

## United Nations Update

Flora K. Bloom, Ed.D., CHES and Kathleen Schmalz, Ed.D., RN, CHES  
CHJP Associate Editors

### United Nations Representatives

*American Association for Health Education (AAHE)*

*Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE)*

*International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE)*

### Convention on the Rights of the Child

*The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality, and as far as possible the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. (Articles 7)*

### Convention for Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

### Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

#### A World Fit for Children

*Children must get the best possible start in life. Their survival, protection, growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition is the essential foundation of human development. We will make concerted efforts to fight infectious diseases, tackle major causes of malnutrition and nurture children in a safe environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.*

7(4)



### Girls' Health

---

In the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000, the world's countries, institutions and leaders took on the commitment to consign unprecedented efforts and resources to meet the needs of those throughout the world living in conditions of poverty. World leaders promised to halve extreme poverty; to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS; to provide universal primary education; all by the target date of 2015. The Millennium Declaration and the goals (MDGs) which flow from it reaffirm States' responsibility to ensure the health and welfare of children, previously stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and provide a universal blueprint for the guarantee of children's rights.

#### Facts to Consider

- Escalating violence perpetrated on children threatens children's health and well-being. In 2002, UNICEF reported that, "violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation threaten children throughout their life".
- The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that girls are at the highest risk of infanticide, sexual abuse, neglect and being forced into prostitution.
- Practices such as son preference, the need for action in this regard is most crucial with regard to the girl-child
- Girls are more vulnerable than boys to the consequences of unprotected and premature sexual relations and often face pressure to engage in such sexual activity.
- WHO, in its 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health*, pointed to the devastating effect sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/ AIDS, have on children's health. Still, HIV/AIDS is only one among many contagious diseases that place children's lives at risk.

## MDGS

**Goal 3:** Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women

**Goal 4:** Reduce child mortality

**Goal 5:** Improve maternal health

**Goal 6:** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

### WGG Health Group

Flora K. Bloom, EdD,  
CHES AAHE, SOPHE &  
IUHPE

Kathleen Schmalz, EdD,  
RN, CHES

AAHE, SOPHE & IUHPE  
Janet Stovin, WRJ

Christine Hindle Verber,  
EdD, RN

NGO Health Committee  
Lynda Selde, GSUSA

Anita Thomas, WAGGGS  
Dorothea M. Lang, *Int'l  
Confederation of  
Midwives*

Leslie Wright, *Zonta*  
Maya Sabatello, *WUPJ*

### More Information

Working Group on Girls  
NGO Committee on  
UNICEF

UNICEF House, Room  
1142

New York, New York  
10017

[wggs@girlsrights.org](mailto:wggs@girlsrights.org)  
<http://www.girlsrights.org>

## Actions to Ensure Girls' Health

- Every girl and woman should be treated with dignity and respect and be registered at birth, “without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status” (CRC, Articles 2).
- Reducing children's mortality rates requires a multi-pronged approach. Some of the primary means are vaccination for preventable childhood diseases; the promotion of safe breastfeeding practices; adequate nutrition and the provision access to clean water.
- The escalating violence perpetrated on children requires particular attention. Governments, NGOs, UN agencies must work to protect every child so that all children can grow up free from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination.
- Breaking the cycles of poverty, violence, discrimination and impaired human development requires a comprehensive approach to children's health.
- The girl-child's health status is generational in nature and impact. Her own health is dependent on her mother's health and it also predicts her children's potential health. It is thus imperative to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted and accompanied by primary family education at all ages and levels, and that every birth is safe and carried out in the presence of a skilled birth attendant.
- It is essential that Governments provide appropriate educational guidance about a variety of contagious diseases which threaten children. Addition measures such as, providing quick oral screening tests and supplying anti-malaria sleeping nets can enable children to thrive in a disease-free environment.
- Special attention should be given to the girl-child and to the elimination of discriminatory cultural attitudes and practices which make her more susceptible to such diseases.

## Source and Resources

- UN Doc. A/Conf. 32/8, cited in Steven D. Jamar, *The International Human Right to Health*, 22 S.U.L REV. 1, 2 (Fall 1994).
- United Nations Children's Fund (2002). UNICEF's Priorities for Children 2002-2005, New York.
- World Health Organization (2002). World Report on Violence and Health: Summary, Geneva, Switzerland, (p. 4).
- United Nations Children's Fund (2002), UNICEF's Priorities for Children 2002-2005, New York.
- Friedman, S. A.. (n.d.). Keeping Promises to Girls: Following Up on the UN Special Session for Children [Brochure]. NGO Committee on UNICEF/ Working Groups on Girls.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20 (1995) and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1 (1995), particularly Strategic Objective L.
- For WHO activities visit: [http://www.eho.int/violence\\_injury](http://www.eho.int/violence_injury)

- prevention/ (under “Injury Prevention Collaborative Activities)
- For UNICEF issues on violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation threatening children, see UNICEF’s Priorities for Children 2002 – 2005 – website: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
  - For further information on Girls and HIV/ AIDS, see in particular, UNICEF’s Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS (2005)

*Prepared November 2005*