

**Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Fifty-first session**  
New York, 26 February – 9 March 2007

**PANEL II**

**Capacity-building on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.**

**Written statement\***

Submitted by

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

## **Progress made in building capacity for integrating the perspective of the girl child into the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most universally ratified human rights instrument with 193 States Parties. It is the most widely accepted framework for action in favour of the fundamental rights of girls. The Convention has thus become the universal constitution guiding national efforts to implement the rights of children. It is the first Human Rights instrument that combines Civil and political rights as well as Economic, Social and cultural rights. It tells us that children are rights bearers and that their **rights are indivisible and interdependent. Article 2 of the Convention stipulates that State Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within its jurisdiction without any discrimination of any kind inter alia, irrespective of the child's sex.**

The Committee on the rights of the Child is the body entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the convention. The Committee has systematically given attention to the status of the girl child. The Committee often deals with “the girl child” within the context of significant cultural discrepancies, discrimination, “early” marriage, child abuse, child labour, among other violations of human rights. The Committee is faced with a number of varying reasons for ‘why’ discrimination occurs against the girl child, including inequality in access to and quality of health care, education and economic opportunities, and of violence against girls, including sexual abuse and exploitation, and persistent traditions and prejudices as the main difficulties affecting the enjoyment of the girls’ rights.

The effectiveness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child depends on whether it is widely known, understood and applied. The CRC is the only major international human rights instruments currently in force that consistently uses both masculine and feminine pronouns throughout and makes it explicit that **the rights apply equally to female and male children**. Furthermore, **the Committee on the Rights of the Child has incorporated gender concerns in its dialogue with States parties since its first session in 1991**. The lists of issues and the oral questions raised during consideration of States parties' reports increasingly reflect a gender perspective, as a number of key development issues that we face today have a gender dimension. The of the Committee's recommendations concerning “General Measures of Implementation” targets capacity building in gender mainstreaming in planning, development, implementation and monitoring. Capacity building using a gender perspective is a core issue among the other general measures of implementing the rights of the child including the girl child. Thus, an understanding of gender roles and relations is central to addressing the rights of the child perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted a comprehensive **Reporting Guidelines**, which include **gender** as one of the grounds. They also contain an umbrella clause requesting States parties to provide information disaggregated by gender on the situation of particular groups of children and in relation to a number of articles. Its **guidelines for periodic reports also request information on measures taken to eliminate discrimination against the girl child**. The guidelines do not, however, contain a general request for data disaggregated by gender for all provisions of the Convention, or systematically ask for such information in conjunction with all

articles. They also do not identify situations where girl children may be subject to particular forms of violations of rights.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child holds regular "**Days of General Discussion**", during which thematic issues are considered. The situation of the girl child has been considered in a number of different contexts, including economic exploitation and the family. **The Committee also devoted its Day of General Discussion at its eighth session (1995) to the topic of "The Girl Child" as part of the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women.** In 1997, the Committee held general discussions on traditional practices detrimental to the health of women and children, in particular female genital mutilation, and on traditional attitudes and stereotypes and the special situation of the girl child, child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation and refugee children. In all subsequent Days of General Discussion, as well as in its General Comments the Committee has integrated the cross-cutting theme of the girl child into the discussions.

In order to build the capacity for integrating the perspective of the girl child into the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there remains **a need for ongoing discussion** by the treaty bodies on the relevance of gender in international human rights law so that efforts can be systematized; thus **it is important that constant interaction occurs between the United Nations treaty bodies namely, Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.** Such communication will ensure that both mechanisms more specifically and adequately address the girl child in their reporting processes and follow-up at national level. These two instruments contain mutually reinforcing principles to ensure protection and fulfillment of the rights of girls and to end gender-based discrimination.

The Gender perspective is very strong in the four general principles of the Convention the first of which is the right to non discrimination as stipulated in article 2 of the Convention.

The Committee has consistently taken the position that the right to non discrimination is not only a general principle but a right on its own. As a general principle it guides the implementation of each and every article in the Convention. According to the Committee, the principle of the best interest of the child, for example, has a gender perspective. The precarious situation surrounding the girl child necessitates a special consideration.

Without including the gender dimension, implementation of the right to be heard as defined by article 2 of the Convention will not be complete. Same can be said about the right to life, if we pay attention to cases of pre-selection of fetus to abort unwanted girls from coming to life; or with pushing girls away from schools; into early or forced marriage. The Four general principles guide the implementation of each and every right stipulated in the Convention. Under the four General Principles of the Convention; the Committee devotes attention to the unique status of the girl child and the actual implementation of her rights. This package of measures is scrutinized again by the Committee while examining the right to Education, health care and protection. The Committee usually focuses on the plight of the girl child including among the most vulnerable groups. The Committee in its dialogue with states parties focuses, for example, on issues such as the girl among, adolescents, refugees- minorities such as

the Roma Children, in situations of armed conflict, child labor, street children, sex tourism- and girls within the Juvenile Justice System.

Under “general measures of Implementation”, the Committee groups, legislation, creating a well resourced and properly mandated body to oversee and coordinate the implementation by the various governmental and non governmental bodies- a time bound, national plan of action-Budgetary allocations- A solid data base **on all** children including the most vulnerable groups, disaggregated inter alia according to sex, age and regional disparities – **monitoring mechanisms** to report violations of the rights of children including the girl child, accessible to all children, dissemination of the Convention and **capacity building** of professionals working with and for children: Is an area of priority to the Committee. **In its General Comment Number five on General measures of Implementation, the Committee underscored Capacity building.**

**It emphasizes States’ obligation to develop training and capacity-building for all those involved in the implementation process - government officials, parliamentarians and members of the judiciary - and for all those working with and for children.** These include, for example, community and religious leaders, teachers, social workers and other professionals, including those working with children in institutions and places of detention, the police and armed forces, including peacekeeping forces, those working in the media and many others.

**The Committee stressed that “training needs to be systematic and ongoing” -** initial training and re-training. **The purpose of training is to emphasize the status of the child as a holder of human rights, to increase knowledge and understanding of the Convention and to encourage active respect for all its provisions.** The Committee expects to see the Convention reflected in professional training curricula, codes of conduct and educational curricula at all levels. Understanding and knowledge of human rights must, of course, be promoted among children themselves, through the school curriculum and in other ways.

The Committee’s guidelines for periodic reports deals with many aspects of capacity building, including specialist training, which are essential if all children are to enjoy their rights.

It notes the need for periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of training, reviewing not only knowledge of the Convention and its provisions but also the extent to which it has contributed to developing attitudes and practice which actively promote enjoyment by children of their rights.

In 1995 the Committee devoted its day of General discussion to the Girl child. The objective was to allow the conclusions of its thematic discussion to be reflected in the Platform for Action to be adopted by the Beijing Conference. It was also an opportunity for the Committee to create a wider awareness of the situation and human rights of girls, a situation which had deservedly received special attention, both in examining State party reports and in the context of previous thematic discussions. It emphasized the principle of non-discrimination and the need for the girl child to enjoy all her fundamental rights, including the right to make free and informed choices concerning her life.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Let me express our appreciation for the comprehensive report prepared by the Secretary General presented to the Commission on the Status of Women contained in document E/CN.6/2007/3 “progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes with a particular focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child”.

The report provides an overview of the joint efforts by various stake holders including governments as well as United Nations’ treaty bodies namely CEDAW & CRC to mainstream girl’s rights into planning, development, implementation and evaluation of such efforts.

The report did not put adequate stress on the issue of capacity building of professionals working with, and for the girl child. The majority of States, in particular developing countries, need guidance on the best, most cost/ effective way to go about mainstreaming. So I need the recommendations of the report to be more specific on this crucial issue.

Moreover, States need models or initiatives that coordinate national efforts with that of the United Nations country team as well as the donor community. Paragraph 55 of the report indicates that girl’s education received the most explicit attention in all reporting mechanism as a cross-cutting theme. Let me remind you here of the United Nations Secretary-General’s initiative on Girls Education launched in Dakar. We in Egypt are considered a flag ship country. We consider girl’s education a critical tool to eliminate discrimination against the girl child. We started in 2000 bottom up approach. Composed of five programs, Community mobilization, data collection& analysis, Construction of girl’s friendly schools, poverty alleviation and monitoring and evaluation, the initiative is comprehensive and multidisciplinary. In less than three years 600 girls’ friendly schools were built. With such initiatives it was easier for countries to leap frog. We need similar initiatives in the area of health and poverty alleviation.

**The United Nations’ Secretary-General Study on Violence Against Children:**

The United Nations’ Secretary-General in-depth study on Violence against Children is another initiative that promises good progress if implemented. The Study has generated a global movement against violence. It was developed through a participatory process including children themselves. Nine regional consultations insured that each region witnessed its government; NGOs and children, not only identify violence against children, but also highlighted the way forward based on its success stories and failures. The study offered a platform where many States prepare a national plan of action. The Committee on he Rights of the Child, since the inception of the process of regional consultations, has been recommending to State Parties to follow up its recommendation and by preparing a multidisciplinary comprehensive plan of action. This process should insure gender mainstreaming in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of rights of the child at the national level. The study mainstreamed gender issues. It offers an opportunity to coordinate

national, regional and international efforts to stop violence against the girl child. We still need to agree on a follow up mechanism at the international level that will complement the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. A Secretary-General Special Representative will help ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the study. Such implementation will mark a shift in dealing with the violence against children. Ensuring the implementation and follow up of the recommendations of the study will mark significant Progress in building capacity for integrating the perspective of the girl child into the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In conclusion let me assure you the following:

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is very diligent in assisting State Parties to identify forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

The Committee adopts a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to towards the implementation of the rights of the child including the girl.

We can say that there is now more awareness of the issues of the girl child. More countries have launched programs targeting the girl child. In spite of this progress, we still have major challenges as many societies are still allowing traditional practices that discriminate against the girl child.

We still need to work harder to ensure that issues pertaining to the Girl child are adequately mainstreamed in planning, development, implementation and monitoring. Governments need to formulate gender-sensitive policies and legislation, right's based and gender sensitive capacity building programs with the active participation of the civil society, Unite Nations agencies and the donor communities need to work in closer coordination to build the capacity. The purpose of gender planning, mainstreaming and monitoring is to build national capacities, both governmental and non-governmental in the areas of gender analysis, gender planning, implementation and monitoring. A primary concern by governments in this connection is to draw a national strategy for the advancement of women and to work closely with line ministries in order to mainstream it in the National Development Plans. Among other things, this will ensure the inclusion of priority programs on women and the required funding for them. This includes training planners in line ministries in gender planning in order to mainstream gender in sectoral, regional and national development plans.

It is important to note that the ability of governments to identify areas of gender concern, to design appropriate remedial action, and to monitor progress depends on the availability of gender-disaggregated data. Government action in this area should be to ensure that basic socio-economic statistics (school enrolment, life expectancy at birth, mortality, labour force participation, etc) are disaggregated by sex. Similarly, information on the outcomes of specific programs should be gender specific.

In closing; I am sure that the outcome of this session will definitely assist the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its dialogue with State Parties, in formulating its list of issues or questions to State Parties and in formulating its Concluding Observations.