The Girl Child in 2022

**Document Sources and influences**
- The Beijing Platform for Action 1995
- UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals
- GWI Advocacy and Advocacy Resources
Graduate Women International

The Girl Child in 2022

Investing in girls is the right thing to do; investing in their education yields significant returns.¹

Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination.²

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The Beijing Declaration

The Beijing Declaration, adopted in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, was the first UN declaration to specifically call out girls' rights. The resulting Platform for Action identified 12 key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and girls, men and boys. “The girl child” is one of those critical areas.

12 Critical areas of Concern
- Women and poverty;
- Education and training of women;
- Women and health;
- Violence against women;
- Women and armed conflict;
- Women and the economy;
- Women in power and decision-making;
- Institutional mechanisms;
- Human right of women;
- Women and the media;
- Women and the environment;
- The girl child.

The Girl Child and Human Rights

Girls’ rights are codified within the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and include basic rights such as non-discrimination, the right to survival and development of potential, protection from harmful influences, abuses and exploitation, and full participation in family, cultural and social life along with those violations unique to the girl child such discrimination based upon sex, prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation and early marriage.

An equal right to education is extended to all children:
- Primary education should be free.
- Secondary and higher education should be available to every child.
- Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible.
- Discipline in schools should respect children’s rights and never use violence.
- Children’s education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities.
- It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people’s rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

In addition to rights, social protection, education, adequate health care, nutrition, full access to clean water, including safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene and skills development are also necessary for the empowerment of the girl child.

Yet today, in 2022, in many cultures and societies, the girl child is still denied her human rights along with her basic needs. According to UNICEF, millions of children (and especially girls) continue to be denied adequate health care, nutrition, education and protection from violence. Inequalities for girls are also exacerbated by global changes such as the rise of digital technology, environmental change, the COVID-19 pandemic, prolonged conflict and mass migration. In extreme situations where girls must undertake adult responsibilities in child-headed households such as being the main household earner and caring for younger siblings, the resulting poverty and violence seriously inhibits their further development.

The empowerment of and investment in girls along with their full, equal and meaningful participation in decisions that affect them are key to breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence and in promoting and protecting the full and effective enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
On December 19, 2011, United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize girls’ rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.

The Girl Child and the Sustainable Development Goals

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) pertaining to ending poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, promoting equitable education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and peace, justice and institutions all have references to the girl child (SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 8, SDG 13, SDG 16, SDG 17).

- 20 of the 169 targets focus on children/girl children
- Around 40 of the 230 indicators are relevant to girl children directly/indirectly.
- The indicators are stronger on gender and education and weaker in the rest.
**SDG 1 – No Poverty**

Chronic poverty remains one of the biggest obstacles to meeting the needs and promoting and protecting the rights of the child, including the girl child. Girls living in poverty are more likely to experience early and forced marriages along with an unequal sharing of domestic work and unpaid care work to ease family hardships. This more often than not leads to an end to their education, further limiting their opportunities and re-enforcing the endless cycle of poverty. The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions is critical to realizing the rights of girls.

The multidimensional impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has increased the number of poor by up to 124 million, causing the extreme poverty rate to rise for the first time in a generation, especially in low- and middle-income countries. The achievement of SDG 1, the eradication of poverty by 2030 is moving beyond reach.

**SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being**

Health and well-being are affected not only by disease and treatment, but also by social and economic factors such as housing, poverty and education. Health targets can therefore also be found across the other SDGs.

Climate change is the single biggest, alarming health threat facing humanity, already harming women's health disproportionality through air pollution, poor water quality, rampant disease, extreme weather events, forced displacement, food insecurity and pressures on mental health. Combined with the multiple impacts of social determinants, we are witnessing an exacerbated deterioration of women's and girls' health, compounded by the global lack of good healthcare.

Girls require access to clean water, including safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and feminine hygiene products, private toilet facilities and feminine hygiene product disposal facilities in educational institutions and other public spaces which will improve their health and access to education.

HIV remains a major concern among key populations and a challenge to the achievement of SDGs related to health. Child, early and forced marriage exposes the girl child to greater risk of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancy and childbearing and high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity particularly for young women and girls.

Equal access to quality education for adolescent girls, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, as well as health care, hygiene and sanitation, dramatically lowers their vulnerability to preventable diseases and infections, in particular HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

The lack of gender-disaggregated health data, disguises the needs of the different life stages of women including childhood and impedes desperately needed education, awareness, and action at all levels of decision making for governments and global healthcare agencies both at the global and regional level.  

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, a majority of countries announced the temporary closure of schools, impacting more than 91 per cent of students worldwide. By April 2020, close to 1.6 billion children and youth were out of school. And nearly 369 million children who rely on school meals needed to look to other sources for daily nutrition. UN Resolution A/RES/76/146 noted that school meals and take-home rations attract and retain children in schools recognizing that school feeding is an incentive to enhance enrolment and reduce absenteeism for all girls.

The global pandemic will have far-reaching consequences jeopardizing hard won gains made in improving global education.

Despite the gains made in providing access to quality education prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, girls are still more likely than boys to remain excluded from quality education. Barriers due to gender inequalities to girls’ equal enjoyment of their right to education still remain: child, early and forced marriage, early pregnancy, sexual and gender-based violence, the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, the lack of safe and adequate sanitation facilities, including for menstrual hygiene, and gender stereotypes and negative social norms that place less value on girls’ education when compared with that of boys.

In addition, school-related violence against girls, including sexual violence and harassment on the way to and from and at school and violence perpetrated by teachers continue to hamper a girl’s education in many cases may influence parents’ decision to allow girls to attend school.

In addition, steps need to be taken to ensure proper training of teachers and other educational professionals now forced to use remote digital platforms they were previously unfamiliar with along with the availability of and access to learning materials and remote learning platforms in order to bridge the digital divide. This includes barriers to online learning such as poor access to connectivity, lack of affordability of connection and devices, limited digital skills, absence of locally relevant digital content, and gender stereotypes and negative social norms in order to provide distance learning opportunities such as the Internet, television and radio teaching alternatives, especially in developing countries.

During the COVID-19 pandemic adolescent girls were at particular risk of dropping out and not returning to school even as education facilities reopened, increasing their vulnerability to poverty, child, early and forced marriage, violence and early pregnancy.
Discrimination against the girl child and the violation of her rights often result in less access for girls to inclusive and equitable quality education, nutrition (including food allocation), physical and mental health-care services and in girls enjoying fewer of the rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys leaving them more vulnerable to unprotected and premature sexual relations and early pregnancies, being subjected to harmful practices such as female infanticide, child, early and forced marriage, prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation and to various forms of cultural, social, sexual and economic exploitation and violence, abuse, rape, incest and honour-related crimes.10

Violence against women and girls increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic due to movement restrictions and restricted access to safety and other services.
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation

As the planet heats up, clean water will become a scarce resource. Investments to improve access to resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene services can considerably reduce overall climate risk for 415,000,000 children as well as decrease over one million deaths related to unclean births, infections, and maternal mortality, while helping to prevent hookworm infections.

Women and Water Management
UN Water (2021) points out that women and girls continue to carry the burden of water supply, sanitation, and health for the household. Yet fewer than 50 countries have laws that speak to the role of women and girls’ involvement in rural sanitation and water management. “Why Water is a Women’s Issue” (Concern Worldwide; 2021) elaborated on the continued perils of carrying water, which can take up to 3½ hours each day. It is physically demanding, especially for girls and pregnant women, poses risks of physical and sexual assaults, and keeps girls from school and women from completing other necessary tasks. Through education girls and women can gain the information and skills needed to address water mismanagement and pollution while demanding easier and more equitable access for their families and communities.

Water / Migration linked to Human Trafficking
Recent studies have linked the water crisis and climate change to human trafficking (either sexual exploitation or forced labor) as a result of ‘climate migration’ with predictions of as many as 1.4 billion people, 1/8 of the world’s population forced to migrate more than 620 miles from their current homes by the end of the century. Many, desperate for security and work, become victims of human trafficking especially women and girls when their lives are disrupted and their access to education including lifelong learning experiences is lost.

Mitigating human trafficking can be achieved through access to clean water and adequate food, essential in keeping populations in place and girls in school. Local adaptations to housing that reduce the effects of climate change (such as flooding) and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions along with increasing government resources and strengthening enforcement against traffickers can mitigate these impacts.
SDG 8.7 and SDG 16.2 - Ending Child Labor and Child Abuse

According to the ILO\textsuperscript{12}, “child labour” is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development; work that deprives them of the opportunity to attend school, obliges them to leave school prematurely, or requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. Millions of girls are engaged in child labour in the worst of its forms including those who have been victims of trafficking in persons or coerced into situations of unpaid care and domestic work, both of which deprive them of their childhood and their right to education and leading to a loss of opportunities for decent employment in the future.

Work related to child labour also supports SDG target 16.2: “end abuse, exploitations, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children” including those that disproportionately affect girls, such as child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence, trafficking in persons and the use of information and communications technology and social media to perpetrate violence against women and girls.

SDG 13 – Climate Action

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by and are more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change including persistent drought and extreme weather events, land degradation, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification, which further threaten health, food security and efforts to eradicate poverty.

80% people displaced by climate change are women and girls and are 14 times more likely to suffer health consequences and die during climate and weather-related disasters. Climate change, pollution and destruction of the environment equally impacts both hemispheres with a reverberating intertwined negative effect on women and girls.
GWI and the Girl Child

In 1918, after the first World War, GWI (formerly the International Federation of University Women) was conceived as a worldwide organisation uniting university women who were convinced that the idea of fostering friendship and understanding amongst graduate women could help prevent another catastrophe such as the World War that had just ended.

Immediately following the second World War, GWI was granted accreditation status to the newly created ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) of the United Nations.

For over 100 years, GWI members have been using their status as educated women to promote equality and peace and in particular safe access to quality education to achieve a better and more just world.

GWI's Mission and Vision

GWI believes that education for girls and women is a cross cutting issue that can help to mitigate many social and policy challenges.

- Equal access to education for all people is an essential element of economic growth.
- Sustainable development and women's access to education are inextricable.
- Education improves the living conditions of women and benefits the communities in which they live.
- Educating girls and women saves lives, improves the quality of life for families and communities and bolsters national economies.
- Women are instrumental in effecting social change and bringing about improvements to political and social landscapes.
- According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- Investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women, including educational and training opportunities, are integral to maintaining stability and peace.
- Access to formal finance is an important tool for opening up further economic opportunities for women.

Graduate Women International (GWI) therefore advocates for women's rights and the rights of the girl child (as embodied in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), equality and empowerment through access to quality secondary and tertiary education and training up to the highest levels.

GWI strives to raise awareness of, support for and the achievement of the UN Agenda for 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals particularly SDG 4 (Equal Access to Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).
Our mission is to:
• Promote lifelong education for women and girls;
• Promote international cooperation, friendship, peace and respect for human rights for all, irrespective of their age, race, nationality, religion, political opinion, gender and sexual orientation or other status;
• Advocate for the advancement of the status of women and girls; and
• Encourage and enable women and girls to apply their knowledge and skills in leadership and decision-making in all forms of public and private life.

Our vision is 100% of girls and women in the world achieving education beyond primary school.
GWI Advocacy for the Girl Child

GWI Resource Library

**GWI Resolutions:**
https://graduatewomen.org/members-login/constitutional-material/resolutions/

**GWI Press Releases:**

**Thematic GWI Advocacy Toolkits and Social Media:**
https://graduatewomen.org/media-publications/toolkit/

**GWI Resolutions**
Recognising the many socio-cultural, legal and other challenges faced by girls and women worldwide, GWI identifies its advocacy position and makes recommendations for policy makers and other stakeholders on issues relating to education, gender and human rights. These resolutions also provide concrete suggestions for steps GWI members can take to implement the resolutions in their own countries.

The full archive of GWI Resolutions dating back to the 1920s can be found on our website: https://graduatewomen.org/members-login/constitutional-material/resolutions/.


**Women and Peace**
- 21 September 2020: On International Day of Peace 2020, Graduate Women International reminds Member States of their commitment to women as means to building sustainable peace
- 21 September: On the International Day of Peace, Graduate Women International urges Peace through Education
- 17 July 2019: Graduate Women International brings together global and local experts for the Peace through Education Centenary Celebration and Conference

**Celebrating Women and Girls**
- 8 March 2020: On International Women’s Day, Graduate GWI issues an infographic report calling out to all stakeholders to remove all barriers and to empower all women and girls through the means of education.
- 20 November 2019: On Universal Children’s Day, Graduate Women International recalls Declaration of the Rights of the Child Principle 7 entitling all children the right to free and compulsory education
- 15 October 2019: On International Day of Rural Women, GWI calls for the voices of rural women and girls’ voices to be heard and key leadership role to be recognised
• 11 October 2019: On International Day of the Girls, Graduate Women International reflects on 25 years of progress for girls
• 5 October 2019: On World Teacher's Day, Graduate Women International celebrates young female teachers
• 8 March 2019: On International Women's Day GWI galvanizes towards gender equal innovation opportunities

Poverty
• 17 October 2020: GWI voices alarm about the World Bank predictions for world poverty: 88-115 million people in 2020
• 17 October 2019: On International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, GWI reflects on the effects of poverty on girls' education

Violence, Discrimination and Harmful Practices Against Women and Girls
• 30 July 2020: GWI voices global outrage against trafficking in persons: an insidious crime against women and girls right to education
• 12 June 2021: GWI calls on governments to invest in education as means to eliminate child labour
• 1 March 2020: GWI calls for stricter laws to eliminate discrimination against women and girls
• 6 February 2020: On International Day of Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation, GWI urges stronger government action
• 18 December 2019: On International Migrants Day, GWI issues an infographic report that calls for international cooperation to tackle human rights violations of women migrants around the world
• 10 December 2019: On Human Rights Day, GWI and its affiliates unite to eliminate Gender-Based-Violence (GBV) and emphasise the right to education as a means to end GBV
• 19 November 2019: On World Toilet Day, Graduate Women International highlights the sanitation crisis as a barrier to education
• 20 June 2019: Refugee girls: education is their only weapon
• 12 June 2019: On World Day against Child Labour GWI Calls for the universal adoption of ILO Child Labour Conventions
• 22 March 2019: A shocking 16 million hours per day are lost in girls education due to lack of water
• 6 February 2019: GWI continues to act towards the elimination of FGM as barrier to education

Education for the Girl Child
• 15 July 2021: On World Youth Skills Day, Graduate Women International urges States to “reimagine” how they think about education of future generations in the post-pandemic context
• 11 February 2021: International Day of Women and Girls in Science Infographic and Social Media Pack
• 24 January 2021: Graduate Women International celebrates education – echoes digital divide concerns
• 24 January 2020: On International Day of Education, GWI members reflect on the potential of education for girls
• 11 February 2020: Graduate Women International highlights underlying issues due to the lack of women in STEM fields
• 17 November 2019: On International Students’ Day, Graduate Women International calls for safe access to schools for all students
What comes next?

**UN Resolution A/RES/76/146** urges all stakeholders, including the United Nations and its agencies, governments at all levels, civil society, the private sector and academia to address the specific needs of the girl child through the following actions:

**Conventions pertaining to the Girl Child**
- full and urgent implementation of the rights of the child, including the girl child, as provided under international human rights instruments;
- sign and ratify or accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocols thereto as a matter of priority;
- ratify or accede to the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of the International Labour Organization.

**Safe and Equal Access to Education**
- Ensure equal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education and transforming education systems by:
  - mainstreaming a gender perspective into educational programmes, infrastructure development and teacher training;
  - investing in quality education, including through adequate financing, to ensure that all girls, including those who are marginalized or in vulnerable situations, enjoy their right to education;
  - addressing negative social norms and gender stereotypes in education systems;
- take steps to bridge the digital divide, including the gender digital divide where it exists, within and among countries as part of the efforts to ensure the empowerment and safety of all young women and girls, including those living in rural and remote areas, including by providing distance learning opportunities, especially in developing countries;
- recognize the importance of the right of girls to education and the continuation of learning;
- In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
  - acknowledge that during the COVID-19 pandemic adolescent girls, as well as girls with disabilities, are at particular risk of dropping out and not returning to school even as education facilities reopen, thereby increasing their vulnerability to poverty, child, early and forced marriage, violence and early pregnancy;
  - ensure that school closures are a last resort and are proportionate to wider public health restrictions;
  - ensure that girls are protected and supported in returning to school once it is deemed safe to do so;
- Member States and other relevant stakeholders to provide distance learning opportunities such as Internet, television and radio teaching alternatives, especially in developing countries to:
  - take the appropriate measures to ensure proper training of teachers and other educational professionals and the availability of and access to learning materials and
Intolerance of ideas, ideologies and lifestyle choices should end. As tolerance is important for peaceful coexistence and harmonious living, it is important to accommodate and understand each other. Conflicts of religion, caste, gender and ideology should be resolved through dialogue and mutual respect.

Remote learning platforms during the pandemic
- Bridge the digital divide, including barriers such as poor access to connectivity, lack of affordability of connection and devices, limited digital skills, absence of locally relevant digital content, and gender stereotypes and negative social norms;
- Recognize the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination by making primary education compulsory and making tertiary education available for all children with both available free to all children, including those living in rural areas;
- Ensure that all schools are accessible, safe, secure and free from violence and provide hygienic, separate and adequate sanitation facilities, contribute to achieving equal opportunity and combating exclusion and ensuring school attendance, in particular for girls and children from low-income families and children who become heads of households;
- Tackle gender stereotypes to ensure that young women entering the labour market have opportunities to obtain full and productive employment and decent work, and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
- Promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, eliminating female illiteracy and promoting financial and digital literacy;
- Ensure that girls have equal access to leadership training, career development, scholarships and fellowships;
- Ensure the completion of quality early childhood, primary and secondary education including catch-up and literacy education for those who did not receive formal education including those who are already married or pregnant, expand vocational and technical education for all girls and foster and provide access to skills and entrepreneurship training for young women;
- Adopt and implement inclusive policies and programmes to promote girls’ education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, including information and communications technology throughout their education recognizing that girls who develop such skills may enjoy more academic success and higher-paying jobs in the future and have an equally important role to play in these arenas as men and boys.

Gender Equality
- Develop or review relevant programmes that promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and equal access to basic social services, such as education, nutrition, water and sanitation, birth registration, health care, vaccinations and protection from diseases representing the major causes of mortality, including non-communicable diseases, and to mainstream a gender perspective into all development policies and programmes, including those specific to the girl child;
- Implement cross-cutting and integrated gender-responsive policies and programmes that tackle all forms of discrimination, which are often compounded, against girls in rural areas and that respond to the multidimensional aspects of adolescent girls’ lives, while taking into account the specific needs and views of girls, including those living in rural and remote areas, in particular with regard to COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts.
Human Rights and Children’s Rights

• promote human rights education and full respect for and the enjoyment of the human rights of the girl child through the translation, production and dissemination of age-appropriate and gender-sensitive information material on those rights to all sectors of society, in particular to children;

• ensure that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, with the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child, to ensure that this right is fully and equally enjoyed by the girl child, to meaningfully involve girl children, including those with special needs, as well as girls with disabilities, and their representative organizations in decision-making processes, as appropriate, and to include them as full partners in identifying their own needs and in developing, planning, implementing and assessing policies and programmes to meet those needs, with a view to ensuring their full and effective participation;

• enact and implement legislation to protect, support and empower children living in child-headed households, in particular those headed by girls, that includes provisions to ensure their physical, psychosocial and economic well-being, including protecting their property and inheritance rights, access to health-care services, nutrition, clean water, including safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, education, scholarships and training opportunities, and that their family is protected and assisted in staying together, including through, where appropriate, social protection programmes and economic support.

End Poverty

• take targeted measures to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere, including extreme poverty, with enhanced international support and strengthened global partnerships;

• all relevant stakeholders to ensure and promote a multidimensional coordinated approach in their work and efforts to eradicate poverty;

• improve the situation of girl children living in poverty, including extreme poverty, deprived of adequate food and nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, with limited or no access to basic physical and mental healthcare services, shelter, education, participation and protection.

Child Protection, Harmful Practices and Violence Against Girls

• strengthen and intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of school-related violence against girls and to hold perpetrators accountable;

• Strengthen multisectoral child protection systems, to prevent trafficking in girls and violence in all its forms, and ensure holistic support for girls who are at greater risk of experiencing, or who have experienced, violence, harassment, exploitation and abuse, including online and offline, and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, while paying special attention to girls with disabilities and girls in vulnerable situations, including indigenous girls and girls facing social and economic exclusion, including those living in rural and remote areas;
• devise, enforce and strengthen effective child- and youth-sensitive measures to combat, eliminate and prosecute all forms of trafficking in women and girls, including for sexual and economic exploitation, as part of a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy within wider efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including by taking effective measures against the criminalization of girls who are victims of exploitation and ensuring that girls who have been exploited receive access to the necessary psychosocial support;


• enact and enforce legislation to protect girls from all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation and harmful practices in all settings, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation, rape, domestic violence, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, trafficking and forced migration, forced labour and child, early and forced marriage;

• enact and enforce the necessary legislative or other measures to prevent the distribution over the Internet of child pornography and other child sexual abuse material ensuring that adequate mechanisms are in place to enable the reporting and removal of such material and that its creators, distributors and collectors are prosecuted;

• develop age appropriate, safe, confidential and disability-accessible programmes and medical, social and psychological support services to assist girls who are subjected to violence and discrimination;

• strengthen efforts to urgently eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and take measures to address the obstacles that continue to affect the achievement of the goals set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action;

• strengthen national mechanisms to implement inclusive policies and programmes for the girl child and enhance coordination among responsible institutions for the realization of the human rights of girls, including access to justice, fighting impunity for perpetrators of and ensuring the availability of appropriate penalties for crimes of sexual violence committed against the girl child, and to mobilize all necessary resources and support in order to achieve those goals;

• ensure that the applicable conventions of the International Labour Organization relating to the employment of girls and boys are respected and effectively enforced:
  • that girls who are employed have equal access to decent work and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value
  • that girls are protected from economic and sexual exploitation, discrimination, sexual harassment, violence and abuse in the workplace
  • that girls are aware of their rights and have access to formal and non-formal education, skills development and technical and vocational training
  • that States develop gender-sensitive measures, including national action plans to eliminate child labour and its worst forms, commercial sexual exploitation, hazardous forms of child labour, trafficking and slavery-like practices, including forced and bonded labour, and the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in violation applicable international law, and to recognize that girls face greater risks in this regard;
• enact, uphold and strictly enforce laws and policies aimed at preventing and ending child, early and forced marriage and protecting those at risk and to ensure that marriage is entered into only with the informed, free and full consent of the intending spouses, to enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage, to raise the minimum age for marriage and ensure that these laws are well known;

• recognize that a considerable number of girl children are particularly vulnerable, including orphans, children living on the street, internally displaced and refugee children, children affected by trafficking and sexual and economic exploitation, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children who are incarcerated, children who live without parental support, children living in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations and in climate-related and other hazards and natural disasters, as well as in other humanitarian emergencies. Therefore States are urged to take appropriate measures to address the needs of such children by implementing national, subregional and regional policies and strategies to build and strengthen governmental, community and family capacities to provide a supportive environment for such children to include:
  o providing appropriate counselling and psychosocial support
  o ensuring their safety and enrolment in school with access to shelter, good nutrition and health and social services on an equal basis with other children
  o taking special measures for the protection of girls in all phases of humanitarian emergencies, from relief to recovery with access to basic services, which include clean water, including safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, to protect them from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection, gender-based violence, including rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, torture, abduction and trafficking, including forced labour, paying special attention to refugee, migrant and displaced girls, and to take into account their special needs in disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation assistance and reintegration processes;

• devise, enforce and strengthen effective child- and youth-sensitive measures to combat, eliminate and prosecute all forms of trafficking in women and girls, including for sexual and economic exploitation, as part of a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy within wider efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including by taking effective measures against the criminalization of girls who are victims of exploitation and ensuring that girls who have been exploited receive access to the necessary psychosocial support;


Health and Wellbeing
• acknowledge the different needs of girls and boys during their childhood and adolescence;

• make adapted investments that are consistent with and responsive to their changing needs, in particular ensuring that girls have access to clean water, including safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and feminine hygiene products as well as private toilet facilities, including feminine hygiene product disposal facilities, in educational institutions and other public spaces, which will improve their health and access to education and increase their safety;
• to promote educational and health practices in order to foster a culture in which menstruation is recognized as healthy and natural, and girls are not stigmatized on this basis, recognizing that girls' attendance at school can be affected by negative perceptions of menstruation and lack of means to maintain safe personal hygiene, such as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools that meet the needs of girls;

• develop policies and programmes, giving priority to formal, informal and non-formal education programmes, including scientifically accurate and age-/culture-appropriate comprehensive education that provides adolescent girls and boys and young women and men in and out of school with information on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention;

• take measures to ensure the right of girls to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including through the development and enforcement of policies, programmes and legal frameworks and the strengthening of health systems that make universally accessible and available quality, gender-responsive, adolescent-friendly health services, menstrual hygiene, information and commodities, including for sexual and reproductive healthcare services, HIV/AIDS, and mental health services and nutrition interventions

• strengthen the capacity of national health systems including the allocation of adequate resources in order to provide the essential services to include family planning, prenatal and postnatal care, skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric care and post-partum care to adolescent girls, including those living in poverty and in underserved rural areas

• extend coverage of social protection through nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all girls

**Financial Resource Allocation**

• continue to actively support, through the allocation of enhanced financial resources and technical assistance, targeted comprehensive programmes that address the needs and priorities of the girl child

**Data Collection**

• strengthen research, data collection and analysis on the girl child, disaggregated by household structure, sex, age, disability, economic situation, marital and migratory status, geographical location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, and improve gender statistics on time use, unpaid care work and water and sanitation in order to provide a better understanding of the situations of girls, especially of the multiple forms of discrimination that they face
Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace.

GWI, formerly International Federation of University Women, is in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1947 and is a nongovernmental organisation maintaining official relations with UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation.

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Endnotes

1 UN Women: https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/girl-child
2 https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5
   Downloadable child version: https://www.unicef.org/media/56661/file
4 The UN definition of a ‘child’ is a person under the age of 14. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets the basic human rights for children under 18 years of age.
6 Convention on the Rights of the Child | UNICEF
7 (PDF) The Girl Child and Sustainable Development Goals (researchgate.net)
9 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) | United Nations Western Europe (unric.org)
10 See GWI Advocacy paper on SDG 5.3 – Harmful Practices (2021)
11 “Climate Change and Human Trafficking After the Paris Agreement” by Michael B. Gerrard (miami.edu)