



United Nations  
Association in Canada

*Celebrate with UNA-Canada*

## UN's International Day of the Girl

♦♦ 11 October ♦♦

Millions of girls around the world face barriers to their survival, their basic rights and their ability to develop - simply because they are girls. They are denied the right to eat; the right to go to school; the right to be heard; the right to be safe; and sometimes even the right to live.

Yet it has been proven that when a girl is educated and her rights protected, she can forever affect and improve not only her own life, but the lives of her family and community.

Women are the nucleus of the family. Their spirit and intelligence fosters democracy by building strong relationships and societal bonds. They bring a balanced approach to human rights in all sectors of life. By investing in girls today we empower future women, mothers, workers and leaders who will improve the lives of everyone around them and lift entire nations out of poverty.

*“The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all.”* - Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society which aspires to social justice, human

### Girl Stats

- 70% of the world's 130 million children denied primary school education are girls
- Every year, roughly 2 million children, mostly girls, are trafficked, sold or coerced into the sex trade
- 2 million girls each year are at risk of genital mutilation
- 70% of the 1.5 billion people living in extreme poverty (less than \$1.25/day) are women & girls
- Girls are 3 times more likely to be malnourished than boys, as they are fed last
- The leading cause of death in teenage girls worldwide is complications from pregnancy
- 🇨🇦 46% of Canadian school girls report they were the target of unwanted sexual comments or gestures
- Each year of attending school increases a girl's lifetime income by 10-20%
- Mothers who have completed primary school education reduce the mortality rate of their children under 5 by 50%. They also spend 90% of their earned income on their families, while men only spend 30-40%

*Sources: United Nations, UNICEF, World Bank and Status of Women Canada*



UN Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran (Darfur); Shutterstock: Olga Sapegina (Russia); UN Photo: Marine Perret (Timor-Leste)

rights and lasting peace. Yet, while causes and consequences vary from country to country, discrimination against women and girls is still widespread. Because they have traditionally been relegated to the family sphere and to subordinate status in society, ongoing gender stereotypes and discrimination has remained persistent, pervasive, and largely invisible.

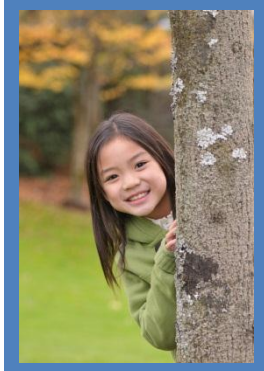
For girls in particular, this discrimination is two-fold... not only are they female, but they are young. As such, **girls are the most marginalised and discriminated group across the globe.**



Empowering women and girls to reach their full potential and to overcome barriers that get in their way is imbedded in the principles and efforts of the United Nations, which recognizes that, when given the opportunity, girls are powerful agents of change.

In countries unwilling or unable to bring the education, health services, food and development aid necessary for the survival of vulnerable girls, the UN is there, providing humanitarian aid, advancing their rights, promoting their well-being, tackling discrimination and expanding their opportunities and voice.

The UN also creates more just and caring societies by improving international norms and behaviours through policy, cooperation and the development of treaties, conventions and standards. From the **UN Charter** in 1945, to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, to the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, the UN has enshrined gender into the concept of fundamental human rights. And since the UN was created in 1945, over 110 countries have changed their laws to give women the right to vote and run for office.



UN Photo, Eskinder Debebe (Afghanistan); Harry Hsu (Canada)

Gender discrimination is not unique to developing countries. Even in Canada; it continues to exist at many levels throughout our society. From emerging issues of “honour” killings and harmful cultural practices, to sexual harassment and physical violence, to disparities in access to and/or salaries for equivalent

jobs, to school yard bullying... girls in Canada face obstacles that often inhibit their opportunities, hopes and dreams.

Poverty, prejudice and violence in other countries around the world also affect Canadians. Such conditions result in despair and simmering anger that can fuel division, suspicion and unrest, destroy societies and even escalate to terrorism and war. But when girls and mothers survive and thrive, the family and community in which they live prosper, and peace blooms.

The UN’s International Day of the Girl is a day to inspire and celebrate the power and potential of girls. By honouring and investing in girls, we will support a generation of women – girls, mothers, workers and leaders – who are empowered to improve the lives of everyone around them and to break the cycles of poverty, seclusion and discrimination across communities and entire nations.

Investing in girls will change our world. Join our movement of “*We the Peoples...*” and help us to transform lives and build hopeful futures. A better world starts with YOU.

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