

United Nations
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
In collaboration with UNICEF
Expert Group Meeting
Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence
Against the girl child

and initiatives aimed at, *inter alia*, the promotion and protection of the human rights of the girl child; education and empowerment of the girl child; improving the health needs of girls, the situation of girls in armed conflict, and combating trafficking and eliminating child labour.³

5. The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly titled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century”,

must be understood in the context of discrimination resulting from gender inequality, including women's lack of adequate access to information, education, and health services.¹⁰

14. Conflict heightens the risk of girls being exposed to abuse and exploitation, and sexual violence such as torture, rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, forced prostitution and trafficking.¹¹ Girls are often abducted for sexual and other purposes by armed groups and forces. The Special Rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women have drawn attention to the human rights violations, including sexual slavery, which are perpetrated against women and girls in times of armed conflict.¹² There is, however; still little awareness of the extreme suffering that armed conflict inflicts on girls or the many roles girls are often forced to play during conflict and its aftermath. In addition, the special needs of women and girls are rarely provided for in demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes.¹³

(c) **Empowerment of the girl child**

15. The empowerment of girls is critical to the achievement of equality.¹⁴ To develop her full potential, the girl child needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs for survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights safeguarded.¹⁵ Empowerment is a critical tool to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, and the elimination of violence against women and girls enables them to participate equally in decision-making.¹⁶ Girls' empowerment can be enhanced through access to all levels of education; access to good quality health care and services, including reproductive health information and services; and equal participation with boys in all spheres of society. It requires partnerships with men and boys, as well as the engagement of families, communities, the state and other actors.

16. The empowerment of girls can be enhanced by increasing recognition of their disproportionate burden of domestic work, and their contribution to household economies. Education provides the opportunity for girls to acquire a range of knowledge and skills critical to negotiating an equal place in society,¹⁷ including through accessing employment and decision-making processes. Girls, however, are often discriminated against in access to all levels of education. Factors which constrain the development of girl-friendly school environments – such as the lack of women teachers, proper sanitation facilities, and safety both in and outside school, as well as the persistence of gender-biased curricula – need to be addressed. Removing obstacles and strengthening the capacity of girls to build their self-esteem

¹⁰ E/CN.4/2005/72, paragraph 21

¹¹ UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, page 14

¹²

and take on leadership roles, including through the use of information technology, are central to their empowerment.

(d) Institutional arrangements to accelerate elimination of discrimination and violence against girls

17. Effectively eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child will require attention to critical institutional mechanisms, including sex disaggregated data on the girl child for further development of policies and programmes to address their specific needs.¹⁸ The United Nations Statistics Division publication, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, reported a mixed record on preparation of data disaggregated by sex and age and called for increased collaboration to review concepts, definitions and methods of collecting data, including the development of appropriate indicators.

18. There is growing worldwide interest in child-focused budgets which could prove beneficial to the girl child by providing analysis that highlights specific impacts on girls, and suggesting methods for targeting their needs more accurately.¹⁹ Few countries currently incorporate a children's rights perspective into their budgetary processes and few donors request it when working with countries on poverty-reduction strategies or similar frameworks.²⁰

19. The renewed commitment to the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, has implications for the girl child. Increased attention to the girl child in national policy development and monitoring and reporting processes, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the national MDG reports, is critical for accelerating the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

III. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting

20. The overall objective of the Expert Group Meeting i

22. In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical balance and, to the extent possible, gender balance, will be taken into consideration. Experts will include academics and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to experts. Observers attend the expert group meeting at their own expense.

V. Documentation

23. The documentation for the meeting will include:

- A consultant's paper commissioned by the Division for the Advancement of Women, outlining the major issues to be discussed;
- Papers prepared by experts on specific issues in line with their expertise;
- Papers prepared by observers.

VI. Organization

24. The EGM will be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy.

25. The EGM will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.

26. The EGM will meet in plenary and in working groups. In an opening plenary meeting, presentations by the experts will create a conceptual framework for discussions. The plenary will be followed by in-depth discussion of specific issues in working groups and drafting of the report.

VII. Expected Outcome

27. The Report of the Expert Group Meeting, containing a summary of the discussion and recommendations, will be adopted by the experts on the final day of the meeting. The report will be distributed at the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and will be made available on the website of the Division for the Advancement