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International
Women's Day 2015



RE-THINKING

WOMEN'S

EMPOWERMENT AND

GENDER EQUALITY

IN 2015

AND BEYOND

UNESCO background report
on the occasion of the International
Women's Day
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INTRODUCTION

In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) was adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, and subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1996. The Beijing Platform for Action, to which 189 countries committed themselves, constitutes a global framework for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The BPfA calls upon governments, the international community and civil society, encompassing non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to empower women and girls by taking action in 12 critical areas: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, media, environment and the girl child.

The 20-year review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+20) takes place at a strategic moment: the global community is intensifying efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and work on shaping a post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals (SDGs) is intensifying. The interlinked processes of the Beijing+20 review and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda provide a critical opportunity to position gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of the global agenda, both as an important end in itself and as an essential means for the achievement of sustainable development in all its dimensions.

At this critical moment, UNESCO celebrates International Women's Day 2015 with the theme of "*Re-Thinking Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in 2015 and beyond*". This background paper provides a context for UNESCO's conference by shedding light on a review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action within UNESCO's domains of competence; Women and Education, Media and Environment. In addition, it introduces and envisages important new areas of work for UNESCO for Post-2015: Violence against Women and Women and Armed Conflict.

Part I - UNESCO and Beijing +20

In the first part of this paper we will review the progress achieved in the areas of the Beijing Platform that are directly related to UNESCO's domains of competence: education, media and communication, and the environment.

Critical Area 2: Education and Training of Women

For the first time, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), made specific reference to ensuring the right of women and girls to education, setting a target to guarantee that by the year 2000 governments "provide universal access to basic education and ensure completion of primary education by at least 80% of primary school-age children; close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005; provide universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015".

The Dakar Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action, Goal 5 and the 3rd United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), both adopted in 2000, also emphasized the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education.

UNESCO as the United Nations specialized agency in education has long underlined the critical importance of gender equality in formal and non-formal education as a fundamental right. UNESCO's commitment to gender equality in education is inherent in its mandate to promote education as a human right.

Against this background, UNESCO endeavors to implement the six strategic objectives articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action, which are relevant to education and training, namely:

Strategic objective B.1. Ensure equal access to education.

Strategic objective B.2. Eradicate illiteracy among women.

Strategic objective B.3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.

Strategic objective B.4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training.

Strategic objective B.5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.

Strategic objective B.6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.

Progress made

Many countries around the world have made significant investments and progress in their education system in the recent years, as a result of the BdfA as well as other international commitments to education policy targets for girls' and women's education.

As a result, there has been progress towards internationally agreed targets:

- In 2012, over two-thirds of all countries worldwide have now reached parity between girls and boys in primary school enrolment.¹
- The gross enrolment rate for girls at lower secondary level increased from 69% to 81% between 1999 and 2010, and from 43% and 58% at the upper secondary level in the same period.²
- Overall, the global adult literacy rate increased from 76% in the 1990 census decade (1985-1994) to 84% in the current census decade (2005-2010).³ Gender parity in adult literacy has improved in all but 1 of the 83 countries with data.⁴

Remaining challenges⁵

- Only 60% of countries had achieved parity in primary education in 2011; only 38% of countries had achieved parity in secondary education. Among low income countries, just 20% had achieved gender parity at the primary level, 10% at the lower secondary level and 8% at the upper secondary level.
- Although there has been an increase in the school enrolment rate in primary education in developing regions, there were still 31 million girls out of school in 2011, 55% of whom are expected never to enroll.
- Reflecting years of poor education quality and unmet learning needs, 493 million women are illiterate, accounting for almost two-thirds of the world's 774 million illiterate adults. Also, over 100 million young women living in low and lower middle income countries are unable to read a single sentence, demonstrating how, despite recent advances in girls' education, a generation of young women has been left behind.
- The interaction between gender and poverty is a potent source of exclusion. The poorest girls are left behind in education progress. On average, if recent trends continue, universal primary completion in sub-Saharan Africa will only be achieved in 2069 for all poorest boys and in 2086 for all poorest girls. Women teachers are particularly lacking in countries with wide gender disparity in enrolment. Among the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, female teachers make up less than 40% of the total teachers in 43% of countries at the primary level, in 72% of countries at the lower secondary level and in all countries at the upper secondary level.⁶

¹ UNESCO, *The UNESCO World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education*, 2012.

² UNESCO, *Institute for Statistics database*, May 2012 release

³ UNESCO, "Youth and Skills—Putting education to work", *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, 2012.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report –Gender Summary*, 2014.

⁶ Ibid.

UNESCO's work on women and girls' education

Since the Beijing Conference, UNESCO has introduced an education strategy which aims at helping Member States renew their education systems in ways that can make lifelong learning and equal access to education for all become a reality. This has been especially true for women and girls as gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of broader forms of gender inequality in society. UNESCO is thus committed to promoting gender equality in and through education systems to break the cycle.

UNESCO encourages mainstreaming of gender equality issues in education at all levels (from early childhood to higher education), in all settings (from formal, non-formal and informal), and in all intervention areas (from planning infrastructure to training teachers). This search for better ways to deliver quality education for all, especially women and girls, has been supported by UNESCO since before the Beijing Conference, and has been intensified since then.

Here are some examples of some of UNESCO's work in this area:

"Better Life, Better Future" (Global partnership for girls' and women's education)

UNESCO launched the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, known as "Better Life, Better Future", in 2011 guided by the conviction that educating girls and women can break the cycle of poverty and foster greater social justice. The Partnership seeks to increase learning opportunities for adolescent girls and women and to find solutions to some of the biggest challenges and obstacles to their education.

Particular emphasis is given to expanding and improving the quality of education for girls and women at the secondary level and in the area of literacy, to take successful initiatives to scale, to replicate good practices and to engage new actors.

"Better Life, Better Future"

- **Malala Fund for Girls' Education (Pakistan, USD 10 million)**

Pakistan, Malala Yousafzai's home country, joined forces with UNESCO to protect and promote girls' education in Pakistan and elsewhere. Aiming to build capacities in both formal and non-formal education, the programme provides gender-sensitive training for teachers and raises awareness in communities in order to improve access to safe and good quality learning environments for girls living in hard-to-reach areas.

- **UNESCO/HNA partnership (HNA Group, USD 5 million)**

Signed in February 2014, this five-year framework agreement (2014-2018) funds girls' and women's education in Africa and South Asia. The aim is to expand access to and the quality of education, especially for adolescent girls who are the hardest to reach, ensuring that they complete all educational levels and that learning environments are free from school-related gender-based violence.

- **Girls' and women's education using ICTs in Senegal and Nigeria (Procter & Gamble, USD 3.15 million)**

Launched in 2012, the project is working to reach 40,000 girls and women, aged 15-55 years, with basic literacy skills for a period of 2 years. During the first phase of the project, some 200 classes were opened in seven regions in Senegal with more than 4,000 girls and women enrolled, 2,300 girls and women followed distance courses through training and use of ICTs, while another 1,000 girls received additional academic support to help them stay in school. The project will soon be launched in Nigeria.

Mobile Learning Programme

UNESCO's mobile learning programme looks directly at how mobile technology—whether in the form of basic handsets or the newest tablet computers—can help nudge the world toward greater gender equity, both in education and beyond it.

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing number of programmes that successfully utilize mobile devices to expand and improve educational opportunities available to women, especially in developing countries where gender inequities are most severe. Specifically, UNESCO is exploring how gender sensitive content and training, literacy support, and skills development can advance the education of women and girls.

UNESCO's 2015 Mobile Learning Week, which theme is "Leveraging Technology to Empower Women and Girls" provides a venue to learn about and discuss technology programmes, initiatives and content that are alleviating gender deficits in education.

Critical Area 10: Women and the Media

The key potential of media as a platform to promote gender equality and diversity in all spheres was highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. All stakeholders are called to join forces to combat "stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media".

Given that new communication technologies are increasingly pervasive in all areas of human endeavor, one of the challenges for UNESCO has been to employ all possible means to increase access to information so that women do not miss out on such resources. UNESCO works to ensure that the content of information is truly directed at supporting women and their full participation in their societies, as well as in the development processes. This is undertaken by strengthening local communication capacities, ensuring that the means are present for women to make their own contributions.

UNESCO's efforts thus respond to two strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action:

Strategic objective J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.

Strategic objective J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Progress made⁷

- In 1995, only 17% of the people in the news were women, now 24% of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news are female, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), a global survey taken every five years since 1995.

⁷ Who Makes the News (WMTN), *The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)*, 2010.

- Since 2000, the percentage of stories reported by women compared to those reported by men has increased in all major topics except 'science/health'.
- Women's representation in foreign news has increased and now reaches that of local news.

Remaining challenges⁸

- 76% - more than 3 out of 4 – of the people in the news are male.
- Only 6% of stories highlight issues of gender equality or inequality.
- As persons interviewed or heard in the news, women remain lodged in the 'ordinary' people categories (19% of spokespersons and 20% of experts), in contrast to men who continue to predominate in the 'expert' categories (81% of spokespersons and 80% experts).
- 46% of stories reinforce gender stereotypes, thus being almost eight times more prevalent than stories challenging such stereotypes (6%).
- In the Internet news domain, only 36% of the news stories in the sample were reported by women, compared to 64% of stories reported by men.

UNESCO's work in gender and media

"Women Make the News"

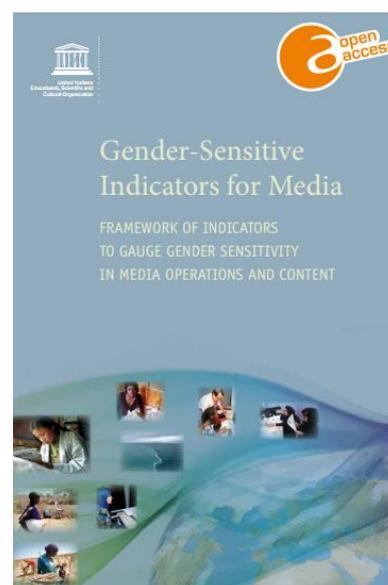
The Beijing Platform for Action proposes as one of its strategic objectives to increase women's access to and participation in decision making in and through the media and new communications technologies. The "Women Make the News" programme addresses precisely this need.

Launched annually on the occasion of International Women's Day, "Women Make the News" is a global initiative aimed at raising awareness on the issue of gender equality in and through the media, driving debate, and encouraging action-oriented solutions until global objectives are met. It is to this end that UNESCO has developed resources such as *the Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media* and *the Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines*.

Gender-Sensitive Media Indicators (GSIM)

UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector has engaged globally in a wide range of gender-specific initiatives and thus, the two perspectives, equality between women and men working in the media, and equality in news reporting on women and men, are of equal importance and are being strongly pursued.

It is against this backdrop that UNESCO, in cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists and many other partners, has elaborated this global framework of Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media. It is part of a suite of indicators being developed across all sectors of the organization to enable



⁸ Ibid.

effective assessment of diagnosis of areas within UNESCO's mandate of media development.

UNESCO is confident that, if fully implemented and properly harnessed, GSIM will have an impact in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

Empowering Local Radios with ICTs

UNESCO's project "Empowering Local Radios with ICTs" aims to bridge the gap between poor people - especially women and girls - and the public debate on issues of local public concern. The project encourages changes in radio programming, which translates to more programmes dedicated to women's issues being launched. Such community radio stations have been established so far in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. The radio programmes aired by these stations are based on the community's daily life and deal with women's concerns, providing advice on health, childcare, nutrition, improved agricultural methods, vocational training, literacy, job opportunities, etc. At the same time, these programmes help training women journalists and enhance women's creativity in general. In addition to the above-mentioned topics, these programmes also provide feature stories on discrimination against women and gender inequality, portrayal of women and sexist stereotyping, women's rights as human rights, etc.

"Giving voice to Nepali women through community Radio"⁹



The radio station was established in order to empower the women of Jumla, who suffer from a high level of illiteracy and low representation in the traditional media. The formal inauguration of the community radio station took place in November 2011.

Radio Nari Aawaj ("Women's voice") operates for three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening. It currently plays informative advertisements, Nepali songs and runs a programme called "Phoning", which discusses contemporary issues.

According to the vice-president of the NGO Hamro Aawaj, Hamro Sarokar ("Our voice, our interests") which created the radio station, Hari Devi Rokaya, gender issues, social and health

matters, local environmental problems, employment and women's rights are the focus of Radio Nari Aawaj. "We want to tackle issues that haven't been publicly discussed in Jumla until now," she says.

At present, the radio station has two technical staff, four volunteer operators, four reporters and one office assistant. It is supported by UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

"Supporting community radio stations is a long-term priority for UNESCO and we are happy to link this priority with the empowerment of women," says UNESCO's Representative to Nepal, Axel Plathe.

⁹ UNESCO website, "Giving voice to Nepali women through community radio", 2011:

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/singleview/news/giving_voice_to_nepali_women_through_community_radio/#.VN0kcZ2G9lw)

[states/singleview/news/giving_voice_to_nepali_women_through_community_radio/#.VN0kcZ2G9lw](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/singleview/news/giving_voice_to_nepali_women_through_community_radio/#.VN0kcZ2G9lw)

Critical Area 11: Women and the Environment

Since 1992 and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil, an international consensus has emerged as to the critical role of women in achieving sustainable development. This consensus, reinforced at subsequent world conferences including that of Beijing, has led to UNESCO's special attention directed to a new vision of Gender and Sustainable Development.

Vulnerable groups including girls, women, indigenous and coastal populations are the hardest hit by impacts of climate change, including the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and natural disasters. Girls and women, who often play an important role in managing risks in the household and community, are specifically expected to benefit from climate change education and education for disaster risk reduction.

Against this backdrop, UNESCO and its Division for Gender Equality are committed to mainstream gender equality considerations throughout all of UNESCO's initiatives of sustainable development issues such as climate change, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction.

The actions undertaken within this framework respond to:

Strategic objective K.1. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Strategic objective K.2. Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

Strategic objective K.3. Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

Progress made¹⁰

- Access to improved drinking water and sanitation is increasing at the world level. It is estimated that in 2008, 87% of the world's population used an improved drinking water source, an increase of 10 percentage points compared to 1990.

Remaining challenges¹¹

- Fewer women than men participate in high-level decision making related to the environment.
- More than half of rural households and about a quarter of urban households in sub-Saharan Africa lack easy access to sources of drinking water, and most of the burden of water collection falls on women.
- The majority of households in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern and South-Eastern Asia use solid fuels for cooking on open fires or traditional stoves with no chimney or hood, disproportionately affecting the health of women.

¹⁰ UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), *The World's Women 2010*, 2010.

¹¹ Ibid.

UNESCO's work in gender and the environment

Gender Sensitive Water Monitoring Assessment and Reporting

The UN World Water Assessment Programme (UN WWAP) has launched a groundbreaking project to develop a priority set of gender-sensitive indicators and a sex-disaggregated data methodology that will then be tested in the field by Member States in different regions, which answers to the calls of a systemic approach to use sex-disaggregated water indicators by UN agencies, NGOs, governments, activists and water experts. This project will yield the first-ever set of sex-disaggregated data on topics such as women's water empowerment and participation in water-decision making.

This UN WWAP UNESCO's ambitious project is needed now more than ever: given global commitments to gender equality, and in light of the importance of water as a resource and of the numerous threats to water resources, the world's policymakers and decision-makers need baseline sex-disaggregated data. This project will provide strong support for the monitoring of current MDGs and post-2015 development goals.

Initiative for Women Marine Scientists

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) at UNESCO is committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in ocean science and to ensure that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights and potential in that field. In particular, UNESCO-IOC endeavors to promote the equal presence of men and women in the marine sciences community. The project aims to promote activities that include women in science and to support women scientists as role models for young women. To this end, women who have dedicated their lives to marine sciences and to the protection of the marine environment have agreed to share their stories and to help us understand how UNESCO-IOC can work together with them in the promotion of gender equality.

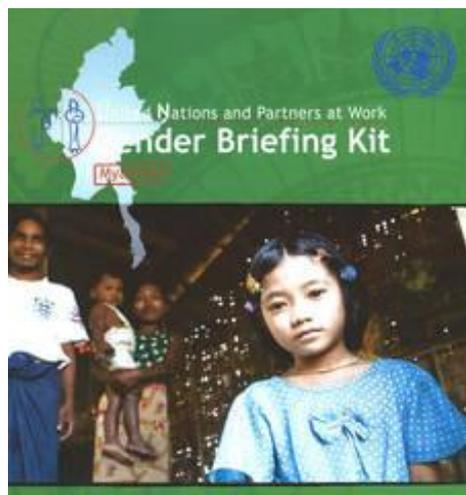
Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction

UNESCO's programme on disaster preparedness and prevention emphasizes the needs and roles of women in building a culture of disaster resilience.

As is well documented, vulnerability and poverty are closely aligned with gender equality, and women are therefore more frequently victims of natural disasters than men. However, mainstreaming gender considerations into disaster preparedness and education contributes significantly to reducing disaster impacts and improving sustainable development.

This programme ensures the mainstreaming of gender equality in disaster risk reduction efforts at different levels. It aims at increasing the number of women in designing policies and strategies to reduce disaster vulnerability through capacity building, mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into educational curricula and public awareness programmes, and advocacy for disaster preparedness and prevention. Efforts are expected to ensure more gender-balanced representations within the international and regional networks of experts on earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides as well as hydro-hazards. The programme also explores how gender perspective can be better integrated in policy guidelines for disaster risk reduction with an emphasis on education, and how policies can be promoted with emphasis to the key role of women as community leaders in disaster preparedness awareness programmes.

Field Studies - Myanmar¹²



UNESCO empowers women to reduce their vulnerability to disaster through its Myanmar Education Recovery Programme.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the programme provides disaster risk reduction training to education personnel. Most of the training participants are female teachers responsible for the care of children in the basic education sector.

A series of training modules has been developed. These include a set of nine posters on disaster awareness and an activity book for children and the community. Importantly, Module 5 contains information on the vulnerability of women in times of disaster, with suggestions on how to incorporate gender issues into disaster risk reduction.

¹² UNESCO website, "In the Field: Myanmar": <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/gender-and-science/gender-and-disaster-risk-reduction/>

Part II: Important areas for post-2015

The issues of violence against women and women and armed conflict were two important areas of concern of the Beijing Platform. Even if UNESCO has been increasingly involved in these topics, especially through the work of the Division for Gender Equality, they are relatively new areas for the Organization and need to be further developed. In the second part of this paper we will review the progress made since 1995, the challenges that remain and the work done by UNESCO in these areas.

Critical area 4: Violence against women

Violence against women is a complex phenomenon encompassing physical, sexual, verbal and psychological violence. Despite the progress made since 1995, this grave violation of human rights is still very widespread nowadays and remains a scourge for humanity.

Progress made

The Beijing Declaration emphasized the scope of violence against women around the world, giving a precise definition of the phenomena and identifying three strategic objectives along with corresponding measures to be taken by governments, NGOs as well as international organizations.

- Since then, a lot of progress has been made in terms of research in that field. In the 1990s and 2000s, violence against women was under-reported; the studies used mainly regional analysis, making data comparison difficult; the only quantitative data that governments could collect was reported crime administrative statistics on rape, sexual assault and other forms of violence. Now, research has developed and research tools have improved a lot: not only is the data studied on a more global scale, but new methodologies such as surveys and large-scale questionnaires, are used, which seems to encourage and facilitate testimonies of women victims of violence and therefore give more adequate and precise estimates.

Thanks to more systematic research and growing denunciation of all forms of violence against women at the international level, concrete improvements can be noted.

- Worldwide, higher proportions of violence against women are reported to the police.
- Since the early 1990s, the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has gained recognition as a health and human rights issue among the international community, African governments, women's organizations, and professional associations. Some of the data collected in the recent years show a timid but positive evolution of the issue, as they reflect lower levels of cutting among girls aged 15 to 19.¹³

¹³ Donna Clifton and Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Data and Trends*, Population Reference Bureau, 2010.

- Since 2010, 14 Latin American countries have implemented a penal recognition of femicides (the act of killing or injuring a woman because of her sex).

Remaining challenges and recommendations for a future free of violence against women

Despite these positive changes, violence against women still constitutes a very widespread human rights violation.

- According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2013 global review of available data¹⁴, 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.
- Worldwide, almost one third of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.
- A WHO 2014 report¹⁵ highlighting data from 133 countries, covering 6.1 billion people and representing 88% of the world's population found that one in five women reports having been sexually abused as a child.
- More than 65,000 women and girls are murdered annually and in 2012, 1 in 2 woman killed was killed by her partner or family.¹⁶

The diverse impacts of violence against women are both immediate and long-term. Indeed, women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners report higher rates of important health problems.

- They are 16% more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby.
- They are more than twice as likely to have an abortion, almost twice as likely to experience depression, and, in some regions, are 1.5 times more likely to contract HIV, compared to women who have not experienced partner violence.¹⁷

In addition, children who grow up in families where there is intimate partner violence can suffer from a range of disturbances and are more likely to experience or perpetrate violence later in their life.

Hence, the main objectives targeted in 1995 still remain unreached. It is clear that what need to be addressed are the fundamental gender inequalities that persist in all societies in order to create new models of masculinity and femininity and thus more equal relationships. We need to better understand the root causes of these unequal social structures and negative attitudes and to address them by developing and implementing effective prevention strategies. This requires a combination of research aiming at identifying those underlying causes, and the implementation of policy that took into account the results of such research.

Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.

¹⁴ WHO, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women*, 2013.

¹⁵ WHO, *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention*, 2014.

¹⁶ UN Women, "Violence against women", 2014: <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/infographic/evaw>

¹⁷ WHO, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women*, 2013.

Explanations for violence can be found at the individual or community level and can also be structural. However, global reports such as the WHO's 2013 report¹⁸ have made it possible to identify key risks and protective factors of violence. For instance, women and men with lower levels of education are at increased risk of respectively experiencing and perpetrating, intimate partner violence. Past history of violence as a perpetrator or victim is a strong risk factor for future intimate partner violence. Likewise, attitudes that are accepting of violence are strongly associated with both the perpetration and experiencing of intimate partner and sexual violence, and beliefs in family honour and sexual purity are associated with a lack of social pressure to persuade young men that coercive sex is wrong.

Despite the progress made, key data on violence are still lacking. Furthermore, a lack of harmonization of statistics makes it difficult to compare data and implement adequate policies.

Moreover, the development of evidence for programmes for the primary prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence is still very much in the early stages. But there is a clear trend towards extending outcome evaluations of existing programmes and the development of new programmes. Several organizations – such as UN Women, UN Trust Fund¹⁹, WHO, World Bank²⁰ – work together with Member States and researchers to build a body of knowledge of risk factors and effective solutions that can be addressed to violence against women.

Regional Focus - Latin America²¹



Increasing rates of violence against women have been reported across Latin America, particularly as a result of organized crime, human trafficking, drug trafficking and the proliferation of small arms. In response, the UN Human Rights Office and UN Women have developed a Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women in Latin America.

Currently, there are no strategies of demonstrated effectiveness for preventing sexual violence outside intimate partner or dating relationships. Only one strategy has been proven to be effective in preventing intimate partner violence, namely school-based programmes for adolescents to prevent violence within dating relationships – and this still needs to be assessed for use in resource-poor settings.

Although it is too early to consider them proven, evidence is emerging of the effectiveness of several other strategies for the prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence, particularly the use of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, *Within our reach: solutions to end violence against women*, 2014.

²⁰ Diana J. Arango; Matthew Morton; Floriza Gennari; Sveinung Kiplesund; Mary Ellsberg, *Interventions to prevent or reduce violence against women and girls: a systematic review of reviews*, World Bank Group, 2014.

²¹ OHCHR, *Ending impunity for femicide across Latin America*, 2014.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/EndingImpunityLAC.aspx>

microfinance with gender equality training and of programmes that promote communication and relationship skills within communities.²²

Evidence also includes the importance of reducing levels of childhood exposures to violence; reforming discriminatory family law; working with young boys to address early ages of sexual violence perpetration, as well as encouraging men to engage against violence (such as through the White Ribbon or the He for She campaigns); strengthening women’s economic and legal rights; and eliminating gender inequalities in access to formal wage employment and secondary education.

In conclusion, current statistical measurements of violence against women still provide a limited source of information, despite some improvements. Statistical definitions and classifications require more work and harmonization at the international level.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, as well as to take care of women who have experienced violence.

The *Global status report on violence prevention 2014* shows that many countries have begun to implement prevention programmes and victim services, and to develop the national action plans, policies and laws required to support violence prevention and response efforts. At the international level, high-level resolutions that commit Member States to tackling interpersonal violence within their countries and through the establishment of networks and partnerships have been adopted.

However, there is a clear need to scale up efforts across a range of sectors, both to prevent violence from happening in the first place and to provide necessary services for women experiencing violence. Indeed, it appears that only two-thirds of all countries have outlawed domestic violence²³. In addition, justice systems do little to prosecute those responsible for crimes against women and impunity reigns. Many survivors of rape are not provided with the legal, medical, social, and psychological care needed to recover, move toward places of healing, and receive justice. Medical services also need to be provided for those who have experienced violence. The health sector must play a greater role in responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women. WHO’s new clinical and policy guidelines on the health-sector response to violence against women emphasize the urgent need to integrate issues related to violence into clinical training. Comprehensive post-rape care services need to be made available and accessible at a much larger scale than is currently provided.²⁴

Regional Focus – Asia and the Pacific / Africa

■ **Asia and the Pacific**²⁵

“Legislation criminalizing all forms of violence against women and girls does not exist in every country in Asia and the Pacific and there are reported challenges to the full and effective implementation of the legislation. Plus, Member States reported barriers to the elimination of violence against women and girls ranging from a dearth of data and service provision to inhospitable judicial systems and discriminatory sociocultural norms.”

²² World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence*, World Health Organization, 2010.

²³ UN Women, “Violence against women”, 2014: <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/infographic/evaw>

²⁴ WHO, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women*, 2013.

²⁵ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *Beijing + 20 review*, 2014.

■ Africa²⁶

“The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), covers a wide range of women's rights. It reiterates the need to protect women from all forms of violence. Above all, the protocol was the first to explicitly forbid Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) which is suffered by 130 million girls worldwide, the vast majority of them living in Africa.

All 51 respondent countries indicated the existence of various forms of legislations targeting the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, with at least 15 countries having made strides in formulating legal frameworks aimed at eliminating Violence Against Women (VAW), since the 2009 Beijing+15 review.

Remarkable progress has been achieved in data collection, with twenty African countries having established a violence prevalence benchmark. However, it is noteworthy that very few countries have put in place measures to ensure the physical safety of survivors or would-be victims of VAW through the establishment of shelters/safe houses/rescue centers despite the high prevalence rates for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), sexual violence and FGM.”

UNESCO and the fight against violence against women

UNESCO's programmes aim to challenge the underlying gender inequalities that persist in society and are the key barriers to the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence. We believe that this is best done by building capacity for research, training and advocacy, to enable policy makers, civil society and women themselves to better implement strategies to combat violence. We also are committed to the idea that men and boys should be actively involved, as agents of societal change, in violence prevention plans.

Currently, 13 UNESCO programmes explicitly target violence against women. They focus primarily on prevention through education programmes.

Our activities include:

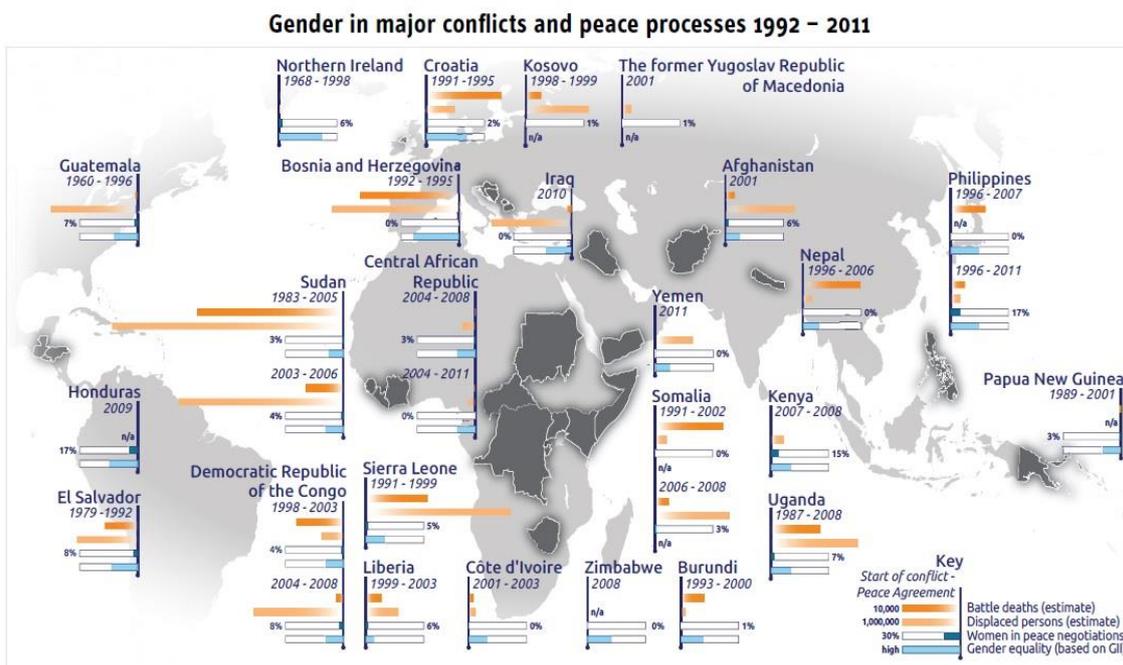
- A project launched in two universities in the Democratic Republic of Congo in late 2011 aiming at preventing sexual and gender-based violence through the involvement of students as “ambassadors” of violence prevention.
- The establishment of a network of researchers and policy makers and advocates in the area of violence against women, starting with a workshop on “Preventing Violence Against Women - Linking Research and Policy” held on 24 November 2011 to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This work is perpetrated year after year, with the 2014 Conference “Gender, Violence and the Rights of the Child” and the preparation of the UNESCO publication on the issue of reparations for women victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.
- In 2006, UNESCO established the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre Library (PWRDC Library), a unique research center in the Arab region, which focuses particularly on the causes of violence against women.

²⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Council – Economic Commission for Africa, *Twenty-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 2014.

- UNESCO also aims at preventing and eliminating school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) which occurs in or on the way to and from school. As teachers and learners can be both perpetrators and/or victims of GBV, awareness-raising and sensitization need to target the entire school population. UNESCO showed a particular engagement on this issue since 2012 when it published a first global review of policies and practice in SRGBV. UNESCO is providing global leadership, in collaboration with UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNGEI and IATT on Education to develop global guidance on SRGBV, to be published in 2015.

Critical area 5: Women and armed conflict

The issue of women and armed conflict constituted an important point of the Beijing Declaration. The said declaration pointed out the particular situation that women and children face in situation of conflicts, stating that “while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex”. But women were also already considered as crucial agents of peace, in a manner that “the equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security”.



Source: European Union Institute for Security Studies, *Gender in Conflict*, 2014

Progress made

The sea change in thinking from Beijing has resulted in a series of UN Resolutions and in a series of noticeable improvements.

- Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and three subsequent implementing resolutions have moved the role of women from conversations among women to the mainstream of Security Council deliberations.
- Women’s participation in maintaining the peace, as well as ending sexual violence (particularly rape as an instrument of war), is gaining strength and prominence.
- Evidence also shows an increased representation of women in decision-making in former conflict zones: Rwanda, with a female majority in its Parliament, now leads the world; Liberia has a woman as president; and Sri Lanka and South Africa best the United States in rankings of closing the gender gap.²⁷
- In 1995, women and children constituted some 80% of the world’s millions of refugees and other displaced persons, including internally displaced persons. Nowadays, the numbers are slightly lower, with women and children representing three quarters of the world’s refugees.²⁸

Remaining challenges and recommendations

Still, nowadays, armed conflicts have devastating consequences, and especially on women. Reconsidering the strategic objectives from the Beijing Declaration, one can see the major challenges that remain with regard to the issue of gender and armed conflict, and the measures that should be taken to make a change.

Protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation, and take their needs into account in recovery situations.

Women face many abuses when in situation of conflict. They are particularly subjected to abduction, forced labour, forced combat, physical assault, sexual abuse – including rape as a strategy of war – or enslavement, among other forms of exploitation and maltreatment. The abduction of Nigerian girls by jihadi militia Boko Haram, the systematic rape carried out during the Syrian civil war, and the scores of Yezidi girls married off against their will by Islamic State (IS) in Iraq are some recent appalling examples of violence affecting girls and women in conflict situations.

Adopting a gender-responsive conflict prevention and protection strategy is necessary to ensure that women are provided with the solutions they need, and to build long-lasting sustainable peace. A gender analysis of conflict situations makes it possible to address the particular violence that women face, and especially the systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a means of prosecuting war which has been observed in many conflicts, notably in the genocidal conflicts in the Balkans; in Rwanda and Burundi; in Darfur, Sudan; and in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. For instance, conservative estimates suggest that 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were targeted in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.²⁹

²⁷ Linda Tarr-Whelan, “The Impact of the Beijing Platform for Action: 1995 to 2010”, Human Rights Magazine Vol. 36 No. 3

²⁸ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *Gender in Conflict*, 2014.

²⁹ UN Women, “Fast facts: statistics on violence against women and girls”, 2014:

<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-fast-facts-statistics-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-.html>

Addressing the needs of women in times of armed conflict also means adopting an adequate budget use. Currently, only 20% of the aid provided by the European Union to the peace and security sector has a gender dimension.³⁰

Adapting the offer of protection is also necessary: nowadays, 97% of military peacekeepers and 90% of police personnel are men, and we only find 5% of women in UN peace keeping operations.³¹

In the context of early recovery programmes, only 22% of funds from cash contributions were directly disbursed to women in 2013³². The 2010 UN Secretary-General's report on women's participation in peacebuilding provides a comprehensive 7-Point Action Plan that commits the United Nations to allocating 15% of post-conflict funds to projects principally aimed at addressing women's specific needs, advancing gender equality or empowering women.³³

Finally, in post-conflict contexts, there is a particularly strong need for gender-sensitive legal and institutional reform. Ending the culture of impunity and providing transitional justice for women who suffered violence during conflicts is necessary.³⁴

Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.

Although women are proven agents of change, they are almost completely missing from peace negotiations.

- From 1992 to 2011, fewer than 4% of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10% of negotiators at peace tables were women.
- Out of 585 peace agreements from 1990 to 2010, only 92 contained references to women.³⁵

This exclusion from reconstruction limits access to opportunities to recover, to gain justice for human rights abuses, and to participate in shaping reformed laws and public institutions.

Regional Focus – Asia and the Pacific

"Some 13 Member States reported national action plans on the "women, peace and security" agenda, of which six could be obtained through public information channels. The participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding bodies has reportedly increased, although women continue to constitute a minority of representatives. Of the 40 respondent Member States 12, encompassing the five ESCAP subregions, explicitly stated that no women occupy conflict resolution and/or peacebuilding decision-making positions in their countries."³⁶

³⁰ EIGE, *Beijing Platform for Action: Review of key trends from 2007 to 2012*, 2013.

³¹ EIGE, *Beijing Platform for Action: Review of key trends from 2007 to 2012*, 2013.

³² UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Peace and Security", 2015: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

³³ UN Women, "Recovery and peace-building", 2015: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/recovery-and-peacebuilding>

³⁴ Ruth Rubio-Marín, *The Gender of Reparations: Unsettling sexual hierarchies while redressing human rights violations*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

³⁵ UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Peace and Security", 2015: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

³⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *Beijing + 20 review*, 2014.

Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.

The tragic human cost of current conflicts is starkly visible in the situation of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons. By the end of 2013, 51.2 million people had been forcibly displaced — the highest number in the post-World War II era. While in 2011 violent conflicts forced some 14,000 people worldwide from their homes every day, in 2013 this number escalated to 32,000. Three-quarters of the refugee and IDP (Internally Displaced Population) are women and children. Women and girls represent 49% of the entire refugee population.³⁷

The percentage of women asylum seekers in the European Union has significantly increased, from 28% in 2008 to 34% in 2012.³⁸

Refugees' survival usually depends on the availability of assistance which is provided by local communities and international organizations. In many societies, women and girls refugees face specific risks and are less likely than men and boys to have access to their rights, due to their gender roles and position in society. In situations of displacement, these risks – particularly discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence – can be exacerbated. Unaccompanied women and girls, women heads of households and pregnant, disabled or older women may face particular challenges.

UNESCO and gender and armed conflict

UNESCO has held conferences and supports meetings on the issue of women and armed conflict. For instance, in December 2014, UNESCO Ramallah Office organized a conference on "The Role of Women in Peace-building and Reconstruction".

Though UNESCO has existing strategies in response to post-conflict and post-disaster situations, it is time to review and assess UNESCO's promotion of women's rights and gender equality in post-conflict situations, exploring how women can be empowered to assume a stronger role in peace-building and policy-making in the critical reconstruction phases of their countries.³⁹

UNESCO Programme in the Great Lakes Region

Understanding the links between gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS in conflict and post-conflict situations in the Great Lakes Region and providing training for effective response to GBV and HIV (2012-2014)

This project, launched in 2012, aimed at providing policy-relevant research on links between gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV & AIDS in conflict and post-conflict situations in the Great Lakes Region in order to fill identified gaps in existing research, assisting governments in developing and implementing their national action plans and strategies on prevention of gender-based violence and on HIV and AIDS, and developing and reinforcing prevention programmes through university networks in the region, and through training to UN and UNESCO staff and partners on links between GBV and HIV.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ EIGE, *Beijing Platform for Action: Review of key trends from 2007 to 2012*, 2013.

³⁹ UNESCO, *Gender, Conflict and peace-building*, 2011.

CONCLUSION

The wave of change initiated by the Beijing Platform for Action in the areas of women's rights and the growing belief that the latter are fundamental human rights, led to important and noticeable progress in several areas. Education is surely the domain in which one can witness the greatest achievements, in terms of gender parity in primary school and girls' enrollment rate at lower and upper secondary school. However, as this paper suggests, the level of violence against women is still unacceptably high, and women's situation in armed conflict, both as victims and as peacebuilders, didn't change much. In a context of the shaping of the post-2015 framework, the international community must make the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls its priority.

Over the past three decades, women's issues have gained prominence on the international and national development agendas. As a global priority for UNESCO since 2008, Gender Equality continues to be at the heart of our work. In the post-2015 framework, UNESCO will continue to promote women's rights and gender equality in all its areas of competence, with particular emphasis on accelerating progress towards equal access to education for all girls and boys, women and men; reducing negative stereotypes and promoting positive representations and positive role models for women in sciences, culture and the media; promoting and defending women's rights, including the right to be free from violence; and reaching out to even the most marginalized women such as those caught up in situations of armed conflict and displacement. We will emphasize even more strongly the need to include women as full partners in society and to give women an equal role in leadership to strive towards a peaceful and sustainable future.

