

International Day of the Girl

Glossary of Terms

Advocacy: Activity by an individual or a group that aims to influence decisions made within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

Agenda 2030: Universal and transformative United Nations agenda and a plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity. It seeks to strengthen universal peace and eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, which is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, are committed to implement this plan within the next 15 years until 2030. Also known as Sustainable Development Goals, Global Goals.

CEDAW: The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a convention adopted by the United Nations in 1979. It outlines what discrimination against women is and includes an agenda for action. The United States is one of only eight countries that has not ratified the convention; 189 have ratified the convention.

Child marriage: The practice of marrying a child to an adult. In practice, it is almost always a young girl married to a man. It is sometimes called forced early marriage because girls may be forced by their families to marry much older men, interfering with their ability to go to school. International agreements state that the minimum age for marriage is 18.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Human rights treaty adopted by the United Nations in 1989. The CRC outlines the political, social, economic, civil, and cultural rights of children, and requires that states consider and act in the best interests of every child. The United Nations defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.

Cultural norms: Values, beliefs, and behaviors of a particular group of people or society. Expectations and the “rules” that guide the behavior of people in these groups are considered cultural norms. Cultural norms must not interfere with or impede upon anyone’s human rights.

Digital gender divide: Economic and social inequality between men and women with regard to access to, use of, or impact of information and communication technologies (ICT). United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Serves as the central body discussing economic and social issues and formulating policy recommendations addressed to member states and to the United Nations system.

Gender: Refers to the social distinctions between boys and girls and men and women that are socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Reflected in roles that boys and girls play in society and the status that they occupy within it. Gender roles tend to be dynamic. They vary from one culture and time period to another and are characterized by unequal power relationships. Gender roles are learned.

Gender equality: Women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural, and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their homes, their communities, and their societies. Gender equality starts with equal valuing of girls and boys.

Gender mainstreaming: Strategy to ensure gender perspectives and attention to gender equality in policy development, research, advocacy, legislation, and resource allocation as well as in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs and projects.

Girl or girl-child: Girls are human beings of the female sex. A girl is typically defined as someone between the ages of five to 18 years, however, in legal, social, and cultural contexts this age range is sometimes as wide as birth to age. The term “girl” can also encompass the characteristics and cultural roles that make up girlhood or the experience of being a girl.

Human rights: Universal rights, freedoms, and protections to which all human beings are entitled, regardless of who they are or their circumstances. All human beings have, by nature of being human, human rights and nothing, including cultural norms, can impede upon a person’s human rights. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (a document that outlines 30 agreed upon human rights) states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Categories of human rights include social, political, and economic rights.

Information and communication technologies (ICT): All devices, networking components, applications and systems that, combined, allow people and organizations to interact in the digital world.

Intersectionality: A theory which considers that the various aspects of humanity, such as class, race, sexual orientation, and gender, do not exist separately from each other, but are complexly interwoven and that their relationships are essential to an understanding of the human condition.

Poverty: The state of not having access to the resources to satisfy basic human needs, such as food, clean water, or shelter. About one-fifth of the world’s population lives in extreme poverty.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 17 goals and 169 targets adopted by world leaders in September 2015 to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and end climate change by 2030. They build on the Millennium Development Goals that the world committed to achieving by 2015. Sex: Refers to the biological difference between girls and boys and women and men. Differences are reflected in male and female bodies.

Sexism: The belief that one gender or sex is better or more valuable than another. Sexism also refers to practices that discriminate against one sex or gender over another.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): A declaration adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, (now known as International Human Rights Day) that outlines the rights to which every human being is entitled. It is divided into 30 articles.

UNICEF: The United Nations Children’s Fund provides short-term emergency care and long-term development and support to children and mothers in developing countries. UNICEF also supports and helps protect the rights of all children.

United Nations (UN): An international organization founded in 1945 and dedicated to maintaining international peace and security, developing positive relations between nations, and promoting social progress, better standards of living, and human rights. There are currently 193 member states in the UN.

UN Women: United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was formed in 2010 by combining several UN agencies that addressed issues of concern to women and is currently headed by Sima Sami Bahous.

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS): Official umbrella organization for all national Girl Guide and Girl Scout organizations in the world. It is comprised of 150 member organizations organized into five regions—Africa, Arab, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Western Hemisphere.

