

Women's Rights

How can we ensure that all women have
equal access to their rights?

FOCUS ON PAKISTAN



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

What are your rights?

WHAT ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

Women's rights are the economic, social and cultural freedoms to which all people are entitled. For women to realize their rights, they must have equal access to resources and opportunities and equal treatment in economic and social life. In many parts of the world, women are not treated on an equal basis with men and are denied their basic freedoms because they are women. Can you think of examples of ways that women's rights are violated?



Women's Rights are a Global Priority

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** affirms that all human beings are born with equal rights.
- **The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** ensures that all women have the right to equal opportunities in political and public life, including the right to vote, education, health care and employment.
- **The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women** recognizes violence against women as an obstacle to equality, development, and peace.
- **The United Nations Millennium Development Goals** commit to promote gender equality and empower women by eliminating gender disparity in education by 2015.

What is the difference between gender and sex?

The term gender refers to how women and men are perceived and expected to think and act in a particular cultural, economic and socio-economic context. Gender is a socially defined expectation for roles, attitudes and values which communities and societies think appropriate for one sex or the other. Sex, on the other hand, refers to the biological differences between women and men. **What are examples of gender roles?**

CHECK IT OUT:

Read the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/e1cedaw.htm
Read about women's rights in the U.S.: www.equalitynow.org

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE U.S.

Since the founding of the U.S., women and men have worked hard to achieve gender equality. Here are a few important events:

- 1848: The first Women's Rights Convention produced a declaration demanding equal rights for women, including the right to vote.
- 1920: The 19th Amendment to the Constitution grants women the right to vote.
- 1963: Congress passes the Equal Pay Act, making it illegal to pay a woman less than a man for the same job.

Despite the significant progress made, inequalities still exist. Here are a few examples:

- In 2008, women earned \$.77 for every \$1.00 that a man was paid.
- The U.S. National Legislature is made up of only 16% women.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In many countries around the world, women and girls spend up to 1/3 of their time collecting firewood and water.
- In rural Africa, 70% of girls do not finish primary school.
- 500 million women and girls around the world can't read or write.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD

Who should determine a woman's rights?

How are women's rights linked to global poverty?

The majority of the 1 billion people living on less than \$1 a day are women. Gender inequality exists in every country in the world. Millions of women around the world face discrimination and abuse. Furthermore, they are denied access to education, health care, land rights and economic opportunities because they are women.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Around the world, women's rights are celebrated in March during Women's History Month and on March 8, International Women's Day.
- More than 80% of the world's 16 million refugees are women and children.
- On average, women represent less than 10% of the seats in national parliaments.
- In Africa, 58% of people living with HIV are women.

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD



How does culture influence women's rights?

Culture is a shared set of values, beliefs, and traditions passed on from generation to generation. Culture influences gender and how men and women are expected to act in society. In many cultures, the roles assigned to women are based on the belief that men and women are not equal and should not have the same freedoms in life. **Do you think governments should be forced to change traditional and cultural practices that compromise the rights of women and girls? Can you think of any traditions in your culture that violate women's rights?**

What if women ruled the world?

Over 55 countries around the world have had female Heads of State or Government. Here are a few examples:

- CHILE:** President Michelle Bachelet (2006-Present)
- INDIA:** Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1966-1967)
- IRELAND:** President Mary McAleese (1997-Present)
- LIBERIA:** Exec. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (2007-Present)
- PAKISTAN:** Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1993-1996)
- UK:** Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990)

Do you think a woman could be elected President of the United States? Why or why not?

Sources for map: UNICEF, UNFEM, UNDP, WHO

CHECK IT OUT:

Read more about human trafficking: www.ungift.org
Learn more about your rights: www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_rights.php

PAKISTAN

How has Pakistan's history affected women's rights?



PAKISTAN COUNTRY INFORMATION

LOCATION: South Asia

CAPITAL: Islamabad

POPULATION: 161 million

SIZE: Almost twice the size of California

ETHNIC GROUPS: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Muhajir

LANGUAGES: Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Siraiki, Pashtu, Urdu, Balochi, Hindko and Brahui

CHILD MORTALITY RATE: 97 deaths/1,000 live births

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 65 years

RELIGIONS: Muslim 95%, other 5%

LITERACY RATE: 50%

PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: 68%

ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER: 91%

KEY EXPORTS: Textiles, rice, leather goods, carpets and rugs

POPULATION LIVING ON LESS THAN \$1 A DAY: 17%

Sources: UNICEF, 2008 & CIA World Factbook, 2008

HISTORY AND POLITICS

Pakistan was home to the ancient Indus Valley civilization, which dates back to the 33rd century BC. Despite its prosperous and glorious past, in modern history, Pakistan has suffered from decades of internal political disputes, low levels of foreign investment, and a costly ongoing conflict with neighboring India.

The government of Pakistan has made a serious commitment to improving social services for women and children, spending more than \$16 billion over the past five years on initiatives such as universal health care, quality education, and affordable housing. However, increases in allocations have barely kept up with the country's rapid population growth.

PAKISTAN & INDIA

Ever since Pakistan and India gained independence from Britain in 1947, the two countries have been bitter rivals. The two nations engaged in two wars, in 1947 and 1965, over the disputed region of Kashmir and a third war in 1971, which resulted in East Pakistan becoming the separate nation of Bangladesh.

While the dispute over the state of Kashmir is ongoing, discussions and confidence building measures in the past few years have led to decreased tensions.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 40 of the world's 50 highest mountains are in Pakistan. K-2, or Chogori, is the second highest mountain in the world at a height of 28,251 feet.
- Pakistan is 1 of 8 countries worldwide with declared nuclear weapons. Pakistan's last test of its nuclear weapons was in 1998.
- In 1988, Benazir Bhutto was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, becoming the first female elected political leader of an Islamic country in modern history. She was assassinated on December 27, 2008.
- There are over 300 languages spoken in Pakistan.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN

Do women have access to their rights in Pakistan?

THE CONSTITUTION OF PAKISTAN SAYS...

- All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law
- There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone
- Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life
- The state shall protect the marriage, the family, and the mother
- The state shall ensure that women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their sex

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Are you surprised that Pakistan's constitution outlaws sex discrimination? Why do you think many women in Pakistan do not demand that their rights are observed? What is your reaction to the law that says the state should ensure that women do not do jobs unsuited to their sex?

HEALTH

- 30,000 Pakistani women die each year due to pregnancy complications.
- 14,000 women are living with HIV and AIDS.
- 75% of babies are born in the home and only 20% of women give birth with the assistance of a skilled birth attendant.

EDUCATION

- The literacy rates for Pakistani women living in urban areas are 5 times higher than for women living in rural areas.
- Less than 50% of girls enrolled in primary school reach beyond the 6th grade.
- 23% of Pakistani girls are enrolled in high school.

The status of women in Pakistan varies across classes, regions and the rural/urban divide.

Male domination is stronger in rural areas, where customs and traditions establish male authority and power over women's lives. On the other hand, women belonging to the upper and middle classes have increasingly greater access to education and employment opportunities and can assume greater control over their lives.

Even though women in Pakistan have legal rights, there are complex reasons why many women don't demand these rights: some don't know they have legal rights; some are afraid to assert their rights; and others believe in their society's gender roles, even if these roles prevent them from realizing their rights. Can you think of other reasons why a woman in Pakistan might not claim her rights? The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reports that 80 percent of young women aren't aware of their basic legal rights, including those related to marriage and divorce. They also report that violence against women is on the rise. A woman is raped every two hours and hundreds of women are victims of "honor" killings, domestic violence, burnings and murder.

GENDER AND POVERTY

Women and men living in extreme poverty suffer from great challenges in day-to-day life — they do not have the resources to provide food and clothing for themselves and their children, they are unable to send their children to school, they do not have access to clean drinking water, and they are unable to go to the doctor when they are sick. These challenges are even greater for women. Seventy percent of the Pakistanis living in poverty are women. In poor households where resources are scarce, discrimination against women and girls is more pronounced — chronic malnutrition is higher among female children and women's access to and control over economic resources is very limited.

GENDER DISPARITIES IN PAKISTAN	FEMALES	MALES
LIFE EXPECTANCY	63 years	63 years
LITERACY RATE	36%	63%
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATE	32%	44%
EARNED ANNUAL INCOME	\$977	\$3,403
SEATS IN GOVERNMENT	20.4%	79.6%

Source for page: Unicef, 2006

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- Although 73% of Pakistani women gain their income from farming, less than 3% of women own the land where they work. Yet, women do have the right to inherit and own land.
- 2% of women work as legislators, senior officials, and managers.
- Female teachers in Pakistan earn \$64 a month, compared to male teachers who earn \$77 a month.

CHECK IT OUT

Read about the government of Pakistan: www.pak.gov.pk
Learn more about women and Islam: www.womenofislam.net

CHECK IT OUT:

Research gender statistics: genderstats.worldbank.org
Read more about women's rights in Pakistan: www.ungei.org/infobycountry/pakistan.html

HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT ALL WOMEN

HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THEIR RIGHTS?



Read the stories and opinions below. What do you think could be considered a violation of women's rights? Would someone from a different country or culture disagree with you?

Here is a list of ten actions that could increase access to women's rights:

1. Encourage women's participation in all levels of government
2. Ensure that women and men enjoy the same legal rights, regardless of their culture or religion
3. Guarantee women's land and property rights
4. End discrimination against women in the workplace
5. Create microfinance programs to support women's business development and entrepreneurship
6. Increase girls' access to primary and secondary school
7. Hire female teachers to act as role models and to promote girls' school attendance and enrollment
8. Promote non-formal education for girls and women, such as vocational skills training and literacy programs
9. Support public awareness campaigns to prevent violence against women and girls
10. Prevent the spread of HIV among women and girls

Can you think of any additional programs to increase women's access to their rights?

These accounts are based on true stories. Most names have been changed.

FATUMA, RWANDAN FEMALE, 20 YEARS OLD

My daughter was sick with a fever for four days. The nearest clinic is a day's walk away, and I didn't have enough money to pay for medicine. My husband has goats he could sell so I could take her to the clinic, but I would never ask him to do that. I finally borrowed some money from a friend, but by the time I reached the clinic my daughter was very, very sick. Luckily, the doctor was able to help her and now she is doing better. If I hadn't borrowed the money, my child would've died.

CAROLINA, SPANISH FEMALE, 25 YEARS OLD

In my country, when a woman gets married she doesn't take her husband's last name. In fact, I think the custom in many countries of having a woman take her husband's name is patriarchal and sexist. Until women stop this oppressive tradition, they will never truly be liberated.

MARLENE, VENEZUELAN FEMALE, 19 YEARS OLD

I got married last year and within a few months my husband had a mistress. This is just a fact of life in my country — all men do it, and women just have to get used to it. It's unrealistic to think that you would ever find a man who wouldn't have a mistress.

NEDA, SAUDI FEMALE, 38 YEARS OLD

I was married when I was 17 years old to a man I barely knew. I wear a veil and, without a man's permission, I am not allowed to travel outside Saudi Arabia, drive a car or leave the house alone. I am also a practicing doctor, have a Ph.D. in speech pathology and am an active member of several community groups. I wear a headscarf and keep my body covered because it is a symbol of my faith and a form of protection. I think it is liberating because it forces people to judge me by my character and intelligence rather than by my appearance.

CHLOE, AMERICAN FEMALE, 13 YEARS OLD

I go to school every day but I hate it. My teachers only seem interested in what the boys have to say, and every time I speak up in class, all the boys laugh and the teacher makes me feel like what I've said is stupid. They listen to the really smart girls in my class, but no one really wants to be friends with them.

NAJEEB, AFGHAN MALE, 22 YEARS OLD

I got married when I was 15 to a 14-year-old girl. We have four children and I am proud of this. I will still be very young when my children are grown up and able to work. People don't realize that a lot is expected of boys here in Afghanistan. We are expected to bring in money at a very early age. Girls are well protected because they are hidden inside the home. Sometimes boys are kicked out of their homes to find their own way in life. The expectations are a lot higher for boys than for girls. Boys are seen as the responsible ones, while girls are the honor or "izzat" of the family.

MEHMOOD, PAKISTANI MALE, 30 YEARS OLD

I married the love of my life two years ago. But my wife's family opposed the marriage, and accused me of abducting her. We were both imprisoned and beaten by the police. The court eventually let us go, but we knew her family would seek vengeance — they consider her their property and they said that she represents their family honor — so we had to leave the country. We consider ourselves lucky — sometimes when a family feels it has been dishonored, women are seriously injured or even killed.



ANGULA, BOTSWANAN FEMALE, 34 YEARS OLD

I know about HIV and AIDS — I know how it is contracted and how to prevent myself from getting it. But my husband, sometimes he stays out all night — I don't know what he's doing and I can't control what he does.



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

International Women's Day
www.internationalwomensday.com

The Girl Effect
www.girleffect.org

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
womenandaids.unaids.org

The Women's Environment & Development Organization
www.wedo.org

PAKISTAN

Asian Development Bank
www.adb.org/Pakistan/default.asp

BBC News
news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1157960.stm

Government of Pakistan
www.pakistan.gov.pk

Mountain Voices
www.mountainvoices.org/pakistan.asp

ORGANIZATIONS

Amnesty International
www.amnestyusa.org/women

Human Rights Watch
www.hrw.org

INSTRAW – UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
www.un-instraw.org

Millennium Campaign
www.endpoverty2015.org

OSAGI – UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi

UN Population Fund
www.unfpa.org/swp

UN Development Fund for Women
www.unifem.org

UN Division for the Advancement of Women
www.un.org/womenwatch/daw

UNESCO
www.unesco.org/shs/gender

DOCUMENTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights
www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm

The U.N. Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/e1cedaw.htm

The U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
[www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.RES.48.104.En](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.RES.48.104.En)

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