities. The stigma attached to HIV/AIDS is so great in some communities that a woman who tests positive is often forced to either leave her children or care for them alone.

Routinely denied their rights to education, economic opportunity and proper health care, women and girls are silenced by ignorance and fear and doomed by their powerlessness to resist the dangers they face. In some cases, social isolation and lack of education limit their knowledge of their own reproductive systems and the health risks associated with sexual activity.

The danger of infection is highest among the poorest and the least powerful. Young girls living in poverty are often enticed or coerced into sex for financial support or social promotion or may be forced into prostitution to support themselves and their families. In many regions, males choose younger partners, believing that they are less likely to carry the virus. Girls who are particularly susceptible to sexual violence and rape – domestic servants, girls living on the streets, girls who are sexually exploited and girls who are orphaned due to AIDS – are especially at risk. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and early marriage further increase girls' risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Women and girls also shoulder much of the burden of caring for those infected with HIV. Mothers, sisters, daughters and wives not only nurse sick family members but also look after young children, provide economic support and maintain the household.

Beijing commitments

- Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address STIs, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues.
- Create and improve gender-sensitive policies, resources, services and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other STIs.
- Provide relevant information and education about HIV/AIDS and pregnancy, including breastfeeding, to all women and health workers.
- Support and expedite research, conducted by women, to prevent HIV/AIDS and other STIs; to empower women to protect themselves from STIs, including HIV/AIDS; and to develop methods of care, support and treatment of women.



Five years later ...

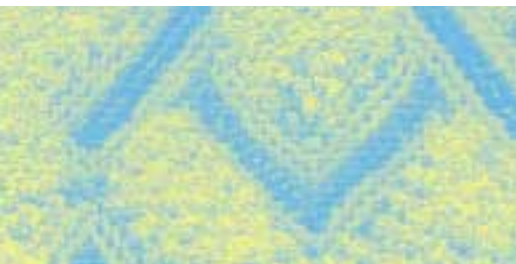
Some examples of actions taken

As one of the seven co-sponsors of UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS launched in 1996, UNICEF currently supports HIV/AIDS programmes in almost 160 countries. UNICEF programme priority areas include adolescent health and development; children and families affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly orphans; AIDS education and communication; and life skills education in schools.

- In Myanmar, SHAPE (School-based Healthy Living and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education), a school-based curriculum, has been introduced in more than 4,000 primary, middle and high schools in 30 project townships. UNICEF has also supported the training of youth and women as reproductive health and HIV/AIDS community educators. As a result of this training, youth are able to discuss positive behaviours with family and friends.
- The Youth Health Development programme in Namibia uses My Future Is My Choice, a life skills training curriculum for adolescents aged 15 to 18, to reduce high-risk behaviour among adolescents. More than 50,000 young people, approximately half of them girls, have received the training.
- In Thailand, the Sangkha Metta project is training Buddhist nuns, who have access to women in the community, to help prevent the spread of HIV among women and to care for women affected by HIV/AIDS.
- In Zimbabwe, newly established Youth Corners reach adolescent girls who are at risk of abuse or already exploited as commercial sex workers, providing them with treatment and information on behavioural change.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Integrate specific interventions for girls into life skills programmes to build their self-esteem and confidence. Ensure that these interventions reach the most vulnerable groups, including young girls, girls living on the streets, sexually exploited girls and orphans.
- Ensure access for girls and women, particularly pregnant women, to relevant and accurate information and education on HIV/AIDS and to voluntary testing and counselling services.
- Promote support groups for women caring for people living with HIV/AIDS and for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.
- Ensure and encourage access to youth-friendly health services that are sensitive to the needs of girls and create opportunities for their involvement in designing and planning such services.
- Encourage discussion between parents, teachers, community leaders and religious elders and young people, particularly on positive behaviours, as a means to improve communication between young people and others within their communities.
- Integrate specific activities into youth programmes to improve communication between boys and girls.



Violence against women and girls: A men's issue, too

“I was lying on my bed, almost asleep when I saw a shadow outside my window. Then a man threw something on my face. It was the acid. I was screaming. The burning was so terrible. People told me water would make it worse, so they put mud on my skin. When I went to the doctor the next day, he said there was nothing he could do.”

– Shireen, age 18, Bangladesh

Gender-based violence is universal and cuts across all boundaries of age, class, location, ethnicity and religion. It takes many forms, occurring mostly in the home, at the hands of male relatives or with their approval. Children who witness violence are seriously affected, often developing many of the same behavioural and psychological problems as children who are themselves abused.

Domestic violence

- At least one in three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in her lifetime.
- Studies from Costa Rica and the Philippines have indicated that 33% and 49%, respectively, of battered women are beaten by their partner during pregnancy.

Harmful traditional practices

- Every year, more than 2 million women and girls, ranging from infant girls a few days old to mature women, undergo female genital cutting.
- In India, more than 6,000 women are killed each year because their in-laws consider their dowry inadequate. Only a small percentage of the perpetrators are brought to justice.
- In many parts of the world, if a woman is suspected of sexual activity outside marriage, or even if she is raped, her family considers it a disgrace to their honour. A study of female homicide in Alexandria, Egypt, found that 47% of all women murdered were killed by a relative after they had been raped.

Sexual abuse, incest and rape

- In Barbados, 30% of women reported being sexually abused during their childhood or adolescence.
- In South Africa, a 1998 study found that one in every three Johannesburg schoolgirls has experienced sexual violence at school and, of these, only 36% said they had reported the episode to someone (not necessarily the police).
- In Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Uruguay, a rapist is exonerated if he marries the victim.
- Rape has been used as a weapon of war in many countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, the Congo, Liberia, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Uganda.



Acid attacks

- Acid throwing is a form of violence that is increasingly being used against girls and women who refuse offers of marriage or who otherwise anger boys or men. Causing serious disfiguring burns, acid throwing affects adolescents more than any other age group. In Bangladesh, between 1996 and 1998, reported acid attacks rose from 47 to more than 200.

Children who witness violence

- Children who witness marital violence face increased risk of anxiety, depression, poor school performance, disobedience, nightmares and physical health complaints, and the risk of becoming perpetrators themselves.
- In Nicaragua, children of battered women were more than twice as likely as other children to suffer from learning, emotional and behavioural problems and almost seven times as likely to be abused themselves, physically, sexually or emotionally.

Beijing commitments

- Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.
- Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls and analyse the effectiveness of preventive measures.
- Prohibit female genital cutting and support efforts among non-governmental and community organizations and religious institutions to eliminate such practices.
- Protect girls in the household and in society from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, and maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF is involved in inter-agency campaigns on violence against women in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia. UNICEF supports programmes to develop national plans, build alliances among local NGOs and advocate for the adoption and implementation of national legislation.

- To counter violence against women and children in Bangladesh, the Acid Survivors Foundation supports the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into society of acid violence survivors, increasing their access to the legal and justice systems and promoting long-term change in attitudes and values.
- In Bolivia, Law 1674 against intra-family or domestic violence is being actively implemented. UNICEF supported training workshops on legislation and women's rights for judges, public prosecutors, police and lawyers. Workshops on violence prevention and the elimination of gender discrimination have been carried out in more than 100 schools, with the participation of 5,000 students and 600 teachers.
- In Eritrea, UNICEF supported communication training for 146 members of the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students and the National Union of Eritrean Women, to mobilize their communities to end female genital cutting.

- In Peru, the multisectoral national Network for Prevention and Assistance to Cases of Family Violence was created to reduce family and community violence. Child Abuse Care Modules (MAMIS) within the health system address the high prevalence of sexual abuse within families. MAMIS provides integrated care to abused children, sensitize parents to prevent child abuse and promote alternative child-rearing practices among parents and relatives. Since 1996, the programme has assisted more than 4,800 children.
- In Senegal, UNICEF supports a non-formal education programme on women's health and human rights, run by a community-based NGO that mobilizes groups of villages to discontinue the practice of female genital cutting. The movement was widely publicized in the national and international media and resulted in a national law banning the practice in January 1999.
- In South Asia, as part of a joint programme between UNICEF and Save the Children-UK, four films on redefining masculinity by South Asian male film-makers are being used in a regional campaign to reach boys and youth through schools and youth groups.
- A forthcoming UNICEF book, *Breaking the Earthenware Jar: Lessons from South Asia to end violence against women and girls*, based on some 200 interviews with activists in the region, recognizes men as partners in efforts to end gender violence.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Develop and implement national legislation and policies prohibiting violence, including harmful customary or traditional practices that are violations of women's and girls' human rights.
- Apply the lessons from the new, small-scale projects that focus on men and boys to other areas where cultural attitudes and practices are entrenched.
- Introduce the subject of violence against women and girls into the training materials, courses and curricula of lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges, health and social workers and local authorities.
- Sponsor community-based research, data collection and national surveys on violence against women and girls, including migrant workers, those with disabilities and those who are trafficked.
- Implement participatory educational programmes on human rights, conflict resolution, peace, tolerance, respect for diversity and gender equality for women and men of all ages, beginning with girls and boys in schools.
- Create and support networks and partnerships among communities, religious leaders, governmental and non-governmental organizations, schoolteachers, health professionals and men's groups and women's groups.



UNICEF/96-0568/Toutounji

Women and girls in armed conflict: Building new roads to peace

“Later I joined the armed struggle. I had all the inexperience and fears of a little girl. I found out that girls were obliged to have sexual relations to alleviate the sadness of the combatants.... There is great pain in my being when I recall these things ... they abused me, they trampled on my human dignity. And above all, they did not understand that I was a child and I had rights.”

– *Report of Graça Machel, Expert of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, 1996*

Emergencies tear apart families, bringing with them risks of exploitation, abuse, disease, hunger, insecurity and death. Everyone suffers in war, but women and girls are subjected to special kinds of violence and abuse.

Violence and abuse at home, during flight and in camps

- Women and girls are routinely targeted in campaigns of gender-based violence, particularly rape, mutilation, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy and sexual slavery. Well over 20,000 Muslim women and girls were raped in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war in the Balkans, and more than 15,000 women and girls were raped in one year in Rwanda.
- Girls are often abducted by the military to serve as domestic servants, spies and sex slaves. During post-conflict reconstruction efforts, many are rejected by their communities, brutalized, stigmatized and outcast as teenage mothers, often with sexually transmitted infections. As many as 15,000 children were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army over an 11-year period in Uganda. Most of the estimated 5,000 children who have participated in the war in Sierra Leone have been kidnapped by rebels. Many are forced to be soldiers and sex slaves.
- Some families living amidst conflict marry their girls at a very young age, sometimes to militia members to secure family protection, increasing the risk of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.
- Women in refugee camps must often venture beyond camp perimeters to carry out routine daily tasks, such as gathering firewood. Exposed and far from help, they risk brutal sexual assaults. Often, these victims are shot, knifed or beaten into submission.





The impact of disruption and displacement on women and girls

- Women and girls are often left to take care of families when social and economic life is disrupted. Frequently, these female-headed households are faced with destitution when basic health care, water supplies and other community mechanisms are destroyed. Mothers who can barely make ends meet may have difficulty restraining older children from joining in the fighting, or may be reduced to prostitution or other forms of exploitative activity to survive.
- An estimated 60,000 households in Rwanda, containing up to 300,000 children, are headed by a child under the age of 18. Girls are in charge of 80% of these households.
- War more often discourages girls from attending school than boys because it is too dangerous for girls to travel to classes or because they must stay home to maintain the household or care for younger siblings.
- Poverty, hunger and deportation may force girls and women into prostitution, obliging them to offer sex for food, shelter, safe conduct through a war zone or to obtain papers or other privileges for themselves or their families. In Colombia, for example, there have been reports of girls as young as 12 submitting themselves to paramilitary forces as a means of defending their families.

Beijing commitments

- Strengthen the role of women and ensure equal representation of women at all decision-making levels in national and international institutions that may make or influence policy related to peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy and related activities, and all stages of peace mediation and negotiations.
- Reaffirm that rape in armed conflict constitutes a war crime and, under certain circumstances, it constitutes a crime against humanity and an act of genocide.
- Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuses in conflict situations.
- Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.
- Promote the capacities of women, particularly young women, in leadership and decision-making within refugee and returnee communities.

Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF, in partnership with other agencies, is promoting the equal participation of women in emergency assistance programmes; increasing women's participation in conflict resolution and peace-building; promoting non-violent forms of conflict resolution; protecting women and girls from abuse; and promoting gender equality and a culture of peace through peace education. UNICEF has also assisted in demobilizing child soldiers in countries such as Angola, Eritrea, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda, where young combatants are being reintegrated into their communities and receiving trauma counselling and training in basic skills.

- Girls are active in the Children's Movement for Peace in Colombia, accounting for about 60% of its approximately 100,000 participants.
- In the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, UNICEF provided seminars to help women organize into associations and learn the principles of democratic cooperation, information skills and lobbying techniques. The women became members of camp committees, traditionally made up of men and responsible for formulating camp policy. UNICEF continues to support collaborative efforts between popular committees and local women's associations to further involve women in leadership positions.
- In Rwanda, nearly 7,000 households headed by children under 18, mainly girls, have benefited from the Child-Headed Households Project. In some communities, neighbours pool together to work land left by deceased or absent parents, provide medical assistance to sick children, inform local authorities of a child's situation and ensure that children are able to attend school. Some children have been elected members of youth councils and some have become active members of associations that provide not only economic but also psychological support.
- In 1998, UNICEF supported income-generating activities for women displaced by war in Sierra Leone, where 90% of the women are illiterate.
- Peace education programmes – within schools, outside of schools and through travelling theatre, puppetry, television and radio, animation, contests and campaigns – have been developed in a number of countries, including Burundi, Colombia, Egypt, Lebanon, Liberia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yugoslavia.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Document and bring more visibility to the multiple ways in which war and conflict affect girls.
- Take measures to address the special needs of women and girls for protection and for gender-appropriate support in counselling centres in refugee camps and during resettlement and reintegration efforts.
- Take steps to assist household finances, including the social and economic conditions of women-headed households and widows in post-conflict situations.
- Strengthen ongoing efforts to train international peacekeeping forces on human rights and gender sensitivity and monitor the impact of this training.
- Involve women and girls fully in peace-building, including conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction; ensure the application of international conventions such as CEDAW and CRC to this process; and provide support to networks of women working to build peaceful societies.
- Implement the policy statement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Assistance and the agreed conclusions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Segment of 1999. This would ensure that gender issues are brought into the mainstream of humanitarian assistance activities and that measures are taken to promote the positive role that women can play in post-conflict peace-building and reconciliation.



Girls for sale

“After the brothel owners beat me, they sent me to my room. The men did many things to me there. The madams even beat me when I came out of the room. They beat me a lot.”

– *Beli, age 17 (from the film The Selling of Innocents by Ruchira Gupta)*

Trafficking – especially for commercial sexual exploitation – has become a worldwide, multibillion dollar industry. About 1 million children are forced or otherwise coerced to enter the sex trade each year for prostitution and pornography, many of them sold and trafficked across international borders. Often they are brought from poorer countries to more economically advanced ones, sometimes abducted from rural villages and sold in big cities, both within their country and abroad.

Young girls are especially vulnerable, as men often mistakenly believe that sex with a young girl reduces their chances of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, or that it will cure existing infections. The psychological impact of repeated rapes on young girls who are exploited for commercial sex is immeasurable.

Girls and young women in the sex industry are often bonded workers, working to pay off a ‘loan’ to their parents or a middleman. They are subject to physical and verbal abuse and are often malnourished, emotionally traumatized and isolated from society.

There are no exact counts of the number of children who are sexually exploited for commercial purposes, but the following estimates provide an indication of the extent of the problem:

- In Brazil, the estimates of child sex workers range from 500,000 to 2 million. The majority are girls.
- Approximately 5,000-7,000 Nepali girls are trafficked across the 1,740 mile-long border from Nepal to India each year, most ending up as sex workers in Bombay or New Delhi. Over the past decade, their average age has fallen from 14-16 years old to 10-14 years old.
- Over the past few years, an increasing number of Nigerian girls have been trafficked to work as prostitutes in Europe, mainly to Italy but also to Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Spain.
- Since the break-up of the former Soviet Union and the resulting economic and political crises, tens of thousands of Russian and Ukrainian women and girls have been trafficked to Israel and North America and large numbers of Bulgarian and Czech women and girls have been trafficked to Austria and Germany.
- In Thailand, an estimated 800,000 commercial sex workers are under 20 years of age. Of these, one quarter are below 14 years, and approximately 3 in every 10 are infected with HIV.

Beijing commitments

- Promote and protect the rights of girls and increase awareness of their needs and potential.
- Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external ones, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex.
- Strengthen the implementation of all relevant human rights instruments in order to combat and eliminate organized and other forms of trafficking in women and children, including trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, pornography, prostitution and sex tourism, and to provide legal and social services to the victims.
- Enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography.

Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF played an active role in organizing the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm in 1996. UNICEF has continued to build on the momentum created by the Congress by focusing on prevention. UNICEF provides support for research, training, legal reform and drop-in centres for abused children as well as advocates for the development of international agreements to address the trafficking of children.

- In Brazil, vocational training has been directed at girls at risk and those involved in prostitution in projects, such as in the Pernambuco state project Coletivo Mulher Vida, where life skills sessions are an essential part of the programme. This project has developed an innovative methodology for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by implementing activities with adolescents and their families.
- UNICEF and several partner organizations are working with 8,000 child sex workers in Calcutta to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- In Nepal, UNICEF works with the police to establish special women's cells and to train personnel in 14 districts to prevent the trafficking of children and apprehend and prosecute those involved. UNICEF also supports the Institute of Legal Research and Resources to conduct paralegal training for women's groups and form them into women's committees against trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.
- In Thailand, the Youth Care Development Programme (YCDP), launched in 1995 under a partnership agreement among private sector hotels, government institutions, Thai NGOs and UNICEF, provides skills training and employment opportunities for girls and young women who are at high risk for sexual exploitation.
- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has finalized a draft of a subregional convention on combating trafficking in women and children.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Develop strong and effective national, regional and international cooperation to prevent and eliminate all forms of trafficking in women and girls, especially for economic and sexual exploitation.
- Create and enforce national and international laws against trafficking of girls and women and prosecute and penalize traffickers.
- Provide economic, medical and psychosocial services for children who have been sexually exploited in order to assist their recovery and reintegration into society.
- Sensitize police, prosecutors and border and judicial authorities to the problem of trafficking and train them to identify and combat trafficking and to protect victims' rights.
- Help communities prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of girls through early detection, identifying families at risk and social support programmes.

Girls: An invisible workforce

“I am from Zablogu from the northern region of Ghana. I came to Accra about two years ago with the help of some elder cousins. I am a ‘Kayayoo’ (female head porter), who makes a living by carrying loads for women. Some women pay me as little as 500 cedis after carrying heavy loads of their shopping. Others also insult you and accuse you of stealing their bags just so they won’t have to pay you. It is very difficult when you work so hard yet make barely nothing.”

– *Alima, age 14, Ghana (from Voices of Youth)*

Throughout the developing world, some 250 million children work – a quarter of all children between the ages of 5 and 14. Half of these children work full-time, the others half-time, combining work with school. Some 50-60 million children aged 5-11 years old work in hazardous conditions, where they are at constant risk of injury and death.

Although poverty is the principal reason children work, cultural factors also play a role. When children start working at a young age and do not attend school, they are likely to remain trapped in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage and to pass this fate on to future generations. The failure of schools to provide rewarding, quality education contributes to the drop-out rate and to the growth of the child labour market.

Apart from the harm they inflict on the child, some forms of child labour involve egregious violations of human rights. Bondage, a form of slavery, is still widely practised, particularly in South Asia. Bonded girls and young women are often trafficked and sexually exploited for commercial reasons and forced to work in the sex industry to pay off a ‘debt’ owed by their parents to a middleman.

Domestic workers are perhaps the largest group of child workers in the world, performing work that is hidden, unvalued and uncounted. About 90% of this invisible workforce is made up of girls, the majority between 12 and 17 years of age, although some enter domestic service as young as age five. Many are sent to work far from their families and, in some cases, are trafficked across borders, living in slavlike conditions in countries where they do not speak the language.

- In Dhaka, Bangladesh, as many as 300,000 children work as domestic servants. A UNICEF study revealed that their average age is 12 years and that they work an average 16 hours each day. 25% of the employers reported that they beat their child domestics. In a countrywide study in 1998, it was found that only 16% received their wages in hand, 45% never saw wages at all as they were given to parents or guardians and about 25% received no wages at all.
- Of an estimated 250,000 child domestic servants or *restaveks* in Haiti, 20% are 7-10 years old.
- In West and Central Africa, large numbers of children are trafficked, mainly to work as domestics (*les petites bonnes*), but also for sexual exploitation, to work in shops or on farms, to be scavengers or street hawkers. They are seldom paid, often maltreated and are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Much of the trafficking is not recognized because children easily cross borders without identity papers in the company of relatives or intermediaries.

Domestic work is low status, barely regulated and poorly paid. Because each child is employed separately and works in the seclusion of a private home, child domestic workers are difficult to reach and to count. These children do not know about their rights and often do not speak the local language.

- Few attend school, severely limiting their life chances. Those who do go to school may be too tired to concentrate on their studies, forcing them to eventually drop out.
- They have little freedom or free time, sometimes working 15 or more hours per day, seven days a week.
- Many do not handle their earnings; some are unpaid or their pay is given to parents or intermediaries.
- Most of them are victims of fraud, often promised a salary that is never paid.
- Their isolation and relative powerlessness make them especially vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Beijing commitments

- Promote and protect the rights of girls and increase awareness of their needs and potential.
- Protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.
- Protect young girls at work, by establishing minimum age or ages for employment; strictly monitoring work conditions; applying social security coverage; and establishing continuous training and education.

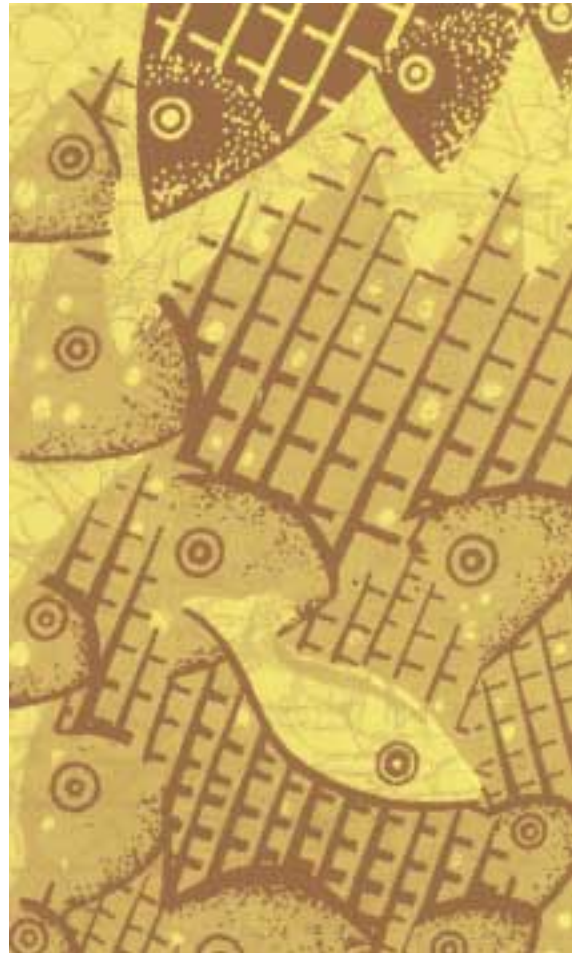
Five years later ... Some examples of actions taken

UNICEF collaborates with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the Global Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, which identifies education as the key strategy to eliminate child labour. UNICEF supports high-profile advocacy campaigns to eliminate child labour and to improve girls' access to quality education.

- In Guatemala, UNICEF is working to increase school enrolment and retention for indigenous children in 81 communities through bilingual education. UNICEF is also producing bilingual materials on the risks and disadvantages of child labour and is training teachers and health and social welfare workers on child labour prevention and protection measures.
- In Guinea, UNICEF supports the Association des Enfants et des Jeunes Travailleurs, (Association of Children and Young Workers), which organizes child workers and, with their participation, provides them with education, training and life skills.
- In Mauritania, UNICEF supported a study of girls working as domestics.
- In Nepal, the Child Labour Education Project identifies children most at risk for being forced into work or for being deprived their right to education. Through computerized mapping in targeted locations, household surveys and other means of data collection, the project identifies children aged 3-15 at risk and focuses on keeping them in school through initiatives ranging from pre-school programmes to teacher training, curriculum development and non-formal basic education.

Recommended actions from lessons learned

- Ensure access to quality, relevant and affordable education.
- Identify families at risk for sending their children to work and provide them with support for their children's schooling as well as alternative income-generating options.
- Raise awareness at all levels of society, including law enforcement, to promote, respect and fulfil children's right to be protected from being forced to work.
- Enforce international agreements and national laws on child labour, most especially the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, No. 182, which prohibits slavery, sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and forced labour (including the recruitment of children for use in armed conflict), and the procurement or use of children for prostitution, pornography and drugs. The Convention recognizes the special protection needs of girls and stresses the importance of education in eliminating child labour.
- Ensure that girls who work have access to education and vocational training, health services, food, shelter and recreation, favourable conditions, and are protected from economic exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace.





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