



## WOMEN IN THE WORLD

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Time</b>           | 45–90 minutes  |
| <b>Level</b>          | upper-intermediate   |
| <b>Skills</b>         | reading, speaking  |
| <b>Knowledge goal</b> | raising awareness of various forms of discrimination against women in the world and considering some ways of reducing it |
| <b>Materials</b>      | Ss' worksheet: p. S1 – Text 1, Text 2<br>p. S2 – Text 3, Text 4<br>p. S3 – Follow-up: A, B<br>p. S4 – Follow-up: C       |

### Warning:

**Ss may find the content of this lesson disturbing!**

#### 1 Lead-in

- Ask Ss to stand up and to make a circle. Join them in the circle and tell them you will say six statements and their task is to show with their hand if they agree with it or not. If they agree, they will raise their hand as high as possible whereas if they do not they will squat and touch the floor. To express limited agreement, they can put themselves in some intermediate position. The statements are:
  - Young people under 20 should not get married.
  - Women are better at child care than men.
  - Only women have a sixth sense.
  - It is more important for men's careers to gain a university degree than for women's careers.
  - It should be more difficult for women to obtain a driving licence than for men.
  - In my country, women are discriminated against.
- Discuss the statements with Ss.

#### 2 Main activity

- Tell Ss that the topic of the lesson will be discrimination against women in the world. Ss will learn more about four particular forms of discrimination and then discuss how it can be reduced.
- Ss make pairs or small groups and brainstorm on various forms of discrimination against women. Ask them to draw a mind map.

#### INFOBOX – Mind map

A mind map is a diagram used to represent ideas linked to a central key word or idea. It is used to visualize, structure, and classify ideas.

- Check their mind maps.
- Split Ss into 4 groups. Each group will get a text on one common form of gender discrimination in the world. First, distribute only the titles of the texts on slips of paper. Have Ss

read them and ask them to predict within their group what the text will be about and what they already know about this issue.

- Then hand out the texts from p. S1–S2. Ss read them thoroughly. Ask them to highlight or underline what they consider the most important pieces of information from the text. Make them aware that they will present them to other Ss later.
- After Ss have finished, they form new groups and pass on the new information to other Ss.
- Discuss each issue as a class. Possible questions:
  - What surprised you most while reading your texts?*
  - What else do you know about these issues?*
  - Are women in your country being discriminated against in the same ways? Why do you think it is the case?*
  - How do you think children who are married off for economic reasons feel?*

#### 3 Follow-up

- Ask the Ss:
  - What do you think can be done to reduce or eliminate the practice of FGM in the world?*
- Give Ss some thinking time and then brainstorm it as a class. Write their suggestions on the board. Tell the Ss that they will soon receive some info on measures taken on both national and international levels and about a special project from Kenya which aims to tackle the problem.
- Hand out all three texts from p. S3–S4 so each student reads just one. Ss read them and then do the exercise below the texts.
- Check their answers as a class. Discuss the three examples and compare them with the list on the board. Did Ss come up with same or similar ideas?

#### 4 Ideas for homework

- A. Ss do research on the trafficking in women in their country – e.g. statistics, countries involved, laws, activities of non-governmental organizations, campaigns, websites. They present their findings in the following lesson or they write a report.
- B. Ss write an editorial with the title “Are women of 21st century still discriminated against?”
- C. Ss prepare an informative poster whose aim is to make schoolmates aware of the issue of early marriages. It should be creative and informative at the same time.
- D. Ss write an essay starting “If I had been married off when I was a child, I would never have....”
- E. Ss look up two videos on the YouTube connected to one of the issues. Ask Ss to write a short summary. Ss then make a list of all of the videos with their summaries and then distribute it in the class. Optionally, Ss can watch the videos the following lesson.
- F. Ss write the synopsis of a film they would make. It would be from one girl or woman’s point of view. They present the synopsis to the group and perform one scene from their film.

#### KEY

##### A. International response

**Actors:** WHO (World Health Organization), UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)

**Methods:** research, work within communities, changes in public policy

**Results:** wider international involvement, development of international monitoring bodies and resolutions, legal frameworks and growing political support, decreasing practice of FGM, increasing support of women and men in practising communities.

##### B. Project in Kenya

**Actors:** MYWO (Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization), UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women)

**Methods:** developing alternative FGM ceremonies, educating girls, retraining FGM practitioners

**Results:** less FGM, well-informed girls about FGM and the dangers of it, informed and retrained FGM practitioners, new ceremonies developed

##### C. Legislation can also help

**Actors:** 14 countries in Africa

**Methods:** enacting laws against FGM, imposing fines and possible prison sentences for the convicted, setting up a telephone help line, finding alternative employment for FGM practitioners

**Results:** only in some countries, e.g in Burkina Faso – less FGM





## 1. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

### Key facts

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGM.
- In Africa, about three million girls are candidates for FGM annually.
- The procedure has no health benefits for girls or women.
- Procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later, potential childbirth complications and deaths among newborn babies.
- It is mostly carried out on girls at some time between infancy and 15.

FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors which makes it a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.

### Causes

The causes of female genital mutilation include a mix of cultural, religious and social factors within families and communities.

- Where FGM is a social convention, the social pressure to conform to what others do and have been doing is a strong motivation to perpetuate the practice.
- FGM is often considered a necessary part of raising a girl properly, and a way to prepare her for adulthood and marriage.
- FGM is often motivated by beliefs about what is considered proper sexual behaviour, linking procedures to premarital virginity and marital fidelity. FGM is believed by some to reduce a woman's libido and help her resist "illicit" sexual acts.
- FGM is associated with cultural ideals of femininity and modesty, which include the notion that girls are "clean" and "beautiful" after removal of body parts that are considered "male" or "unclean".
- Local structures of power and authority, such as community leaders, religious leaders, circumcisers, and even some medical personnel can contribute to upholding the practice.
- In societies where FGM is practised, it is considered a cultural tradition, which is often used as an argument for its continuation.

**Source:** WHO – World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int>



## 2. Trafficking in Women and Girls

Trafficking involves the recruitment and transportation of persons, using deception, coercion and threats in order to place and keep them in a situation of forced labour, slavery or servitude. Persons are trafficked into a variety of sectors of the informal economy, including prostitution, domestic work, agriculture, the garment industry or street begging.

While exact data are hard to come by, estimates of the number of trafficked persons range from 500,000 to two million per year, and a few organizations have estimated that up to four million persons are trafficked every year. Although women, men, girls and boys can become victims of trafficking, the majority of victims are female. Various forms of gender-based discrimination increase the risk of women and girls becoming affected by poverty, which in turn puts them at greater risk of becoming targeted by traffickers, who use false promises of jobs and educational opportunities to recruit their victims. Trafficking is often connected to organized crime and has developed into a highly profitable business that generates an estimated US\$7–12 billion per year.

Trafficking is in most cases a trans-border crime that affects all regions of the world: according to a 2006 UN global report on trafficking, 127 countries have been documented as countries of origin, and 137 as countries of destination. The main countries of origin are reported to be in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Asia, followed by West Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The most commonly reported countries of destination are in Western Europe, Asia and North America. By 2006, 93 countries had prohibited trafficking as a matter of law.

### How Trafficking Happens

Traffickers use a variety of recruitment methods including abduction and purchase from family members. However, in most cases, the potential trafficking victim is already seeking a chance to migrate when she is approached by an acquaintance or lured through an advertisement. Some are tricked into believing they are being recruited for legitimate employment or marriage abroad. Others know they are being recruited into the sex industry and even that they will be obliged to work in order to pay back large recruitment and transportation fees but are deceived about their conditions of work.

The web of dependence is a complex one. Traffickers generally seek to exercise control over a victim's legal identity by confiscating her passport or official papers. Her entry or stay in the destination country is usually illegal – serving to increase her reliance on the traffickers. Debt bondage is widely used to control trafficked persons and to ensure their continued profitability. Physical restraint, violence, and intimidation are frequently reported.

**Source:** UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women, <http://www.unifem.org>

### 3. Honour Killings

Honour crimes are acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members who are perceived to have brought dishonour upon the family. A woman can be targeted by her family for a variety of reasons including refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce – even from an abusive husband – or committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has acted in a manner to bring “dishonour” to the family is sufficient to trigger an attack.

The ramifications for women are significant. For example, a woman in an abusive marriage must make the choice to stay in the marriage and hope that the violence will end, or leave the marriage and hope that neither her husband nor any male relatives will kill her. A woman who is raped, even if she can prove that she was a victim of sexual violence, may be killed by her husband, father, son, brother or cousin.

Honour crimes are not specific to any religion, nor are they limited to any one region of the world. According to a 2002 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, “honour killings” take place in Pakistan, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Morocco and other Mediterranean and Gulf countries. It also occurs in countries such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom within immigrant communities. It is not only in Islamic countries or communities that this act of violence is prevalent. Brazil is cited as a case in point, where killing is justified to defend the honour of the husband in the case of a wife’s adultery. Although there is increased awareness of this issue, countries remain reluctant to take the necessary steps to end the men’s impunity for honour killings.

Honour crimes are a clear violation of women’s human rights and states are bound to protect women from such violations. Nonetheless, in many countries, honour crimes are either condoned through government inaction or defended as legitimate cultural practices. As a result, police fail to investigate these crimes and prosecutions are non-existent. In the rare cases where a man is prosecuted, it is the woman’s behaviour that becomes the focus of the trial, not the culpability of the defendant. In the even rarer case that a man is found guilty, the man’s claim that it was a crime committed to restore family honour allows the courts to reduce the sentence.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that the annual world-wide number of “honour killing” victims may be as high as 5,000 women.

**Source:** HRW – Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org>, UNFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women. <http://www.unifem.org>.



### 4. Early Marriage

Child marriage is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation.

Young married girls are a unique, though often invisible, group. Required to perform heavy amounts of domestic work, under pressure to demonstrate fertility, and responsible for raising children while still children themselves, married girls and child mothers face constrained decision-making and reduced life choices. Boys are also affected by child marriage but the issue impacts girls in far larger numbers and with more intensity.

Girls married before they turn 18 are less educated, have more children and are married to men who are significantly older. Women who married as girls are more likely to experience domestic violence and believe that in some cases a man is justified in beating his wife. Significant percentages of women who were married before 18 are in polygynous unions, and their partners are likely to be significantly older and more highly educated.

Parents and families often justify child marriages by claiming it ensures a better future for their daughters. Parents and families marry off their younger daughters as a means of gaining economic security and status for themselves as well as for their daughters. Insecurity, conflict and societal crises also support early marriage. In many African countries experiencing conflict, where there is a strong possibility of young girls being kidnapped, marrying them off at an early age is viewed as a way to secure their protection.

The practice of early marriage is prevalent throughout the world, especially in Africa and South Asia. According to a 2006 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women on her mission to Afghanistan, for example an estimated 57 percent of girls in Afghanistan are married before the age of 16. Economic reasons are said to play a significant role in such marriages. Due to the common practice of “bride money,” the girl child becomes an asset exchangeable for money or goods. Families see committing a young daughter (or sister) to a family that is able to pay a high price for the bride as a viable solution to their poverty and indebtedness. The custom of bride money may motivate families that face indebtedness and economic crisis to “cash in” the “asset” as young as 6 or 7, with the understanding that the actual marriage is delayed until the child reaches puberty. However, reports indicate that this is rarely observed, and that young girls may be sexually violated not only by the groom, but also by older men in the family, particularly if the groom is a child too.

**Source:** Early Marriage: Traditional Harmful Practice, UNICEF, 2005, <http://www.unicef.org>. Report: Because I am a Girl: The state of the world’s girls 2007. Plan UK.



## A. International response to FGM

In 1997, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a joint statement with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) against the practice of FGM.

Since 1997, great efforts have been made to counteract FGM, through research, work within communities, and changes in public policy. Progress at both international and local levels includes:

- wider international involvement to stop FGM
- the development of international monitoring bodies and resolutions that condemn the practice
- revised legal frameworks and growing political support to end FGM
- decreasing practice of FGM in some countries and an increasing number of women and men in practising communities who declare their support to end it

Research shows that, if practising communities themselves decide to abandon FGM, the practice can be eliminated very rapidly.

**Source:** WHO – World Health Organization, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

### 1. Identify:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Actors involved  |  |
| Methods used     |  |
| Results achieved |  |



## B. FGM project in Kenya

Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO) is a non-governmental organization whose mandate is to promote the welfare of Kenyan women and girls. FGM is deeply ingrained in the traditions of much of Kenyan society therefore the most effective way of ending FGM in Kenya is not to do away with the ceremony completely, but to transform it. A grant from UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) helped support a pilot project called “Alternative Rite of Passage”, a collaborative effort by MYWO and the Program for Appropriate Technology and Health (PATH). The aim was to replace the cutting ceremony with training on empowerment and health and human rights.

During the school holidays, educators meet with girls and FGM practitioners. They talk about the dangers of FGM and women who have undergone it share their experiences and the complications that arise. Then together they perform a ceremony celebrating the transition of girls to womanhood without FGM. In addition to these alternative ceremonies, MYWO works on changing attitudes of FGM practitioners who are usually much respected by their community and also earn their living from FGM. Alternative occupations must be found for these women so they can continue support themselves. They are trained to do something else.

**Source:** UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women. <http://www.unifem.org>

### 1. Identify:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Actors involved  |  |
| Methods used     |  |
| Results achieved |  |



### C. FGM legislation can also help

Fourteen countries in Africa – Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, and Togo – have enacted laws against FGM. But these need to be enforced. In most of the countries where legislation exists, it has not helped to bring down the prevalence of FGM substantially. Clearly, a specific law prohibiting the practice is necessary, but it is not enough. The law by itself has limited reach. It is only one important element creating a favourable environment for change. The risk of FGM being conducted clandestinely can be an unwanted side effect of legislation.

#### When the law works

In Burkina Faso, the law is rigorously applied. Between 1996 and 2005 there were more than 400 convictions. Those convicted face a fine of up to \$1,800 and a possible prison sentence of up to three years. The Government has also undertaken public information campaigns and introduced the topic into the school curriculum. A telephone helpline has been set up and there are initiatives to find alternative employment for women who carried out the practice. As a result of all this, the number of girls undergoing FGM is dropping. A survey carried out in 1999 showed that 63.7 per cent of women wanted the practice to end. The government in Burkina Faso has managed to create an environment that is conducive to change on this very difficult issue.

**Source:** Because I am a Girl: The state of the world's girls 2007. Plan UK.

#### 1. Identify:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Actors involved  |  |
| Methods used     |  |
| Results achieved |  |

