

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

THE GIRL CHILD

CSW42 AGREED CONCLUSIONS (IV)

United Nations, March 1998

THE GIRL CHILD

The Commission on the Status of Women

Reaffirms the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, notably chapter IV.L on the girl child, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

Proposes, in order to accelerate the implementation of the strategic objectives of chapter IV.L:

A. Promotion and protection of the human rights of the girl child

Actions to be taken by Governments, local authorities, non governmental organizations and civil society and the United Nations system, as appropriate:

- Promote further the enjoyment by children, particularly the girl child, of their human rights, by the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on measures for the prevention and eradication of the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography;
- Organize community-based actions, including the setting up of local committees to create awareness of, and monitor conformity with, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with a special focus on the situation of adolescent girls and young mothers;
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns designed to mobilize communities, including community leaders, religious organizations, parents and other family members, especially male family members, with regard to the rights of the child, giving special emphasis to the girl child, and monitor changes in attitudes;

- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns and gender training targeted at law enforcement and justice system officials with regard to the rights of children, giving special attention to the girl child;
- Eliminate traditional and customary practices that constitute son-preference through awareness-raising campaigns and gender training;
- Recognize and promote the contribution of girls and boys to development;
- Promote non-discriminatory treatment of girls and boys in the family and, in this regard, adopt measures to ensure equal access by girls and boys to food, education and health.

Actions to be taken by States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women:

- Include comprehensive information and sex- and age-disaggregated data on children in their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and invite the treaty monitoring bodies to pay special attention to the rights of the girl child while assessing those reports;
- Ensure that any reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are formulated as precisely and as narrowly as possible and that they are not incompatible with the object and purpose of those conventions, and review the reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a view to withdrawing them.

B. Education and empowerment of the girl child

Actions to be taken by Governments, educational institutions and the United Nations system, as appropriate:

- Consider drawing upon the findings and recommendations of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Adolescent Girls and their Rights, held in Addis Ababa in October 1997;
- Consider making primary education compulsory;
- Ensure universal enrolment and retention of girls in school and ensure the continued education of pregnant adolescents and young mothers in order to guarantee basic education to the girl child;
- Encourage all levels of society, including parents, Governments and non governmental organizations, to support the implementation of educational policies to enhance gender awareness in the community;
- Provide gender-sensitive training for school administrators, parents and all members of the school community, such as local administrators, staff, teachers, school boards and students;
- Review teaching materials, including textbooks, to promote the self-esteem of women and girls through positive self-images and revise these materials, highlighting women's effective role in society, including in decision-making, development, culture, history, sports and other social, political and economic endeavours;
- Develop programmes of sensitization on the gender perspective for staff of government offices working on educational issues concerning indigenous and rural girls, and develop educational materials adapted to their situation;
- Identify the special needs of girls in difficult circumstances, including girls from migrant families, refugee and displaced girls, girls from ethnic minorities, indigenous girls, orphaned girls, girls with disabilities

and other girls with special needs, and provide the resources necessary to address their needs;

- Involve girls, including girls with special needs, and their representative organizations in the decision-making process and include them as full and active partners in identifying their own needs and in designing, planning, implementing and assessing policies and programmes to meet those needs;
- Provide training opportunities for girls to develop their skills in leadership, advocacy and conflict resolution;
- Make visible girls' and boys' unpaid work in the household by conducting research and documenting gender differences, particularly in rural communities, note the implications of household work for girls' equal access to basic and further education and career development and take measures to redress imbalances and eliminate discrimination.

C. Health needs of girls

Actions to be taken by Governments, civil society and the United Nations system, as appropriate:

- Protect the girl child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by taking appropriate measures, including, for example, designing and implementing legislation;
- Encourage parents, coalitions of concerned organizations and individuals, especially political leaders, popular and community figures and the media, to advocate for children's health, including adolescent girls' reproductive and sexual health;
- Eradicate all customary or traditional practices, particularly female genital mutilation, that are harmful to or discriminate against women and girls and that are violations of women's human rights and obstacles to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, through the design and implementation of awareness-raising programmes, education and training, as well as programmes to help the victims of such practices to overcome their trauma;

- Develop and implement national legislation and policies prohibiting customary or traditional practices that are violations of women's human rights and obstacles to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and prosecute the perpetrators of practices that are harmful to the health of women and girls;
- Make widely available information and counselling to adolescent girls and boys, especially on human relationships, reproductive and sexual health, sexually transmitted diseases and adolescent pregnancy, that are confidential and easily accessible and emphasize the equal responsibility of girls and boys;
- Improve the health care for adolescent girls by health personnel and provide the latter with appropriate training, and encourage health-care personnel to work with girls to understand their special needs;
- Recognize and protect from discrimination pregnant adolescents and young mothers and support their continued access to information, health care, nutrition, education and training;
- Support the activities of non governmental organizations in the area of reproductive health and health orientation centres for girls;
- Enact laws concerning the minimum age for marriage and raise the minimum age for marriage when necessary in order to ensure respect for the rights of the child, as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

D. Girls in armed conflict

Actions to be taken by the United Nations and Governments:

- Incorporate information on the rights of the child in the mandates and operational guidelines of peace-keeping forces, the military and humanitarian workers and provide them with gender-sensitive training;
- Encourage girls and other individuals and communities to play a key role in reporting violations of

rights of girls in armed conflict to the appropriate authorities and ensure adequate, accessible and gender-sensitive support services and counselling;

- Protect the girl child in situations of armed conflict against participation in armed conflicts, recruitment, rape and sexual exploitation, in particular through the adoption of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as recommended by the General Assembly;
- Take measures to address the special needs of girls for protection and for gender-appropriate support and counselling centres in refugee camps, and in resettlement and reintegration efforts;
- Create and respect zones of peace for children in armed conflict.

E. Trafficking, including for purpose of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation

Actions to be taken by Governments, international organizations and civil society:

- Collect information and raise public awareness on the issue of trafficking, physical and psychological abuse, and sexual exploitation of girls in order to better design and improve preventative programmes;
- Consider implementing the recommendations of the Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996;
- Establish recovery programmes for children who have been abused or sexually exploited, with specially trained personnel to provide a safe and supportive environment.

Actions to be taken by Governments:

- Enact and enforce laws that prohibit sexual exploitation including prostitution, incest, abuse and trafficking of children, paying special attention to girls;

- Prosecute and punish persons and organizations engaged in and/or promoting the sex industry, sexual exploitation, acts of paedophilia, trafficking in organs, child pornography and sex tourism involving minors, and condemn and penalize all those offenders involved, whether local or foreign, while ensuring that children who are victims of those practices are not penalized;
- Design mechanisms and strengthen international cooperation to better protect girls and bring to justice the perpetrators of such crimes;
- Adopt measures that ensure that judicial and legal processes are sensitive to the specific needs of abused girls to prevent further traumatization or victimization.

F. Labour and the girl child

Actions to be taken by Governments, international organizations and the private sector:

- Consider ratifying and implementing international agreements that are designed to protect children, including conventions of the International Labour Organization, and bring national legislation into conformity with those agreements in order to protect the girl child;
- Ensure that girls who work have access to education and vocational training, health, food, shelter and recreation on equal and favourable conditions, and are protected from economic exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace;
- Pay special attention to girls in the informal sector, such as domestic workers, and develop measures to protect their human rights and fundamental freedoms and prevent their economic exploitation, ill treatment and sexual abuse;
- Raise government and public awareness as to the nature and scope of the special needs of girls employed as domestic workers and of those performing excessive domestic chores in their own households, and develop measures to prevent their economic exploitation and sexual abuse;

- Actively contribute to efforts at the 1998 session of the International Labour Conference to draw up a new international convention to eliminate the most abhorrent forms of child labour;
- Consider the implementation of the actions identified in the Agenda for Action of the 1997 Oslo Conference on Child Labour.

G. General recommendations

Actions to be taken by Governments and the United Nations system:

- Prepare programmes for the girl child as part of national action plans in order to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women;
- The organizations of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, as the agency mandated to deal with the rights and concerns of children, should give greater attention to the girl child through Fund country programmes, using its goodwill ambassadors for raising awareness on the situation of the girl child on national, regional and international levels;
- The Secretary-General should report on the girl child to the Commission on the Status of Women prior to the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
- Base programmes and policies for the girl child on the rights of the child, the responsibilities, rights and duties of the parents and the evolving capacity of the girl child, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. ■

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