



**Joint statement of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child 2021**

Girls are entitled to all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without discrimination.

Yet, globally, three-quarters of children of primary school age who will never set foot in school are girls; and over 20 per cent of young women marry before their eighteenth birthday.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted education systems around the world, depriving nearly 1.5 billion students of in-person access to schools, in almost all countries. This situation risks compromising the results obtained in the area of girls' education and impacting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those related to poverty reduction, health and well-being, quality education and gender equality.

Two million more cases of female genital mutilation could occur over the next decade because COVID-19 is forcing schools to close and disrupting programs that help protect girls from these harmful practices.

Girls must be able to complete their education and have access to age-appropriate information and services, without discrimination, free of gender bias and with an equal opportunity to fulfill their potential.

Recently, the UN Secretary-General, in his "Our Common Agenda," recognized that no meaningful social contract is possible without the active and equal participation of women and girls and emphasized the need to put women and girls at the centre of processes to promote peace and prevent conflicts.

Ensuring equal participation must start with girls, by guaranteeing equal access to education for girls, empowering them and ending child marriage as priority.

Education empowers girls and equips them with capacities to claim and exercise broader civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, on an equal basis with boys in their societies. The reality is that girls from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including girls with disabilities and rural, indigenous and

migrant girls, are facing intersecting forms of discrimination preventing them from enjoying their right to education.

Barriers to attending school are exacerbated by poverty and economic crises, gender-based violence against girls in and out of school, structural and ideological restrictions to their engagement in male-dominated academic and vocational fields, lack of hygiene facilities in schools, early pregnancy, and a disproportionate burden of domestic and care responsibilities.

Education empowering girls must be accompanied by the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, which is still widely accepted.

To achieve gender equality in all aspects of the education system, laws and policies, educational content, pedagogies and learning environments should be gender-sensitive, responsive to the needs of girls and transformative for all.

We call on States to eliminate discrimination against girls in law and practice. It is imperative to address social and gender norms that perpetuate inequalities and condone violations of girls' rights. We reiterate girls' rights to be informed, empowered and provided with opportunities to have their voices heard and to participate on an equal footing in all decision-making processes affecting them, in their communities and in society at large. Meeting these objectives is paramount for the well-being of all.

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**Background:**

*The [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#) monitors States parties' adherence to the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), which to date has **189** States parties. The Committee is made up of **23 members** who are independent human rights experts drawn from around the world, who serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of States parties.*

*The [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) monitors States parties' adherence to the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and its [Optional Protocols on involvement of children in armed conflict](#), and on [sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#). The Convention to date has **196** States parties. The Committee is made up of **18 members** who are independent human*

*rights experts drawn from around the world, who serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of States parties.*

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