

SOCIAL,  
HUMANITARIAN AND  
CULTURAL (SOCHUM)

*Study  
Guide  
2013*

**Table of contents:**

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM) ..... 2

Topic 1: Dealing with Gender Disparity in Education..... 3

Topic 2: Recovery After Natural Disasters..... 14

Topic 3: Building a Global Partnership to end Child Marriage..... 30

# The UN Peace Building Commission

## Committee History:

With the signing of the *Charter of the United Nations* at the conclusion of the United Nations (UN) Conference on International Organization in 1945, the United Nations came into existence. It was not until 1947, however, that the General Assembly (GA) was created and together with it, the Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee, also known as the GA Third Committee, was also created. With the purpose of overseeing and finding solutions relating to human rights issues and to social and cultural affairs, the SOCHUM agenda consists of, every year, issues that include, but are not limited to:

- The advancement of women,
- The protection of children,
- Indigenous issues,
- The treatment of refugees,
- The elimination of racism, and
- The promotion of human rights

Among the works of the GA Third Committee, it is the groundbreaking *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), which was partially drafted and debated by SOCHUM. Adopted in 1948, the UDHR emphasizes freedom, justice, and peace in the world as well as promotes even the most basic rights to all human beings. The aforementioned document was drafted as a result of the atrocities and conflict experienced in World War II. Moreover, it was later (1966) reinforced in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, which have been signed and/or ratified by the majority of States worldwide. The SOCHUM Committee works closely with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Human Rights Committee (HRC), and other UN bodies to discuss “any questions or matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs.”

Together with other UN bodies, the GA Third Committee drafts working papers that only turn into resolutions once adopted by the GA Plenary. These resolutions become recommendations to all UN Member States and are often supported by treaties and conventions. Members of SOCHUM are all 193 UN Member States. The current Chair of the committee is Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe of Cameroon. He chaired the sixty-fifth session (2010), in which 58 draft resolutions were approved and will be presented to the

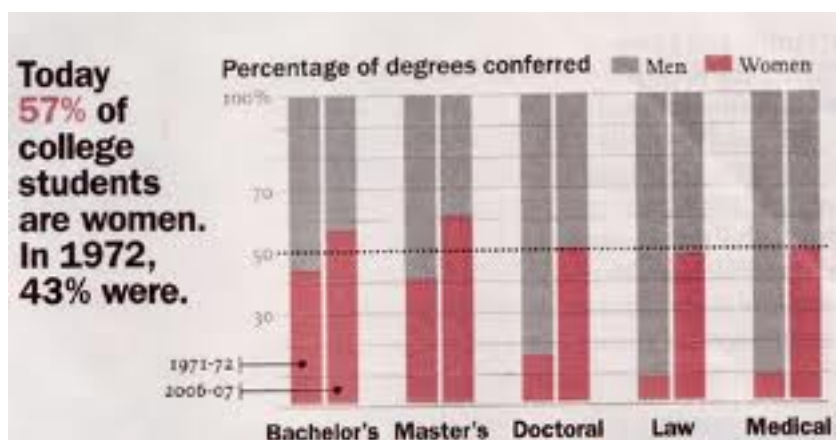
GA Plenary during this year's session (66<sup>th</sup>). The GA session runs from September to November each year and is it during this time that SOCHUM drafts working papers to be put forward for adoption by the GA Plenary in the following year's session.

## Topic 1: Dealing with the gender disparity in Education

### Abstract

There is no region of the developing world where women possess the same legal, economic and social rights as men. Nowadays around the world, issues such as crippling poverty, long distances to school, social traditions, deep-rooted religious and cultural

beliefs are most often the barriers to expanding girls' educational opportunities in undeveloped countries. Approximately two-third of the world's 880 million illiterate adults are women. Girls are more than 70 percent of the 125 million children who don't have a school to attend. Significantly more girls than boys enrolled in the first grade fail to complete the first cycle of primary school in countries around the world. Education is not only the key to a brighter future; it is also a key to survival. Despite these conditions, there is much desire for change: Parents (,) in even the poorest circumstances everywhere hope that their children will receive an education, even though the barriers to education for girls in these countries are many, they are not insurmountable.



### Introduction

This is just a very brief example of a major crisis that this world faces today- Gender disparity. Everywhere around the world, whether the country is at the edge of poverty and starvation or whether the country is wealthy that most people get paid for nothing. Gender disparity will always exist at some corner of their community. Solutions to this crisis was presented years after years and several resolutions were passed, only a few percentage of counties actually worked up to the mark of the acts published. Millions of young women around the world face obstacles such as early and forced marriage, domestic slavery,

gender violence and discrimination, lack of access to healthcare and school fees. On the other hand, a committed shift towards the creation of gender equality in education can deliver a wide range of associated benefits from economic growth, Reduction in infant mortality, decrease in a country's population, increasing country's GDP and higher literacy rate within a country. In 1989, the enrolment of children in pre-schools was already quite diverse in transition countries, with high rates in Central Europe and Baltic regions and much lower rates in the Caucasus and Central Asia. This is possibly due to the high unemployment soar that irrupted during this time in Central Asia, which raised the fees of pre-schools and forced parents to keep the girls at home (According to UNICEF). Latin America, where the expansion of education systems started earlier, there had been practically no formal education for women during colonial times – although they often received instruction at home to enable them to perform domestic tasks and to help them bring up their children to get educated. Although the foremost factor limiting female education is poverty. Economics also plays a key role when it comes to coping with directs costs such as tuition fees, cost of textbooks, uniforms, transportation and other expenses. Wherever, especially in families with many children, these costs exceed the income of the family, girls are the first to be denied schooling.

Moreover educated women have better job prospects and thus have a greater value in the global community. They get married later, have fewer children and are able to influence family decisions better. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, as the number of years of completed schooling for women increase, their total fertility rate and their desired family size each decline. Proposing no “quick-fix” to the ongoing task at hand, the researchers say, “female education is a necessary goal, and it needs to be pushed even more vigorously to cross the threshold of secondary education beyond which the net effects on female autonomy are all positive.”

In the field of development, gender issues are becoming increasingly important. Previously a focus of church groups, non-government organisations (NGO's), and women's rights organizations - addressing gender inequality is now firmly in the mainstream of development activities. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has only recently announced a new gender equality agency to amalgamate the smaller gender-related departments and better manage intergovernmental resources. The 'gender implications' are an important part of almost any project in the fields of social or economic development. The MDG's are the world's agreed development objectives. Gender inequality is a recurring theme throughout the MDG's. While gender issues and gender inequality are made explicit in the third MDG, women have a disproportionate share of the development problems of education access, hunger and poverty, child mortality and maternal health, and HIV/AIDS. From a policy-making perspective, we can generally say that it is economic growth, which is a prime concern of most development economists in national governments, academia and international organizations. Economic growth is

typically correlated with improvements in a number of the other MDG's, and although the monetary aspect of development can help serve as a foundation to reach the rest of the goals, it alone is not sufficient. For over a decade now, institutional economists at leading institutions like the World Bank have preached about how equality in education and employment - and the education of women in particular - leads to improved economic development in the forms of including higher productivity and faster growth rates. Over this same time, a small body of economic literature has emerged which looks at the effect of different measures of gender inequality on economic growth, in which gender inequality is typically measured by the gender distribution of capabilities, and gender gaps in income, health, education, and employment. Compared with two decades ago, more young people are entering school, completing primary school, and pursuing secondary and tertiary education. In low-income countries, average enrollment rates in primary education have surged upwards of 80%, and primary completion rates are now well above 60%.

### **History of the problem**

Gender inequality or gender disparity is one of the great puzzles of modern society. We have largely discarded the belief that it is necessary or fair for women to have a lower status than men. We have created programs, extinguished practices that would treat women differently than others. For centuries we have rejected or suppressed the idea of having an educated or literate class of women in our society. Through resolutions over the past years, or protests made by people, the community of having literate women have broadened but still countries still exists where girls travel miles and miles to collect water from the river or are doing household chores and are burdened with the fact that they are just excess "luggage" while in the same family boys are sent to schools, sent to local universities or are given extra classes for them to get educated. Apart from the household practices that are forced on girls. Girls' lack of access to education isn't always related to scarcity of places in schools, it also emerges from expectations, attitudes and biases in communities and families. Economic costs, social traditions, and religious and cultural beliefs limit girls' educational opportunities.

From the nineteenth century through the twentieth century, middle class men's version of myths (which had the widest influence) varies different gender differences that favored men. Here are some ideas that were accepted the most in a society:

- Men are practical; women are childish
- Men are strong; women are weak
- Men are independent and can lead; women are dependent followers

- Men are smarter and more knowledgeable; women think and know less
- Men are more rational, analytical and thoughtful; women are more emotional and lack judgment
- Men are rule makers; women are ruled with circumstances and emotion
- Men are outward looking and socially responsible; women are narrowly concerned with families

This narrow minded thinking of people over the years has convinced people that women are inferior and thus does not require the need of educating themselves. Having large number of girls outside the formal schooling system brings developmental challenges to both current and future generations. Individuals, families, communities and nations are affected. Inability to read, write and calculate complicates a girl's efforts to engage in both market-focused production and household activities as effectively and efficiently possible. This affects her family's welfare and diminishes her potential contribution to the development of the household, local and national economy. According to Statistics reports, the average number of boys who joined tertiary institutions last year stood at 100,831 while the average number of girls were only 78,738-indicating a gap of 22,093. While the severity gender inequality has varied over time and place, men have held a largely exclusive control over economic and political power anywhere that gender inequality has been insignificant.

Whilst Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 on 'Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' has been successful in mobilising resources and garnering political will, the targets of the goal have been criticised for being overly narrow in focus. Several studies have found that expanding women's access to quality employment opportunities is important for economic growth and development. However, discriminatory social institutions, which undermine women's position in the family, may mean that women are less able to negotiate paid work with caring responsibilities. Violence against women has also been found to be another social institution associated with female employment. Similarly, restrictions on women's access to public space such as the law providing that husbands have the sole authority to choose the place of residence, or women's limited access to economic resources such as land or credit can influence women's employment opportunities. Discriminatory social institutions often reflect social norms that reinforce stereotypes of women as inferior, less able or less deserving of quality jobs. Thus, in countries with higher gender discrimination, it can be expected that women may be assigned to jobs or sectors that offer lower opportunities, poor working conditions and lower salary. In countries with low-moderate levels of discrimination, there is a higher proportion of women employed in the service sector, compared to men. On the contrary, in countries with higher levels of discrimination, there are a higher proportion of men in the services sector. Gender differences in the industry sector do not appear to be correlated with discriminatory social institutions, as there are a consistently higher

proportion of men in this sector, compared to women. Improving child health outcomes is a cornerstone of the current MDGs framework. While many countries are on-track to meet the targets on this goal, UNICEF (2012) estimates that 19,000 children under age five were dying every day in 2011. Several studies have demonstrated the link between aspects of women's empowerment and child health and mortality. Records and Statistics have found that women's enhanced autonomy and authority (the two dimensions of women's status used in the study) significantly reduced post-neonatal mortality and child mortality respectively. Apart from this, statistics have shown that there is a significant relationship between child stunting (the measure of child nutrition used in the study) and attitudes towards domestic violence, maternal height, maternal education and age at first marriage. A study in Nepal also found a strong association between women's land ownership and improved child health. As such, it can be expected that discriminatory social institutions be related to child mortality.

Gender inequality impedes the economic growth. Gender inequality in education has a direct impact on economic growth through lowering the average quality of human capital. In addition, economic growth is indirectly affected through the impact of gender inequality on investment and population growth. Gender inequality in education has a significant negative impact on economic growth and appears to be an important factor contributing to Africa and South Asia's poor growth performance over the past 30 years. In addition to increasing growth, greater gender equality in education promotes other important development goals, including lower fertility and lower child mortality. In fact, it appears that promoting gender equity in education and employment may be one of those few policies that have been termed 'win-win' strategies. It would further economic prosperity and efficiency, promote other critical human development goals such as lower mortality and fertility, and it would be intrinsically valuable as well. However, it is also important to know that the countrywide policies that support rapid growth are also indirectly contributing to gender equality.

### **Current situation**

In South Asia, women have only half as many years of schooling as men. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa women obtain land rights, chiefly through their husbands as long as the marriage endures and women account for only ten percent of seats in Parliaments worldwide.

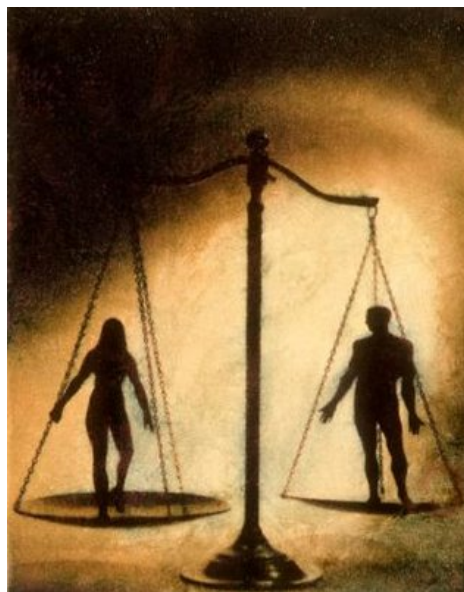


So until nations are able to address this issue of gender inequality and resolve it, the vicious cycle of poverty will continue to pervade. This is because poverty leads to and aggravates gender discrimination – it is in the poorer sections and nations that instances of gender biases and inequality are more evident. Women and girls who are at the bottom of the social, economic and political ladder in these societies, get even lesser opportunities to have a command over productive resources such as land or credit. Access to the means to influence the development process is a rare and difficult possibility.

### Case studies

#### **Kenya and South Africa**

Only 29.6% of the Kenya adult population has attained desired mastery literacy competency. About 29.9% of the youth aged 15-19 years and 49% of adults aged 45-49 years are illiterate. The survey reveals high regional and gender disparities in literacy achievements. The challenge of pro-poor education was immense. In 2007, the results from the Kenya National Literacy Survey (KNALS 2007) showed that national illiteracy rates had risen to 38.5% of the adult population. This translated in to some 7.8m Kenyan people being defined as illiterate. In 2002, it was estimated 56% of the Kenyan were living below the poverty line – and that this was projected to increase to 69.5% of the population by 2015 if current trends continue. Officials in the South African Education Department were explicit about this:



“Like I say it (gender) is much more secondary to us because we deal much more with poverty and poverty is poverty whether you are male or female... we deal with hunger and hunger does not discriminate. For us gender doesn’t come out as an issue”

However times have now changed. Government agencies developed a gender analysis of the obstacles and inequalities faced by nomadic and pastoralist girls and women, both inside and outside of the school. Depending on the context, successful initiatives to include girls, and to support them to remain in school and complete a basic education,

might include girl-only schools, boarding facilities, or female ‘animators’ working in the community. Mobile schools have been set up in remote locations of the Sahel region of Africa, which have been successful quite to an extent. Mobile schools have challenged well established ideas of what a school is; - mobility may necessitate a shortened school day, involve multigrade teaching (sometimes including adults too) and need an adapted curriculum that requires specific relevant training for teacher. Also basic education has also been provided over the Somali region in Ethiopia and schools have a flexible calendar, based on the seasonal movement of the community, and school timetables have been negotiated in order to allow both boys and girls to attend classes. Links with the formal education system have been established in order to allow children who complete the three-year alternative basic education cycle to join the second cycle of primary education in the formal system.

## **Afghanistan**

Attacks on schools and threats against teachers, students, and principals are common in parts of this country where the Taliban is re-emerging, or was never fully ousted. The ongoing violent attacks against school girls and teachers are chilling reminders of the enormous disparity between the reality on the ground and the equal rights to education that have been, on paper, enshrined in the laws of the country. Deeply rooted Islamic ideologies have a major role to play here as it has been manipulated to control and subjugate the lives of Afghan women—and the men around them. Girls have always been excluded from formal Islamic education. After the elementary instruction they get in the Mosque Schools their opportunity to get Islamic education is only through attending the primary school - if there is any and if offered to girls students.

Recently UNDP associate Administrator Rebecca Grynszpan launched a US\$ 30 million project to promote gender equality and help build schools and strengthen the country's literacy system. Establishing economic opportunities for women will also remain as a key issue. Through this current gender equality project, about 300 women entrepreneurs will each year receive assistance in establishing their own businesses, with a total of nearly 1,000 new women entrepreneurs established by 2015. According to government statistics, there are currently only 458 registered women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan.

## **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has always remained as a country below the poverty line and a lengthy history of gender discrimination. Many families marry off their daughters in their adolescence to older men to avoid higher dowry costs and the economic burden associated with having more dependents. According to the Social Institutions & Gender Index (SIGI) presented by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Bangladesh has the “highest rate of early marriage in Asia, and ranks among

the highest worldwide.” An UNFPA report that nearly 50 percent of girls are married by the age of 18.

But this hasn't prevented the country's governmental bodies from trying to improve their current situations. Over the years, the government has recognized the power of investing in female primary education to reverse the effects of poverty. Together with organizations like the United Nations, UNICEF, and the World Bank, Bangladesh has initiated programs to help the female population gain equal access to primary education in order to fight extreme poverty and improve their quality of life. By 2008, the World Bank reported that the total amount of government spending on the education sector accounted for about 2.4 per cent of the country's GDP, compared with less than 1 per cent of the GDP in 1981. In rural areas, the percentage of females age 6 and above with no education fell from 50 percent in 1993 to 32 percent in 2007, while urban areas witnessed a slightly less drastic, but still significant drop from 34 percent to 23 percent, respectively. These numbers are growing evidence pointing to education as a major determinant of empowerment, that is paving way to provide a brighter future for women by increasing their mobility and decision-making capabilities. While it is true that women today have more income-generating opportunities than ever before, Ms. Kamal and Mr. Zunaid's findings support the United Nations and World Bank's call for increased action.

## **India**

India represents a picture of contrasts when it comes to education and employment opportunities for girls. Cultural, social and economic factors still prevent girls from getting education opportunities so the question of equality is still a mirage. However, the rural and the urban areas present a contrast. In the rural areas the girl child is made to perform household and agricultural chores. This is one of the many factors limiting girls' education. Cleaning the house, preparing the food, looking after their siblings, the elderly and the sick, grazing the cattle and collecting firewood are some of the key tasks they have to perform. Households are therefore reluctant to spare them for schooling. Physical safety of the girls, especially when they have to travel a long distance to school and fear of sexual harassment are other reasons that impede girls' education. In the urban areas, however, there is a discernible difference in the opportunities that girls get for education and employment. Though the figures for girls would still be low as compared to boys, what is heartening to see is that whenever given the opportunity, girls have excelled more than boys. For instance, in the Central Board of Secondary Examinations for grades 10 and 12, which are at an All India level, girls have for over a decade now, bagged all the top positions and secured a higher over all percentage compared to boys.

In employment opportunities too, women in India today have stormed all male bastions. Be it piloting aircraft, heading multi-national corporations, holding top bureaucratic positions, leading industrial houses, making a mark as photographers, filmmakers, chefs, engineers and even as train and lorry drivers, women have made it to all hitherto considered male bastions in India. However, this is not reason enough for cheer. For the number of girls and women who have been left out of education and employment opportunities, still far outweighs those who have got them. And what needs to change this scenario, is not just governmental efforts but a change in societal norms, in cultural and traditional biases and in general mindsets of people. And in this the media, the civil society, and the youth, the women and girls have a lot to contribute.

### **Proposed solutions and UN actions**

Several UN projects are on course to eliminate gender disparity and promote gender equality around the world. The most widely known are the millennium development goals , which are a set of goals that were said to be accomplished by 2015. In Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality underscores the need to place women's empowerment at the center of development plans—an emphasis that is shared by Investing in Development. In 2007, The UN secretary General Kofi Annan said,

*“There can be no development, and no lasting peace on the planet, if women continue to be relegated to subservient and often dangerous and back-breaking roles in society.”*

#### **The Millennium Development Goals**

To ensure that Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) is met by 2015, the task force has identified seven strategic priorities. These seven interdependent priorities are the minimum necessary to empower women and alter the historical legacy of female disadvantage that remains in most societies of the world:

- Strengthen opportunities for primary education for girls.
- Invest in infrastructure to reduce women and girls' time burdens.
- Guarantee women and girls' property and inheritance rights.
- Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation.
- Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies.

- Combat violence against girls and women.

Some International agreements include the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The recommendations made in these international agreements remain important for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, but the task force sees the seven priorities as areas needing immediate action if Goal 3 is to be met by 2015. Although all women and men should enjoy empowerment and equality, the task force believes that action on the seven priorities is particularly important for three subpopulations of women:

- Poor women in the poorest countries and in countries that have achieved increases in national income, but where poverty remains significant.
- Adolescents, who constitute two-thirds of the population in the poorest countries and the largest cohort of adolescents in the world's history.
- Women and girls in conflict and post conflict settings.

Eliminating gender inequality is a multidimensional and a multispectral effort. For this reason, the financial costs of these efforts are difficult to calculate. An accurate cost analysis is the first step in efforts to mobilize the financial resources needed to implement the various interventions and policy measures that have been proposed. With the help of UN Millennium Project Secretariat, the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality adapted the general needs assessment method developed by the UN Millennium Project for estimating the financing requirements of the gender-related interventions. There are several cautions or problems concerning this method. First, the needs assessment comprises only some of the actions and strategies necessary to meet the goal of gender equality. Adequate resources alone will not achieve gender equality. Second, a gender needs assessment is possible only at the country level and meaningful only as part of a Goals-based national poverty reduction strategy in which all stakeholders participate. The estimated costs that such assessment yield depends on the interventions to be included, and these need to be locally identified based on nationally determined targets. Third, gender needs assessments should be carried out in conjunction with similar exercises in such other Goals-related areas as education, health, transport and energy infrastructure, water and sanitation, agriculture, nutrition, urban development, and environment. This simultaneous estimation of needs is important to ensure that the total resources capture all gender-related interventions and strategies. The UN Millennium Project approach to assessing the needs for gender-related interventions follows two tracks. The first track covers gender interventions to meet all other Millennium Development Goals affecting gender equality and empowerment of women, and the second track covers the additional specific interventions to meet Goal 3.

Girls and their families may find little reason to attend school if the curriculum or their teachers or counselors convey the message that girls are less important than boys or if the school tracks girls into fields of study or training for low- paid occupations considered appropriate for females. Analyses of textbooks in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa consistently find heavily stereotyped material, with women portrayed as subordinate and passive and men as intelligent, leaders, and dominant. Providing female teachers for girls may address some security concerns as well as provide useful role models. International cross-section data suggest a positive correlation between gender parity in enrollment and the proportion of female. Qualified female teachers are in short supply, however. Young women are now being recruited, particularly in rural areas. Their lack of educational qualification may be compensated for by their knowledge of and commitment to local communities. A large body of evidence shows that providing education for uneducated or illiterate mothers of young children can facilitate better education outcomes for their children. Support to literacy programs for adult women can be an important complement to interventions to increase access and retention rates of children in school. Adult literacy programs, especially when combined with the acquisition of other skills relevant to the learner, may be particularly useful where there are pockets of undereducated women, such as among ethnic minorities and native communities.

Improved roads and transportation services are needed to increase women's access to all resources and services. Feeder and main roads can greatly reduce the burden on women's time and expand their opportunities, especially when combined with accessible and affordable modes of transportation. They can increase women's chances of finding employment or training, selling their goods and increasing their income, expanding their social networks, accessing health care, and visiting local government headquarters for redress for their problems. The probability that girls will attend school also increases. A rural transport project in a remote area of Morocco eventually led to the tripling of girls' school enrollments in the area. Transport projects have been implemented which has also addressed the safety and security needs of women and girls, such as adequate street lighting and also ensuring that bus stops and terminals are not located in remote or secluded areas.

Women's work, both paid and unpaid, is critical to the survival and security of poor households and an important route by which households escape poverty. Paid employment is critical to women's empowerment. Despite the low pay that women receive, their income has important welfare consequences for children and families. An extensive literature reports that women are more likely than men to spend their incomes on food, education, and healthcare that enhance the welfare of their children as well as their own. Women's access to jobs empowers them by improving their self- esteem and bargaining power. Women and men typically perform different tasks and are located in



different industries and occupational sectors. About half of workers worldwide work in occupations in which at least 80 percent of workers are of the same gender). Occupational segregation by gender is extensive in both developed and developing countries but is greatest in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by North Africa and the Middle East, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia. In many countries occupational segregation is highest among the least educated workers. The International Labour Organization's Decent Work initiative provides a framework at the international level for promoting equal access to employment and equal treatment. This initiative seeks to foster rights at work, provide employment and social protection, and encourage social dialogue. Its goal is "to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity". The gender sensitivity of the decent work framework and the gender-disaggregated indicators it proposes for monitoring country performance make it suitable for tracking a country's progress toward eliminating gender inequalities in labor markets. The task force recommends that the International Labour Organization be given the resources and authority to take the leadership in collecting and disseminating data and monitoring progress for this initiative.

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## Topic 2: Recovery after Natural Disasters

### **Abstract**

Natural disasters are unavoidable, unstoppable and are inevitable. Devastating hurricanes, floods and other extreme weather cripple the world every year, particularly as the world's climate changes and as weather patterns are expected to become more unpredictable and possibly more destructive, scientists say. And as more people around the globe move to urban areas, their exposure to these



events is going up. The occurrence of natural disasters has increased in frequency across the globe over the past 50 years. Estimates of the economic and financial losses from natural disasters have also risen. While the reporting of natural disasters has improved, these upward trends are due primarily to a documented rise in the number and intensity of climactic disasters, and to an increase in the concentration of people and physical assets in areas more exposed to disasters. Communities become vulnerable when their lives, property, and assets are exposed to hazard shocks and when in face of these shocks they are defenseless and lack of capacity to cope.

However the vulnerabilities that are now emerging must now be tackled, and can be done so, at least in part, while also addressing another growing danger - climate change.

### **Introduction**

Natural disasters cannot be prevented, but measures can be taken to eliminate or reduce the possibility of trouble. It is true that big natural disasters influence the country and its population for months, or even years, after the disaster has struck. The demolition by natural disasters can be reduced by evacuation plans and warning in advance however, it is not avoidable. Natural disasters are increasing worldwide. They are striking in new locations, with greater impacts, and affecting more people than ever before. Last year, more than ten times as many people died in a single day as a result of the Haiti earthquake than in all disasters in 2009. We also saw historic flooding submerge one-fifth



of Pakistan's national territory, affecting more than 20 million people. In the last few months alone, drought has brought an acute food and livelihood crisis to Kenya, and weeks of intense rain have brought floods and landslides to Bolivia. Capturing the world's attention, Japan had to contend with the effects of not one, but three crises due to an earthquake and the resulting tsunami and radiation leaks. Greater needs have also led to greater international responses. The number and diversity of international responders has multiplied over the past decades. Non-traditional actors new to disaster response have entered the field. The Haiti earthquake is a striking recent example, attracting more than 400 foreign organizations. This outpouring of generosity demonstrably saves lives – but it can also strain the capacity of local authorities to facilitate, coordinate and oversee the relief effort.

Regulatory mechanisms are often seen as impediments in the aftermath of a disaster – something to be bypassed rather than as tools to enhance the effectiveness of response. But well-designed systems and processes are critical to meet the needs of the affected population. They can swiftly and efficiently direct international assistance to where it is most needed, and they can help ensure that appropriate quality and accountability standards are maintained. In the past few decades, many countries have improved their ability to mitigate and respond to the effects of disasters. However, some catastrophic events are still overwhelming domestic capacities. This is unfortunately likely to continue in the near future, in light of the increasing severity of meteorological events caused by global warming and the increasing numbers of people living in precarious situations. When this occurs, international cooperation is essential to meet the humanitarian needs of affected communities. Recent disasters have also shown that no state can reasonably consider itself immune from the occasional need for international assistance. As demonstrated by the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan and 2005's Hurricane Katrina in the United States, even the wealthiest societies can sometimes use a helping hand from abroad. Unfortunately, very few governments are adequately

prepared for the possibility that they may one day require international assistance. Often, the result is a poorly attuned approach when the need arises. Over-regulation in some areas leads to unnecessary bureaucratic bottlenecks slowing the entry and distribution of relief, while under-regulation in others allows for poor quality and uncoordinated efforts. The increasing number and variety of international actors who may seek to provide assistance in response to large



disasters compound these problems. Unprepared governments suffer countless administrative and political headaches in these cases, while aid providers are frustrated by unnecessary delays and substantially higher costs. However, the principal victims are the families whose lives have been turned upside-down by a major disaster and who need immediate, effective support.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### **Natural disaster**

A significant loss of human life, damage to property, and environmental damage caused by a natural hazard is known as a natural disaster.

### **Natural hazard**

Natural Hazards are geographical events which occur naturally under, on or above the surface of the earth. Examples of natural hazards that occur under the surface of the earth are earthquakes and volcanoes. Example of natural hazard that occur on the surface of the earth is floods. Examples of natural disasters which occur above the surface of the earth are droughts and hurricanes, due to climate conditions.

### **NGO (Non Governmental Organization)**

A NGO is an organization operating internationally without being under any supervision of a government thus being a free organization. Most of the NGOs are concurrent to the UN.

### **Ex-ante**

Ex-ante is the neo-Latin term meaning 'before the event'. This word is frequently used when a result of a particular event is based on forecasts rather than the genuine results.

### **Risk prevention**

Risk prevention is defined as the actions that are carried out ex-ante in order to reduce the possible impacts of natural hazards from becoming natural disaster.

### **Risk mitigation**

Risk mitigation is defined as the actions taken in order to minimize the impact of natural hazards if they occur.

### **Humanitarian Aid**

Humanitarian aid is the assistance that is provided by corporations, organizations, government, and/or individuals in response to humanitarian disasters, in this case natural

disasters. There is a clear objective in humanitarian aid. This objective is to save lives, reduce the suffering, and preserve human dignity.

### **Disaster Risk reduction**

Disaster Risk reduction is a series of activities that explain ex-ante policy as well as actions that are taken in order to minimize the impact from natural hazards. This will reduce the occurrence of natural disasters.

### **LEDC (Less Economically Developed Countries)**

A country with low levels of economic development is known as a LEDC. Indicators such as lack of development include high birth, death, and infant mortality rates, 50% and over of the workforce in agriculture industries, low literacy rates, GDP per capita below \$1000, low levels of nutrition and low level of electricity consumption per head.

### **MEDC (More Economically Developed Countries)**

A country with high levels of economic development is known as a MEDC. Indicators such as low infant mortality rate, low birth and death rate, less than 10% of the working population evolved in agriculture, high levels of literacy rate, high levels of nutrition, electricity consumption per capita, and GDP per head above \$20000 per capita.

### **Historical background**

One of the key challenges in promoting a shift from disaster management to risk management is to make the risk factors that cause disasters more visible. Prior to disasters these causal factors may be hidden. Only after a disaster occurs does it become crystal clear the extent to which latent risk factors were present. Unfortunately by then it is too late to prevent losses. Identifying where and when conditions of hazardousness and vulnerability are present creates the potential for acting before disasters occur, to reduce the risks. Risks can also be transferred away from exposed populations and assets, through insurance, contingency funds, catastrophe bonds and other financial mechanisms. An essential element of a larger disaster risk reduction programme, countries have adopted comprehensive legal, policy, and institutional frameworks and planning for disaster prevention, preparedness, relief and recovery, and are inclusive of domestic civil society, and empower communities to enhance their own safety and resilience. Countries with the support, of relevant regional and international organizations, have devoted adequate resources to ensure the effectiveness of these frameworks. They have allowed effective coordination of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance, taking into account the role of the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator as central focal point and assisting humanitarian organizations concerning United Nations emergency relief operations. Countries have also clearly

designate domestic governmental entities with responsibility and authority in these areas. Considerations have been given to establishing community centers and shelter areas where refugees from disasters are treated and taken care of.

In November 2007, the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent unanimously adopted a set of recommendations to help governments prepare their regulatory systems for international disaster response. The Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance have been widely endorsed in the years since their adoption. They have been recognized in several UN General Assembly resolutions, and referred to by regional organizations, such as CAPRADE and NATO. Dozens of governments and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies made use of the Guidelines to review their national legislation –with support from the IFRC. This progress is encouraging, but with renewed momentum there is potential for much more. These Guidelines were a set of recommendations to governments on how to prepare their disaster laws and plans for the common regulatory problems in international disaster relief operations. They advise them as to the minimal quality standards they should insist upon in humanitarian assistance as well as the kinds of legal facilities aid providers need to do their work effectively. While responding to today's common problems, they are based on existing international legal and policy documents.

The root causes of poverty and vulnerability to crises are often the same. These structural factors include: political exclusion, social and economic marginalization and unsafe conditions. Early recovery programs aim to provide communities with safety nets, accurate information, and access to resources, opportunities and capacity to rebuild their lives, at a moment when they are most vulnerable and thereby increasing their resilience in post crises contexts. These critical interventions can help safeguard them from destitution, protect them from adopting adverse coping mechanisms that could result in risk reconstruction, and prevent them from returning to pre-crisis levels of vulnerability. At the same time strengthening core state capacity that may have been depleted by the crises, ensures that national and local authorities are in a position to lead in securing stability, resuscitating markets and livelihoods, providing basic social services.

There are three key challenges that the international community faces in its response to early. These relate to: strategy, capacity and financing. The lack of an early recovery strategy process that integrates political, security development and humanitarian tools in post conflict contexts characterize the challenge with regards to strategy. The challenges with regards to capacity are characterized by the inability to consistently build national capacity early on, to lead recovery efforts, and inadequate multilateral capacity to bring the international community together, and get the right people on the ground at the right time. The challenge with regards to financing is characterized by of timely, flexible and predictable funding for early recovery. An Early Recovery Policy and Practitioners Forum

was held in Denmark from 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2008, which brought together a range of practitioners and policy makers from crisis and post crisis countries, UN agencies, Regional Organizations, NGOs, the International Financial Institutions and the Bilateral in order to develop a shared understanding of early recovery, reflect upon the above mentioned challenges in early recovery and identify areas for strengthened collaboration and joint action to move the early recovery agenda forward. Practitioners and policy makers endorsed a joint action statement that included a set of commitments. They agreed to work together, in the future, to implement the commitments and move beyond the challenges.

### **Negative effects created by natural disasters**

#### **Economic problems**

Natural disasters lead to destruction of the country's infrastructure as well as creating a financial burden. For instance, the Flood insurance in North Carolina claims that payments totalling \$460 million were given out to 25,000 claimants for repairs and reconstruction. In addition to this, agricultural losses were estimated around at \$1 billion. These kinds of supply shocks will negatively influence the country's economy. Office buildings, oil platforms, residential houses, forests, public transportation, infrastructure of a country, and etc are destroyed once a natural disaster strikes that country. This becomes a bigger problem to LEDCs in comparison to MEDCs because a lot of the LEDCs rely on industries such as oil and forestry. Inevitably this will lead to unemployment in the country due to the fact that the major businesses are affected. This will lead to a knock-on effect due to the decreased purchasing power of the citizens, which will mean less tax will be paid. Furthermore, it is possible that this will result in redistribution of people in the country and the cities might become more crowded. A good example of this case was in 2005, when the United States had experienced a redistribution of roughly 1 million people. The UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) declares that financial losses from natural disasters have drastically amplified from the estimated \$75.5 billion in the 1960s to an approximate \$660 billion in the 1990s. This is a great deal worse in LEDCs because victims already suffer from financial poverties. Many sufferers also lose their source of revenue and so it is very important for the disaster risk measures to be put into practice.

#### **Social problems**

It is always the case that social problems such as looting and violence occur in cities after a natural disaster has struck. These looters could very well be looking for essential goods such as water and food however; many of the looters could also be in search of luxury goods that are not essential. These goods include cars, accessories, televisions, and couture clothing. If the natural disaster created an extreme damage, it is possible that

riots and other forms of social unrest could take place. Also, undesirable social effects, which include rape, carjacking, theft, and murder, can take place following a natural disaster.

### **Security**

The security of the country affected by a natural disaster is likely to be fragile. This creates a big problem. A natural disaster can cause masses of disorder and trauma to the people who have been affected by the natural disaster. One of the biggest consequences of a natural disaster is anarchy. Once the lawlessness is implanted in a country, it is extremely difficult to stable it's security.

### **Political problems**

Other than the economical and social impacts of a natural disaster, the political problems that arise are also imperative. The government can be forced and then pressurized into dealing with the consequences of a natural disaster which will negatively affect the political system of that country by creating disputes and split of opinion. This will further place the country affected by natural disaster into difficulty.

### **Environmental problems**

If the natural disaster affected a country's economy, society, and politics then the natural disaster will have a reflective impact on the environment. Some of the environmental consequences of a natural disaster are habitat demolition, soil erosion, and a loss of mating areas for the animals in that area. These are the small consequences that can be solved in the short term. Bigger environmental problems such as oil spill and nuclear tragedy, most recently seen in Japan, will have a lasting effect that is difficult to solve in the short term.

### **Key issues that need to be solved**

#### **Lack of Supplies**

The lack of primary and necessity goods like water may lead to preventable casualties created by starvation and sickness.

#### **Releasing trapped people**

People who are or remained trapped in the wreckage or in other dangerous areas because they could not evacuate should be rescued without delay.

#### **Loss of income**

The people who survived can be left unable to find their way of making a living. For the people who were previously in poverty before the natural disaster, the circumstances will be worse.

### **Loss of industries**

As a natural disaster hits a country, the majority of the businesses could be, to a great extent, damaged. After a natural disaster, many firms would probably suffer from the loss of records, work-space, and employees. This could lead to the firms not being capable of recovering from the consequences and so, they will no longer contribute to the country's economy. This can be extremely damaging for the economy.

### **Determining the number of casualties and injuries**

One of the hardest problems to solve during a natural disaster is determining the number of casualties. The country hit by the natural disaster will have to find the missing people, either dead or alive, and then the appropriate aid will need to be delivered to these people. This is a difficult task and usually requires other rescue organizations to help from neighbouring countries.

### **Poor Infrastructure**

In LEDCs, the infrastructure is very poor and thus it becomes a large problem for urgent situation responses. The people in the urban areas will experience better response but the people in the rural areas are not often rescued or reached by the emergency personnel.

### **Dislocation and loss of social unity**

Most of the people who survive the natural disaster lose their residences and as a result they have no choice but to stay in the unprepared shelters where the environment is neither healthy nor safe. Sometimes the displaced survivors have to stay in these over-populated shelters for longer than a year as they have no other place to go. As time progress, the survivors are split away from their family and friends. This will cut away the physical and mental support, which could cause distress.

### **Psychosomatic damage**

The survivors can be distressed by the consequences of a natural disaster. This is because the majority of them lost some of the people they loved due to the natural disaster. Also they could have received wounds, which can alter their lives forever. This is in addition to the fact that most of the survivors have lost their properties and jobs.

### **Major Countries involved**



## **Haiti**

A severe earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010. The effect of the earthquakes has not faded away yet.

## **Japan**

Japan has always suffered from tsunamis and earthquakes. Their biggest problem is the consequences of the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima which has resulted from the latest earthquake in Japan. Most of the times Japan's disaster reduction technologies work effectively however, there have been cases where the size of the disaster that struck was too big and Japan had to suffer from the result.

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan suffers from many natural disasters. Most recently (July 2010) severe floods occurred in Pakistan and the emergency response arrived late and so unfortunately many Pakistanis were in a difficult position to help.

## **USA (United States of America)**

Due to its location in the world, USA has to suffer from natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, cedar fire, and blizzards. USA is a big donor for the emergency responses through financial aid.

## **Organisations involved:**

## **UNOPS**

In order to reduce damage caused by future natural disasters, UNOPS also works with a number of countries to develop their capacity for disaster risk reduction and management. UNOPS is incorporating disaster risk reduction into all aspects of its infrastructure work. A focus on high-quality results is built into the culture of UNOPS, with the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability core to their work. UNOPS emphasizes the use of labor-intensive projects to help local people back into work, as securing livelihoods goes a long way towards empowering families, promoting stability and boosting economic recovery. They also work closely with national governments to provide project management, infrastructure or procurement support to fill capacity gaps and develop existing capacities, often embedding staff in key ministries. Alongside their post-disaster operations, they help their partner countries prepare for



recurring natural hazards, for example providing project management services to support seismic monitoring in Argentina, for the Government. In 2011, UNOPS managed the direct training of more than 170,000 people to help build the resilience of communities to natural hazards. In Afghanistan, for example, men and women in villages were taught how to limit flooding by building retaining walls in projects that supported gender empowerment and gave villagers a marketable skill, on behalf of the governments of Italy and Japan. UNOPS also strengthens disaster mitigation, for example by providing administrative support to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. UNOPS provides infrastructure services to improve access to areas affected by disaster, by building roads and clearing away wreckage. For example, in Haiti, on behalf of United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Human Settlements Program, the International Labor Organization and the Haiti Reconstruction Fund, almost 100,000 cubic meters of rubble were cleared by UNOPS as part of a larger debris management and recycling project.

## **UNDP**

UNDP implemented a number of early recovery activities factoring disaster risk reduction into sector specific interventions targeting the most vulnerable. As a part of the early recovery effort, safer building practices were advocated for in the housing sector. The hardest hit by natural disasters are the loss of income and employment for a significant portion of the society; the most severely affected being the rural poor and female household heads. UNDP specifically targets unemployed and impoverished people and includes them in livelihood initiatives implemented in both traditional and non-traditional employment sectors. Using its early recovery programme as an entry point, UNDP initiated a project in 750 villages covering a population of 375,000 people which aims to:

- Establish village disaster preparedness committees
- Facilitate development of community-based disaster preparedness plans and conduct periodic mock drills to test village plans
- Establish communication and response protocols with specialized training on first aid, search and rescue, and warning dissemination
- Transfer disaster resistant construction technology through the training of masons and construction of multi-purpose demonstration units
- Integrate risk reduction in key recovery sectors with gender as a cross cutting issue

One of the key pillars of the early recovery programme was to help restore depleted Government capacity in the affected areas, in order for the Government to resume the delivery of services to affected populations. This would not only facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to communities but help restore public confidence and speed up the transition to longer term recovery. Pre-fabricated office structures, equipped with furniture and IT equipment were set up Pakistan during the earthquake in October 2005. UNDP though level earthquake recovery in selected villages, which includes: livelihoods support, legal aid (for issues its early recovery programme is implementing an integrated approach to community related to land rights, adoption, entitlements and inheritance), debris removal, repair to minor infrastructure and the introduction of disaster risk reduction activities. UNDP advocated for an early recovery approach that provided the impetus for a broader disaster risk reduction agenda that will result in increased Government and community capacity to cope with future disasters. This includes the promotion of hazard resistant construction techniques and the development of community based preparedness and response team.

## **UN Habitat**

UN-HABITAT Disaster Management program helps governments and local authorities rebuild in countries recovering from war or natural disasters. In the first half of the year 2003, for example, the cost accrued by natural disasters was 24 billion dollars with an estimated 60 million civilians affect in some 30 conflicts. The agency is working, or has worked in Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Burundi, the Caribbean, Central Asia, China, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Timor Leste and Vietnam, and Indian Ocean rim countries hit a giant tsunami wave. The main results achieved include the following:

- Community-level disaster preparedness and response capacity strengthened through the establishment, training and equipping of 76 community civil protection committees.
- Communal civil protection committees, covering approximately 1.3 million people. These committees played a crucial role in receiving and assisting displaced people from the capital after the January 2010 earthquake, and have facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance from the international community.
- Institutional and technical entities supporting the national disaster risk management system strengthened and operational, including the capacity to manage disaster preparation and response activities better.
- Rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of prioritized small-scale public infrastructure in areas affected by natural disasters identified and completed.

- Local risk maps and emergency contingency plans prepared for 76 communities.
- Approximately 130 small disaster mitigation works successfully implemented.

### **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

The international Committee of the Red Cross systematizes and directs international disaster response. From the 1949 Geneva Conventions, it has an international authorization to provide humanitarian aid for people.

### **ICR (International Rescue Committee)**

The ICR is an important nongovernmental international aid and development organization. It is based in the USA and has functions in more than 40 countries. The chief purpose of the ICR is to supply emergency relief, resettlement services, and post-conflict development in order to contribute to the protection of human rights. Founded in 1933, the ICR is made up of humanitarian relief workers, healthcare providers, international development experts, and educators.

### **WFP (World Food Program)**

The WFP provides food to areas where it is needed. By doing this, the WFP improves the lives of victims of natural disasters, and civil conflict.

### **MSF (Medecins sans Frontieres)**

As an international humanitarian aid organization, the MSF supplies emergency medical assistance to the necessary people in more than 60 countries.

### **UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)**

The UNOCHA is an organization formed in December 1991 by the General Assembly. After several changes, the UNOCHA is now projected to be the UN central point on major disasters in addition to the organization of policy development, humanitarian response and encouragement.

### **UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination)**

The objective of UNDAC is to provide assistance to countries suffering from disasters. The workers in UNDAC are professionals funded by the UN Member

Organization, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA, and WHO.

### **GAR (Global Alert and Response System)**

The GAR is a system created by the World Health Organization (WHO). The GAR issue and respond to health emergencies caused by natural disasters and other humanitarian disasters. The WHO works as one with a system of organizations that are concerned with the confirmation, response, and identification to open health emergencies following the active concepts of the International Health Regulations from 2005.

### **Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

- Assistance in cases of natural disaster, 07 December 1965 (A/RES/2034) • Assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations, 14 December 1971 (A/RES/2816) • Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters and the other disaster situations, 17 December 1981 (A/RES/36/225) • Assistance to Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru to alleviate the effects of natural disasters, 20 December 1983 (A/RES/38/222)
- Long-term and effective solution of the problems caused by natural disasters in Bangladesh, 17 December 1985 (A/RES/40/231) • International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 11 December 1987 (A/RES/42/169) • Humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, 14 December 1990 (A/RES/45/100) • Early warning capacities of the United Nations system with regard to natural disaster, 20 December 1994 (A/RES/49/22B) • Assistance for the reconstruction of Madagascar following the natural disasters of 1994, 20 December 1995 (A/RES/50/58[I]) • International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters from relief to development, 28 January 2011 (A/RES/65/264)

### **Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

As one of the best way to re-establish an economically active area after a natural disaster would be by funding the area, the UN has already taken a lot of the necessary steps in order to re-establish an economically active area after a natural disaster. Strategies for post-natural disaster regions have been funded by organizations and the United Nations. One of the leading, certified global response systems for natural disaster is the GAR (Global Alert and Response system). This does not mean that other response systems do not exist. However, during the last century it has been clear that these response systems and guidelines can be further amended and new guidelines will possibly be funded. With the past natural disasters in mind, it could be said that the guidelines regarding the effectiveness and the efficiency of the response to natural disasters ought to be enhanced by improving the organization of agencies in addition to improvement of the supply of resources and equipment

## **Possible Solutions**

Natural disasters are caused not only by hazard events but also by the degree of exposure and vulnerability of society. Analysis of these causal factors has permitted identification of countries and areas within them where disaster-related mortality and economic losses are likely in the future. These high-risk areas are candidates for increased attention to, and investment in, disaster risk identification, reduction and transfer. Plans are underway to further identify disaster risk levels and factors on national and sub-national scales in high-risk countries to create evidence for improved risk management decision-making. Disaster risk management based on identification of disaster risks offers a preferable alternative to the current over-reliance on emergency management as a means of dealing with disasters. When a disaster occurs, the response can be divided into three phases: relief, recovery and reconstruction. Each phase is supported by assessment information that supports key decisions in each domain. In the relief phase, assessment data includes how many people were killed, injured or displaced, and their degree of access to basic requirements -- water, food, shelter and medical care. This information is used to estimate needs for relief supplies. Recovery involves the initial restoration of the functioning of the economy, government and society. Damage and data loss, combined with an analysis of political, livelihood and social systems, supports recovery planning. Data on the economic value of damages and losses is used as the basis for estimating the financial requirements for reconstruction and for reconstruction planning. More effort needs to be put in to integrate data collection, compilation and analysis in support of decision-making in each of these phases. Since many disaster prone countries are also poor, it helps if there is a strong commitment to risk management by the international community as well. Agencies that have key roles to play in this regard include the United Nations system, bi-lateral donors, international finance institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Risk and loss information can help raise the visibility of disaster risks among these constituencies and encourage them to work together to develop and act upon a common set of evidence-based risk management priorities. Increasingly the private sector is participating in the development of innovative ways to transfer as well as reduce risks.

Re-establishing an economically active area requires sufficient funding and humanitarian aid. However, looking at the past natural disasters, the funding and the humanitarian aid were not sufficient. In order to solve this issue, the cooperation between the governments of countries and UN organizations must be improved so that relief assistance will be more efficient. It is true that a lot is being done in order to prevent natural disasters from happening. However, it is not

possible to prevent nature. Destruction by natural disasters can be reduced by evacuation plans and warning. So in order to effectively re-establish the economically active areas, it is vital to improve the level of humanitarian aid and funding after a natural disaster strikes.

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The following links are some useful resources that may help in research

1. [http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-8/papers/Seck\\_Papa.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-8/papers/Seck_Papa.pdf)
2. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/63/plenary/E\\_ha\\_emergency.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/ga/63/plenary/E_ha_emergency.shtml)

## Topic 3: Global partnership to end child marriage

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Child marriage is truly a global problem that cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. It is mostly common with the female gender. Child brides can be found in any region across the world, from Middle East to Latin America, South Asia to Europe. One in three girls in the developing countries are married off under the age of 18. Globally, 400 billion women who are of the age of 20 - 49 were married off under the age of 18. UNICEF recorded 46% of girls marry before the age of 18 in South Asia, higher than any other region.

This issue has been highly important throughout the history of humanity. The matter of contention of child marriage has happened because of cultural traditions and beliefs especially in Africa, Oceania, South America and Asia. Children from the age of 10 or under are given into marriage, especially woman due to the fact that some men favor virgin women. This problem is mostly present due to economic reasons and it happens as well because of power. Child marriage brings many other consequences to people around the world, especially to the woman that have suffered the marriage or that have been forced to do it since their own childhood experience is denigrated and it is affected by this actions. Usually these types of weddings occur between a puerile woman and an elderly man due to the power that men have in each society where education is poorly brought up. Child marriage is found primarily in the Sub-Saharan African nations due to the under development of the countries in this region and due to the lack of education each society has there. However in any of these countries this action is considered legal under the legislation of each country. This problem occurs due to two main causes, which are money matters and illness, and war matters which are outlined later in this report.

The families implicated in it because of the main situation they live and that they want to solve cause this problem voluntarily and involuntarily. When it deals money matters,





families want to solve it as urgently as possible, risking everything to fulfill their aim to solve the problem. Many women lose their virginity due to this specific situation presented around the world in many cultures. In addition, a statement that needs to be made is that women with this problems are the victims of prostitution, and of child trafficking too when they are exposed to child marriage causing other social and family-related complications as well. Raping and ravaging is also present as one of the consequences and one of the main conflicts that this main one, cause. Another consequence that this problem cause is the end of the education process that a woman undergoes when she is a child because when getting married she assumes other types of responsibilities in their own house causing her to stop studying. As a result when assuming new responsibilities, woman start to have children because in many cases they don't have the right to decide whether they have or not causing many woman to die because of not being prepared to give birth to a children.

In order to solve this problem, diverse actions need to be taken not just internationally as establishing organisms or organizations affiliated to the United Nations, but new actions inside the countries in which this happen to end child marriage. Although due to the significance and the protection of child's rights and women rights, this practice has stopped in many cultures.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### Child Marriage

This term can have two different connotations in society but both of them refer when a child marries. The first definition that we can give to child marriage is when two children under the age of 18 marry between each other whilst the second definition given is when a child marries an adult, regarding its gender.

### Childhood

According to the UNICEF (United Nations Children's Funds), childhood refers to the time children have to be in school and play, also nurture and to live with their family and with their community. They live "free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation".

### Global Partnership

It refers as a global working group to cooperate and collaborate towards one specific cause and to solve a determined problem.

### Child exploitation and abuse

Exploitation is the selfish utilization and the overuse of a certain resource or thing. In this case child exploitation refers to the selfish utilization and the misuse of children for any matters, in this case sexual matters.

### Children trafficking

According to UNICEF Child Protection Information Sheet 2006 child trafficking is “A ‘child victim of trafficking’ is any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, either within or outside a country.”

### Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination refers to the act of prejudice against a person due to their sexual orientation or due to their gender.

## **HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM**

*Educating girls is one of the  
most powerful tools to prevent  
child marriage.*

*Girls Not Brides -  
The Global Partnership to  
End Child Marriage*

Before modern history, child marriage was a common practice found the world over. With the advent of 20th century, the practice began to be questioned, discouraged by a majority but not all governments, and child marriage practice has been decreasing across the world.

In ancient and medieval societies, girls would be

betrothed at or before puberty. In Greece, early wedding and early motherhood for girls was encouraged. Even boys were likely to marry before they reached the age of 18. With an average life expectancy for human beings between 40 to 45 years, around the world, early marriages and teenage motherhood was typical. In Ancient Rome girls were wed above the age of 12 and boys above 14. In the Middle Ages, under English civil laws that were derived from Roman laws, marriages before the age of 16 were common. In Imperial China, child marriage was the norm.

Friedman claims, "arranging and contracting the marriage of a young girl were the undisputed prerogatives of her father in ancient Israel." Most girls were married before the age of 15, often at the start of her puberty.

Most religions, over history, influenced the marriageable age. For example, Christian ecclesiastical law forbade marriage of a girl before the age of puberty. Hindu Vedic scriptures mandated the age of a girl's marriage to be adulthood which they defined as three years after the onset of puberty. Jewish scholars and rabbis intensely discourage

marriages before the onset of puberty. In contrast, Islam has permitted marriage of girls below the age of 10, because of Sharia law.

Some Islamic scholars propose that it is not the number that matters; marriageable age under religious laws of Islam is the age when the guardians of the girl feel she has reached sexual maturity. Such purpose of sexual maturity is a matter of subjective judgment, and there is a strong belief among most Muslims and scholars, based on Sharia, that marrying a girl less than 13 years old is an acceptable practice for Muslims.

## **CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

### **Dowry**

Dowry has been an ancient practice, but often an economic challenge for the bride's kins. The effort to save and preserve wealth for dowry was widespread, particularly in times of economic hardship, or persecution, or unpredictable capture of property and savings for discriminatory taxes such as Jizya. These difficulties pressed families to betroth their girl, irrespective of her age, as soon as they had the resources to pay the dowry. Thus, it is noted that European Jews would marry their girls early, once they had collected the expected sum of dowry.

### **Persecution, forced migration, and slavery**

Social upheavals such as wars, major military campaigns, forced religious conversion, taking natives as prisoners of war and converting them into slaves, arrest and forced migrations of people often made a suitable groom a rare commodity. Bride's families would seek out any available bachelors and marry them to their daughters, before events beyond their control moved the boy away. Persecution and displacement of Roma and Jewish people in Europe, colonial campaign to get slaves from various ethnic groups in West Africa across Atlantic for plantations, Islamic campaign to get Hindu slaves from India across Afghanistan's Hindu Kush as property and for work, were some of the historical events that increased the practice of child marriage before 19th century.

### **Fear and social pressures**

A sense of social insecurity has been a cause of child marriages across the world. For example, in Nepal, parents fear likely social stigma, if grown-up adult girls (past 18 years) stay at home. Other fear of crime such as rape, which not only would be traumatic but may lead to less acceptance of the girl if she becomes victim of a crime. In other cultures, the fear is that an unmarried girl may engage in illicit relationships, or elope causing a permanent social blemish to her siblings, or that the impoverished family may be unable to find bachelors for grown up girls in their economic social group. Such fears and social pressures have been proposed as causes that lead to child marriages. Extreme poverty, in many cases, makes teenage girls feel like an economic burden to a poor family; early marriage is a way to reduce that economic burden. In many parts of Africa, marrying girls early brings income through bride price - a payment that the groom makes to the bride's

family to gain the right to marry and consummate the marriage. Child marriages of girls in exchange for payment, becomes an incentive, a way out of desperate economic conditions, or simply a source of income to the parents.

### **Religion, civil law and child marriage**

The laws in many countries allow child marriages that are the marriage of girls and boys less than 18 years of age. The minimum legally approved age of marriage is less than 15 in some countries. Such laws are neither limited to developing countries, nor to state religion. In Europe, for example, the canon law at the Vatican sets 14 as the minimum age for the marriage of girls, as does Spain with a legal guardian's permission. In North America, girls can be legally married at age 15 in Mexico. Canada and many states in the USA permit child marriages, with court's permission.

Lower legally allowed marriage age does not necessarily cause high rates of child marriages. However, there is a causative correlation between restrictions placed by laws and the average age of first marriage. In the United States, per 1960 Census data, 3.5% of girls married before the age of 16, while an additional 11.9% married between 16 and 18. States with lower marriage age limits saw higher percentages of child marriages. This correlation between higher age of marriage in civil law and observed frequency of child marriages breaks down in countries with Islam as the state religion. In Islamic nations, many countries do not allow child marriage of girls under their civil code of laws. But, the state recognized Sharia religious laws and courts in all these nations have the power to override the civil code, and often do. UNICEF reports that the top five nations in the world - Niger (75%), Chad (72%), Mali (71%), Bangladesh (64%), Guinea (63%) - with highest observed child marriage rates are all Islamic majority countries.

### **Politics and financial relationships**

Child marriages may depend upon socio-economic status. The aristocracy in some cultures, as in the European feudal era tended to use child marriage as a method to secure political ties. Families were able to cement political and/or financial ties by having their children marry. The betrothal is considered a binding contract upon the families and the children. The breaking of a betrothal can have serious consequences both for the families and for the betrothed individuals themselves.

## **Child marriage by region**

### **Africa**

According to UNICEF, Africa has the highest incidence rates of child marriage, with over 70% of girls marrying under the age of 18, in three nations. However, one must note that this UNICEF report is based on data that is derived from a small sample survey between 1995 and 2004, and the current rate is unknown given lack of infrastructure and in some cases, regional violence.

African countries have enacted marriageable age laws to limit marriage to a minimum age of 16 to 18, depending on jurisdiction. In some cases, such as Ethiopia, Chad and Niger, the legal marriage age is 15, but local customs and religious courts have the power

to allow marriages below 12 years of age. Child marriages of girls in West Africa and Northeast Africa are widespread. Additionally, poverty, religion, tradition, and conflict make the rate of child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa very high in some regions.

In many tribal systems a man pays a bride price to the girl's family in order to marry her (comparable to the customs of dowry and dower.) In many parts of Africa, this payment, in cash, cattle, or other valuables, decreases as a girl gets older. Even before a girl reaches puberty, it is common for a married girl to leave her parents to be with her husband. Many marriages are related to poverty, with parents needing the bride price of a daughter to feed, clothe, educate, and house the rest of the family. Meanwhile, a male child in these countries is more likely to gain a full education, gain employment and pursue a working life, thus tending to marry later. In Mali, the female:male ratio of marriage before age 18 is 72:1; in Kenya, 21:1.

The various reports indicate that in many Sub-Saharan countries, there is a high incidence of marriage among girls younger than 15. Many governments have tended to overlook the particular problems resulting from child marriage, including obstetric fistulae, premature births, stillbirth, sexually transmitted diseases (including cervical cancer), and malaria.

In parts of Ethiopia and Nigeria numerous girls are married before the age of 15, some as young as the age of 7. In parts of Mali 39% of girls are married before the age of 15. In Niger and Chad, over 70% of girls are married before the age of 18.

In South Africa the law provides for respecting the marriage practices of traditional marriages, whereby a person might be married as young as 12 for females and 14 for males. Early marriage is cited as "a barrier to continuing education for girls (and boys)". This includes *absuma* (arranged marriages set up between cousins at birth), bride kidnapping and elopement decided on by the children.

## **Asia:**

### **Sub continental**

According to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children-2009" report, 47% of India's women aged 20–24 were married before the legal age of 18, with 56% marrying before age 18 in rural areas. The report also showed that 40% of the world's child marriages occur in India. However, as with Africa, one must note that this UNICEF report is based on data that is derived from a small sample survey in 1999. The latest available UNICEF report for India uses 2004-2005 household survey data, on a small sample, and other scholars [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child\\_marriage\\_-\\_cite\\_note-39](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_marriage_-_cite_note-39) report lower incidence rates for India. According to Raj et al., the 2005 small sample household survey data suggests 22% of girls were married between the ages of 16-18, 20% of girls in India were married between 13-16 years, and 2.6% were married before age 13 years. According to 2011 nationwide census of India, the average age of marriage for women in India is 21 years. Given India's large population, child marriage is a significant social issue.

The *Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929* was passed during the tenure of British rule on pre-partition India. It forbade the marriage of a male younger than twenty-one or a

female younger than eighteen. A marriage fell under the scope of this Act if either of the contracting parties met the established criterion of a child. South Asia has the highest prevalence of child marriage of any region in the world.

According to "National Plan of Action for Children 2005" (published by the Department of Women and Child Development of India), a goal has been set to eliminate child marriage completely by 2010. This plan has been unsuccessful, and it is still difficult to monitor every child due to the sheer population of India.

Similarly the tradition is still practiced in some rural areas of Pakistan through Vani and other customs like Wattasatta and Swara. The minimum legal age for marriage is 18 for men and 16 for girls.

Even though its legal to marry a female under 18 there have been illegal marriages between the struggling classes of Bangladesh. According to statistics from 2005 45% of women then between 25 and 29 were married by the age of 15 in Bangladesh. According to the "State of the World's Children-2009" report, 63% of all women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is making progress in increasing women's education and employment opportunities. This, combined with specific education about child marriage and cooperation with religious leaders, is hoped to decrease child marriage.

## **Middle East**

Roughly half of Yemeni girls are married before 18, some by the age eight, even though Yemeni law set the minimum age for marriage at 15; but tribal customs have often flouted the law. According to HRW, in 1999 the minimum marriage age of fifteen for women was abolished; the onset of puberty, interpreted by conservatives to be at the age of nine, was set as a requirement for consummation of marriage. In practice "Yemeni law allows girls of any age to wed, but it forbids sex with them until the indefinite time they're 'suitable for sexual intercourse'" As with Africa, the marriage incidence data for Yemen in HRW report is from surveys between 1990 and 2000. Current data is difficult to obtain, given regional violence.

In April 2008 Nujood Ali, a 10-year-old girl, successfully obtained a divorce after being raped under these conditions. Her case prompted calls to raise the legal age for marriage to 18. Later in 2008, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood proposed to define the minimum age for marriage at 18 years. The law was passed in April 2009, with the age voted for as 17. But the law was dropped the following day following maneuvers by opposing parliamentarians. Negotiations to pass the legislation continue. Meanwhile, Yemenis inspired by Nujood's efforts continue to push for change, with Nujood involved in at least one rally.

The widespread prevalence of child marriage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been documented by human rights groups. Saudi clerics have justified the marriage of girls as young as 9, with sanction from the judiciary. There are no current laws in place defining a minimum age of consent in Saudi Arabia, though drafts for possible laws have been created since 2011.



## **Southeast Asia:**

### **Oceania**

About 22% of Indonesian girls experience child marriage every year, and 12% get married before the age of 15, according to 2012 United Nations Population Fund report. There are many reports of Muslim clerics taking multiple underage wives, some less than 12 years old. Indonesian prosecutors have attempted to stop this practice by demanding prison terms for such clerics, however local courts have issued soft sentences.

In Indonesia the 1947 Law on Marriage stipulates that a woman must be at least 16 years old and a man must be at least 19 years old to marry. Among the Atjeh of Sumatra girls formerly married before puberty. The husbands, though usually older, were still unfit for sexual union. Among the islanders of Fiji, also, marriage took place before puberty.

The Marquesas Islands have been noted for their sexual culture. Many sexual activities seen as taboo in Western cultures are viewed appropriate by the native culture. One of these differences is that children are introduced and educated to sex at a very young age. Contact with Western societies has changed many of these customs, so research into their pre-Western social history has to be done by reading antique writings. Children slept in the same room as their parents and were able to witness their parents while they had sex. Intercourse simulation became real penetration as soon as boys were physically able. Adults found simulation of sex by children to be funny. As children approached 11 attitudes shifted toward girls. When a child reaches adulthood, they are educated on sexual techniques by a much older adult.

## **North America:**

### **Canada**

In some provinces of Canada, people under 16 can get married if they are pregnant and have the court's approval.

### **United States**

Child marriage, as defined by UNICEF, is observed in the United States. The UNICEF definition of child marriage includes couples who are formally married, or who live together as sexually active couple in an informal civil union, with at least one member - usually the girl - being less than 18 years old. The latter practice is more common in the United States, and it is officially called cohabitation. According to a 2010 report by National Center for Health Statistics, an agency of the Government of United States, 2.1% of all girls in the 15-17 age group were in a child marriage. In the age group of 15-19, 7.6% of all girls in the United States were formally married or in an informal civil union. The child marriage rates were higher for certain ethnic groups and states. In Hispanic groups, for example, 6.6% of all girls in 15-17 age group were formally married or in an informal civil union, and 13% of 15-19 age group were. Over 350,000 babies are born to teenage mothers every year, in the United States, and over 50,000 of these are

second babies to teen mothers. In 1991, underage teen pregnancies were significantly higher.

Laws regarding child marriage vary in the different states of the United States. Generally, children 16 and over may marry with parental consent, with the age of 18 being the minimum in all but two states to marry without parental consent. Those under 16 generally require a court order in addition to parental consent.

Until 2008 the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints practiced child marriage through the concept of 'spiritual (religious only) marriages,' as soon as girls are ready to bear children, as part of its polygamy practice and laws have raised the age of legal marriage in response to criticism of the practice. In 2008 the Church changed its policy in the United States to no longer marry individuals younger than the local legal age. In 2007 church leader Warren Jeffs was convicted of being an accomplice to statutory rape of a minor due to arranging a marriage between a 14-year-old girl and a 19-year-old man. In March 2008 the state of Texas believed that children at the Yearning For Zion Ranch were being married to adults and were being abused. The state of Texas removed all 468 children from the ranch and placed them into temporary state custody. After the Austin's 3rd Court of Appeals and the Texas Supreme Court ruled that Texas acted improperly in removing them from the YFZ Ranch, the children were returned to their parents or relatives.

## **Europe:**

### **Denmark**

In Denmark people at 15 can get married if have the municipality's approval, and the municipality's approval requires that they have their own homes.

### **United Kingdom**

The marriageable age in Scotland is 16, no parental consent is required.

As with United States, cohabitation is observed in the United Kingdom. According to a 2005 study, 4.1% of all girls in 15-19 age group in the UK were cohabiting (living in a civil union), while 8.9% of all girls in that age group admitted to have been in a civil union arrangement (child marriage per UNICEF definition), before the age of 18. Over 4% of all underage girls in the UK were teenage mothers.

## **Major countries and organisations involved**

### **UNICEF**

The UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) is the major organization involved and that tries to solve this problem. The UNICEF has different projects to work with many communities around the world to solve this big issue in the world. The UNICEF destines a percentage of money to try to resolve this problem in the world. Since UNICEF deals with



children issues, it has done some reports regarding the children status or situation around the world and it has included in these reports, mentioned later in this report, some information about the situation that children live concerning child marriage.

### **UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)**

This United Nations high commissioner office is involved with refugees totally but in some of its camps there are women that were victims of child marriage or that were almost married under the age of 18. For example in Chad in one of these camps there are some children that are involved totally in this practice but thanks to this camps established by the UNHCR this issue has not happened because in this camps this is not allowed.

### **Chad**

According to the UNICEF report “The State of the World’s Children 2011 Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity”, Chad is the country in the world that the most number of child marriages has. Almost 86 percent of children in Chad are married under the age of 20 and together with Niger are the two countries that most number of women have married under the age of 15. In Chad the numbers are incredible and this problem is still present now a days.

### **Mali**

Mali has the same numbers as Chad when it refers to child marriage. According to “The State of the World’s Children 2011 Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity”, in Mali almost 86 percent of children are married under the age of 20 as well, but it has almost a 25 percent of women in Mali are married under the age of 15. This special situation is present here because of the same reasons as in other countries in which this issue is present in a big way.

### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is country outside of Africa that is ranked among the top of the list presented by the report “The State of the World’s Children 2011 Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity”. This country has high numbers of child marriage and because of this it is ranked in the fourth place of this list behind Chad, Mali and Niger. Around 79 percent of the women in this country have married under the age of 19 and around 23 percent of women were married under the age of 15. CR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

### **Girls not brides**

Girls not brides is a global partnership of more than 250 non-governmental organisations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfill their potential.

## International Women's health Coalition care

### Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, 10 July 2012 (A/HRC/21/41)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 7 November 2008, (CEDAW/C/ECU/CO/7)
- Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2 September 1990
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 23 March 1976
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 3 January 1976, (A/6316)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child

Prostitution and child pornography, 25 May 2000 (A/RES/54/263A)

### Previous attempts to solve the problem

On 19 December, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare 11 October as the International Day of the Girl Child. For its first observance, this year's Day will focus on **child marriage**, which is a fundamental human rights violation and impacts all aspects of a girl's life.

Child marriage compromises girls' development and often results in early pregnancy and social isolation. The right to 'free and full' consent to a marriage is recognized in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** - with the recognition that consent cannot be 'free and full' when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner.

The practice of child marriage further perpetuates the unrelenting cycle of gender inequality and often increases their risk of violence. Girls who are married young are at risk of rape and physical violence as they lack power in relation to their husbands and in-laws.

UN Women is working closely with UN partners, member states and stakeholders to ensure that girls enjoy their right to a life free of violence.

**To address violence against girls and young women UN Women is adopting a three-tiered approach:**

- We are advocating that girls at risk or who have already experienced violence are supported, ensuring their access to protection, justice and support services, including shelters, health care, counseling services and hotline services, tailored to their specific needs.
- We are calling for an intensification of efforts to prevent violence and to ensure that prevention strategies must also ensure they engage all segments of society, including men and boys, to challenge gender stereotypes and discrimination and promote respectful relationships.
- We are supporting community initiatives that work with girls and boys and that seek to foster youth leadership aimed at ending violence against women and girls and that support young women and men as champions for change.

**UN Women is also involved in leading global initiatives that address violence against girls:**

- The Together for Girls initiative is a unique public-private partnership through which UN Women works together with UNICEF and UNFPA, to bring attention to the issue of sexual violence against children, especially girls, in support of country driven efforts for change. Efforts to support data collection to document the magnitude and impact of sexual violence are already paying off with national action plans being developed to prevent and respond to sexual violence against girls and boys in countries where national surveys have been completed.
- The UN Adolescent Girls Task Force is a partnership with UNFPA and UNICEF to step up action to advance the rights of adolescent girls in developing countries. Programmers are already underway in Guatemala, Liberia, Ethiopia and Malawi and focuses on five programming areas: education; with a focus on transition and completion of post-primary; health with emphasis on sexual and reproductive health; prevention and response to violence; leadership and participation and data collection and analysis.
- The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is designing a non-formal education curriculum on violence against girls and young women; its development and delivery are supported by UN Women. The curriculum will provide girls and young women with tools and expertise to understand the root causes of violence in their communities and educate and involve their peers and communities to prevent such violence.

As part of its global efforts, the **UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women**, managed by UN Women, is supporting initiatives in Cambodia, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Liberia, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Tajikistan to tackle this and other pervasive forms of violence against women and girls where it matters the most, at community and local level.

In **Cambodia**, UN Trust Fund grantee, Youth Star facilitating access to education for all at-risk girls and boys in the target communities, and creates space for young people in rural communities to have meaningful peer discussions on values, sexual rights, and intimate relationships and facilitates wider community conversations about domestic violence.

In **Tajikistan**, UN Trust Fund grantee in Tajikistan, Child Rights Center (CRC), is targeting the law to improve institutional response to child marriage. CRC has established a referral network among local law enforcement and child protection authorities in ten districts and also influenced national policy by proposing amendments to the Family Code that increased the minimum statutory age of marriage to 18 and changes to education policy that increased girls' compulsory education from nine to ten years.

In **Ethiopia**, Action Aid Ethiopia, UN Trust Fund grantee, trains religious and traditional leaders to use their position of authority to take a stand against violence and protect the rights of girls. Community watch groups established in 35 villages report incidents of female genital mutilation or cutting or child marriage to community leaders, then assist in bringing cases to justice.

In **Cameroon**, the UNTF raises awareness in schools to decrease number of cases of forced marriages and early pregnancies among girls attending schools. In Liberia, the UN Trust Fund is supporting Action Aid to empower women violence survivors in South-Eastern Liberia—the area with the highest HIV rates—through implementation of the recently enacted laws on rape and inheritance, and promoting their economic empowerment for them and their families.

## **Proposed solutions**

### 1 - Educating and empowering girls:

Education is one of the most powerful tools to delay the age at which girls marry as school attendance helps shift norms around child marriage.

Improving girls' access to quality schooling will increase girls' chances of gaining a secondary education and facilitate to delay marriage. When a girl in the developing world receives seven or more years of education, she marries on average four years later.

Empowering girls, by offering them opportunities to gain skills and education, providing support networks and creating 'safe spaces' where girls can gather and meet outside the home, can help girls to affirm their right to choose when they marry.

Several communities are working to empower girls by establishing girls' groups that provide a safe space for girls to meet and share experiences, reducing their sense of isolation and exposure.

### 2- Supporting young people to become activists for change:

Communities have set up youth groups, bringing together adolescent girls and boys to share their experiences and to encourage girls and boys to become advocates for change. Some of our members encourage dialogue between youth groups and local community leaders or government officials on the issues that affect young people, including child marriage.

### 3- Mobilizing and educating communities:

Laws alone will not resolve child marriage. In many instances legislation is not obligatory as many local establishments are unwilling to be seen as interfering in the confidential relationships of families. Many are simply unaware of the scale of child marriage and the harmful impact it can have.

Several communities are working in a number of ways to raise awareness among communities of the impact of child marriage such as street theatre, bicycle rallies, and encouraging community dialogue, which often results in a collective community pledge to end child marriage.

#### 4- Enacting and enforcing laws that set a legal minimum age for marriage:

While most countries legislate for a minimum legal age for marriage, this is often not enforced. Some countries continue to have a legal age for marriage lower than in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legal age for marriage is also higher for men than women in many countries.

#### 5- Introducing incentives:

Introducing economic incentives can help to encourage families to consider alternatives to child marriage. Incentives include microfinance schemes to help girls support themselves and their families, and providing loans, subsidies and conditional cash transfers to parents of girls at risk of becoming child brides.

#### 6- Raising awareness in the media:

Mass media campaigns are present to raise awareness about general rights and laws along with the impact of child marriage. Communities plan to both raise awareness among the general public and to pressure governments and community leaders to take action to end the practice.

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