



The Rights of Women and Girls

Discrimination against women means that specific laws or practices create a distinction, exclusion, or restriction on the basis of gender.

✚ Democracies should strive to protect women's rights, encourage women's participation in all aspects of society and government, and create places for women to associate freely and express their views openly.

✚ Legal rights for women include equal representation under the law and access to legal resources.

- Women's rights must be clearly stated — ambiguity of women's legal status remains a leading cause of poverty worldwide.
- Women should have rights to ownership and inheritance.
- Women should have the opportunity to take part in the drafting and implementation of constitutions and legislation.

✚ Women's political rights include the right to vote in elections, to run for public office, to participate in government, and to organize politically.

- Democracies should support civil society initiatives — public and nongovernmental — that teach women how to vote and train them in political campaign techniques and the legislative process.
- Women's activism at all levels of civil society and government strengthens democracies.

✚ Women and girls should have access to primary education. They should not be barred from attending or teaching in secondary schools and universities.

✚ Economic rights give women control over their economic assets and help them avoid

risky sexual and abusive relationships. These rights include:

- The same employment opportunities and criteria as men.
- Protection from job termination because of pregnancy or marriage.
- Participation in programs, such as micro-enterprise lending and vocational training, that enable women to generate income.
- The right to equal pay and to equal treatment and respect at work.

✚ Democracies should strive to ensure the health and well-being of women and girls and provide equal access to programs such as:

- General health care, disease prevention, and prenatal care.
- Preventing HIV/AIDS, improving health care delivery to those infected, and reducing mother-to-child transmission of the disease.
- Combating traffickers who lure women and girls into forced prostitution or domestic servitude through deception, fraud, or coercion.
- Fighting so-called sex tourism that often exploits women and children.
- Educating families about the social and health consequences of early marriage.
- Supporting victims' organizations, including domestic violence and rape crisis centers.
- Training police, lawyers, judges, and medical personnel to reduce domestic violence.
- Eliminating female genital mutilation.