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## Gender equality

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### UNICEF in action



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Women and men from a community water committee, Nigeria.

UNICEF recognizes the fulfilment of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW) (*external link*) as integral to the fulfilment of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC), both of which provide the framework for UNICEF's mandate and mission.

Article two of the CRC establishes that all rights declared in the convention must be respected without discrimination on the grounds of sex, meaning that State Parties are required to protect children against gender discrimination. Similarly, CEDAW plays a role in preventing gender-based inequalities in childhood, as it applies to females of all ages. This means that CEDAW plays a particularly important role in UNICEF's work on the girls.

UNICEF's commitment to the CRC and CEDAW is demonstrated through its [Human Rights Based Approach to Programming](#). UNICEF strives to support programmes that recognize the rights of each individual and to create enabling conditions for gender equality.

UNICEF's Medium-Term Strategic Plan (2002-2005) affirms our commitment to support the equal rights of women and girls and pledges to support their full participation and empowerment in the community and within their families. In emergency situations, UNICEF works with the international community and national partners to ensure an effective response to the rights and urgent needs of children and women through mutually-reinforcing actions in the areas of humanitarian policy, global advocacy and humanitarian response, as outlined in its Core Corporate Commitments in Emergencies.

Gender is an integral aspect of all areas of UNICEF's work, not only to ensure that the basic needs of girls, boys and women are met, but that they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and realize their human rights. Gender equality is also crucial to the achievement of UNICEF's other goals.

For example, programmes which strive to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS need to incorporate the recognition that women and girls are at greater risk than men and boys and can contribute to the empowerment of women by providing life skills training. Similarly, programmes aimed at preventing child trafficking must address the different reasons why boys and girls are trafficked if they are to be successful.

For this reason, each programme and project in UNICEF is required to address gender-based aspects and impact. For example:

- UNICEF works to decrease inequality at the household level by working in the area of [Water, Environment and Sanitation](#) (WES) to make sure that women can get the water needed for daily life as safely and easily as possible.
- [HIV and AIDS](#) disproportionately affects women, with girls in most countries being much more likely to become infected with the virus than boys and with women bearing most of the care-taking responsibilities for those who are ill
- UNICEF supports innovative programmes to increase the capacities of [adolescents](#), especially girls, to avoid this disease.

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The State of the World's Children 2007



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[SOWC 2007: Women and Children – The double dividend of gender equality \(publication\)](#)

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- Women and girls compose 80 per cent of refugees and people displaced by armed conflict, therefore a gender perspective in [humanitarian response](#) is essential to taking action in emergencies.
- Early marriage, child trafficking and other forms of violence against women and girls are addressed through multi-level interventions to increase [protection](#). Only by acknowledging the difference in experiences of boys and girls can effective actions ensure the best possible life for each member of society.

### Gender mainstreaming in action

Within UNICEF, the Gender and Development (GAD) Unit works to promote the implementation of UNICEF's policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through gender mainstreaming. To this end, the GAD Unit develops guidelines and training materials that are used to increase the capacity of UNICEF-assisted programmes around the world to integrate a gender perspective into all areas of work. A network of gender focal points in our regional and country offices assists the GAD unit in promoting gender issues and awareness at the national and local level.

Involving men and boys in the fight against gender inequality and violence against women and girls is one important approach of the work towards gender equality. Addressing gender discrimination also requires tackling all forms of violence against women and girls, which is not only one of the most serious, but arguably the most common form of gender discrimination globally. The GAD unit has recently commissioned studies in both these areas.

An Intern Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) has been formed under the leadership of the Special Advisor on Women and Gender Equality. This network meets once a year and maintains regular contacts electronically. The Network has formed inter-agency task forces to work on different gender equality issues, where organizations within the United Nations system meet to share information and develop common strategies.

UNICEF's GAD Unit participates in a number of these task forces to improve co-operation for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls. The major areas of inter-agency co-operation for gender equality that UNICEF actively participates in include humanitarian assistance, peace and security, HIV/AIDS and the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (*external link*).

*External links open in a new window and take you to non-UNICEF web sites.*

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