

International Day of the Girl 2020

An activation moment of Generation Equality

11th October 2020

Every year on 11th October, the International Day of the Girl, UNICEF and partners work with girls to amplify their voices as they stand up for their rights.

This year, while we face the global COVID-19 crisis, the opportunity was seized to reimagine a better world inspired by adolescent girls, sharing their voice, their solutions, under the theme “ **My voice, our equal future** “. By promoting engagement and a youth activation, this year’s International Day of the Girl has added significance as a key activation moment of the global Generation Equality movement, a multi-partner advocacy and action platform for gender equality.

As adolescent girls worldwide assert their power as changemakers, we focus on their demands to live in safety, choose their own futures and accelerate change towards building a more equal world for all.

Key figures from the UNICEF report “A new era for girls, taking stock of 25 years of progress”

Nearly 64 million girls were born in 1995, the year of the **Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action** was adopted, beginning their lives as the global community committed to improving their rights. In 2020, nearly 68 million girls are expected to be born.

The UNICEF, Plan International and UN Women report, *A New Era for Girls: Taking stock of 25 years of progress*, finds that while girls’ lives are better today than they were 25 years ago, the gains are uneven across regions and countries. This is particularly true for adolescent girls.

Girls born today are expected to live eight years longer, yet we are still far from the vision of gender equality set out in 1995. This report demonstrates the need to focus on the realities girls face today and addresses the critical issues of making sure girls **have access to 12 years of education** and the skills they need for the workforce; ending gender-based violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) and improving girls’ health and nutrition.

- There are fewer out-of-school girls today than in 1998, but progress has stagnated for both girls and boys since 2007. The number of out-of-school girls worldwide dropped by 79 million between 1998 and 2018. Worldwide, nearly 1 in 4 girls aged 15-19 years is neither employed nor in education or training compared to 1 in 10 boys of the same age. **By 2021 around 435 million and girls will be living on less than 1,90 USD a day, including 47 million pushed into poverty as a result of COVID-19.**
- The literacy rate for female youth aged 15-24 years has increased from 80% to 90% since 1995, but that means 1 in 10 are still illiterate today.
- Violence, which should never occur, is still experienced by too many girls. No girl should be subject to child marriage, FGM, sexual violence or abuse in any place. Yet, an astonishing **1 in every 20 girls aged 15-19, around 13 million, has experienced forced sex in their lifetimes**, one of the most violence forms of sexual abuse women and girls can suffer. Meanwhile, even though harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM have declined in the past 25 years, they continue to disrupt and damage the lives and potential of millions of girls globally. **Since 1995, the proportion of young women who were married as children has declined globally**

from 1 in 4 to approximately 1 in 5. Some 650 million girls and women around the world today have been married as children, and over 200 million have undergone FGM.

- Girls face heightened health risks in adolescence. The proportion of girls aged 5-19 years who are overweight has nearly doubled since 1995.
- Over the past 25 years, the adolescent birth rate has declined from 60 births per 1000 girls aged 15-19 years to 44 births, worldwide. For many adolescent girls, pregnancies are neither planned, nor wanted.
- The number of new HIV infections among adolescent girls has halved since 1995, **but girls still account for nearly 3 in 4 new infections among adolescents. Over 2,8 million children and adolescents were living with HIV in 2019, nearly 9 out of 10 in sub-Saharan Africa.**
- At least 60% countries still discriminate against daughters' rights to inherit land and non-land assets in either law or practice.

Martine Gayon

UN Representative, New York