FOCUS ON PAKISTAN

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

How can we ensure that all women have equal access to their rights?
WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES
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 produces 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.
- **2009**: President Barack Obama signs the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, enabling women to recover lost wages due to discriminatory pay.

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

- In **2012**, women earned $.82 for every $1.00 that a man earned.
- In **2013**, women held only 24 percent of legislative seats nationwide in the U.S.

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 as well as 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.

What are your rights?

What are examples of ways that women’s rights are violated?

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 that communities and societies think are 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?

DID YOU KNOW?
- In many countries around the world, women and girls spend up to ⅓ of their time collecting firewood and water.
- Of the 61 million children who are out of school, 53 percent are girls.
- More than 525 million women around the world can’t read or write.

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’ (MDGs) third goal is to promote gender equality and empower women by eliminating gender disparity in education by 2015.
- The Maputo Protocol was adopted by the African Union in 2005 and guarantees comprehensive rights to women.
- In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which supports various Commissions and member states and also holds the UN system accountable for its commitments on gender equality.

CHECK IT OUT:
Read about women’s rights in the U.S: [www.equalitynow.org](http://www.equalitynow.org)
There are three billion people in the world living on less than $2.50 a day, and 70 percent of them 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.

**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?*

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**CHALLENGES TO WOMEN’S RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD**

Only 24% of women 15 years and older can read and write in Chad. In San Paolo, Brazil, a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds. Women do over 75% of the agricultural work but own less than 10% of the land in Cameroon. Only one out of 301 parliament seats in Yemen is held by a woman. Only 6% of women account for business owners in Kosovo. In Afghanistan, 6% of girls attend secondary school. 47% of trafficked individuals in Cambodia were reportedly sold by their mothers.

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**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:

**ARGENTINA:** President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–present)

**INDIA:** Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1966–1967)

**IRELAND:** President Mary McAleese (1997–2011)

**LIBERIA:** President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (2007–Present)

**MALAWI:** President Joyce Banda (2012–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 in the next ten years? Why or why not?*

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**CHECK IT OUT:**

Read more about human trafficking: [www.ungift.org](http://www.ungift.org)

Learn more about your rights: [www.voicesofyouth.org](http://www.voicesofyouth.org)
Pakistan Country Information
LOCATION: South Asia
CAPITAL: Islamabad
POPULATION: 193 million
SIZE: Almost twice the size of California
LANGUAGES: Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Siraiki, Pashtu, Urdu, Balochi, Hindko and Brahui
ETHNIC GROUPS: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Muhajir
RELIGIONS: Muslim 96 percent, other 4 percent
LIFE EXPECTANCY: 66 years
CHILD MORTALITY RATE: 61 deaths/1,000 live births
ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER: 90 percent
LITERACY RATE: 55 percent
PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: 66 percent
POPULATION LIVING ON LESS THAN $1.25 A DAY: 23 percent
KEY EXPORTS: Textiles, rice, leather goods, carpets, and rugs
Sources: UNICEF, 2013 & CIA World Factbook 2013

HISTORY AND POLITICS
Pakistan was home to the ancient Indus Valley civilization, which dates back to the 33rd century BCE. 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 improve social services for women and children, spending more than $16 billion in recent 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 AND INDIA
Ever since Pakistan and India gained independence from Britain in 1947, both 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?
- Forty 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 one of eight 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.

CHECK IT OUT:
Read about the government of Pakistan: www.pak.gov.pk
Learn more about women and Islam: www.womenofislam.net
WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN

Do women have access to their rights in Pakistan?

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.

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. Of the 23 percent of the population living below the poverty line, the majority is comprised of women and girls. 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.

Meet Zahida

Zahida is a 13-year-old girl from Southern Pakistan where she lives in a house with 25 members of her extended family. Zahida was married at the age of 11 to a 35-year-old goat herder who supports the entire household with the help of two of his in-laws. Although her new family is desperately poor, Zahida is now able to consume two meals a day, unlike when she lived at home with her parents. She recounts, “My mother is happy, too, because she no longer has to support me.”

Unfortunately, it is still difficult for Zahida to care for herself and her 12-month-old son, Sanam, while her husband remains away for months at a time. In fact, her husband has not lived at home since Sanam was born. As a young mother, Zahida is unable to produce adequate amounts of breast milk for her son, who is suffering from malnutrition.

After meeting Zahida at a Concern-run Oral Therapeutic Care Center in Rahuja Village, Concern Worldwide nutritionist Najma Ayab explained, “Only about 20 percent of the mothers in this area are educated. They don’t know anything about nutrition or health or family planning.” However, Najma has not given up hope and adds, “Gradually, we will reach them all.” Despite the many challenges Zahida continues to face as a young mother, through Concern’s program she has learned a great deal about the importance of improving her own nutrition as well as her son’s.

THE CONSTITUTION OF PAKISTAN SAYS . . .

- All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the 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?

GENDER DISPARITIES IN PAKISTAN

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIFE EXPECTANCY</td>
<td>68 years</td>
<td>65 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERACY RATE</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT RATE</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATS IN GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
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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 or sexually assaulted every two hours and hundreds of women are victims of “honor” killings, domestic violence, burnings, and murder.

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?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The issues surrounding women’s rights are broad and complex. Therefore, there are many different solutions. Read some possible solutions below. Which ones do you think are most effective at improving women’s rights?

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

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

EDUCATION AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Education can improve women’s lives by… Because...

Reducing the number of children a woman has
Educated girls have fewer children because they typically marry later than uneducated girls.

Lowering infant and child mortality rates
Educated girls are better able to care for their children’s health and nutrition.

Lowering maternal mortality rates
Educated girls have better access to health care and information.

Protecting against HIV and AIDS infection
Educated girls tend to practice safer sex than those who are uneducated.

Increasing women’s workforce participation rates and earnings
Educated girls have better access to jobs and are able to work at higher paying jobs.

Creating intergenerational education benefits
Educated girls are more likely to send their children to school, which helps break the cycle of poverty.

Source: Global Poverty Project
SPEAK OUT! CULTURAL TRADITIONS OR WOMEN’S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS?

DEBATE IT! TRADITIONS VS. RIGHTS

Cultural traditions or women’s rights violations?
Consider the role culture plays in different countries around the world and how that may or may not influence the definition of women’s rights in these nations. Keep in mind the differences between “tradition” (in which a certain practice is repeated due to its place in the culture) and “modernity” (which refers to more modern and liberal ideals).

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?

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.”

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.”

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.”

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.”

“It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. . . . Men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less.”
—Susan B. Anthony, 19th century women’s rights activist

“Every time we liberate a woman, we liberate a man.”
—Margaret Mead, 20th century American cultural anthropologist

“When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.”
—Kofi Annan, Former Secretary-General of the United Nations

“The plight of women in the developing countries is unspeakable. Hunger, disease, and unremitting toil is their fate. Weak economic growth and inadequate social support systems affect them most seriously and directly.”
—Benazir Bhutto, Former Prime Minister of Pakistan

These accounts are based on true stories. Most names have been changed.
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
www.womenandaidss.net
The Women’s Environment &
Development Organization
www.wedo.org

PAKISTAN
Asian Development Bank
www.adb.org/pakistan
BBC News
news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/
country_profiles/1157960.stm
Government of Pakistan
www.pakistan.gov.pk
Mountain Voices
http://mountainvoices.org/
pakistan.asp.html

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
UN Women
http://www.unwomen.org/
UN Population Fund
www.unfpa.org/swp
UNESCO
www.unesco.org/shs/gender

DOCUMENTS
Universal Declaration of
Human Rights
udhr/index.shtml

The UN Convention of the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
Against Women
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/
daw/cedaw/
The UN Declaration on the Elimination
of Violence Against Women
http://www.un.org/documents/ga/
res/48/a48r104.htm

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