



UNESCO Chair and Institute of Comparative
Human Rights

Women's Leadership in Human Rights



Young people attend the launch of the 2010 International Year of Youth on the theme "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding", inside the General Assembly Hall, at UN Headquarters. International Youth Day is celebrated annually 12 August (UN Photo).

Who are involved in human rights **What** supports Women's rights **When** should we act
Where are there women's rights issues **Why** should we care and **How** can we help?

Who?

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU

YOU



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (third from right) poses for a group photo with youth delegates at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s 20th Anniversary Commemoration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With them is former child soldier and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Ishmael Beah (right) (UN Photo).

Women's rights is the responsibility of all of us to realize in our communities. You are the next generation of leaders that will shape our societies and way of thinking. Your actions will have an impact on others, whether good or bad. Let's try to do our best to have the most positive, friendly impact on others to make this world a better place,

one person at a time. To make a difference, start with yourself, and enjoy the fruits of what many before you have done to vouch for universal human rights. Of course, there's lots to be done. Whether you're a guy or a girl, supporting human rights, and women's rights in particular, are essential to a more peaceful world. It all starts with YOU.

What?

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

One of the most direct and important documents addressing women's rights, it states, "Noting that the States Parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights have the obligation to ensure the equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights" (CEDAW).

Almost all member states of the UN have signed and ratified CEDAW. The United States is the only state to not ratify the convention (therefore obliging it to comply to it's articles). However, it has signed the Convention, which doesn't force the US to comply with it's articles (UNTC).



Marcia Sarmento is one of fifteen public defenders in Timor-Leste; three are women. Public defenders fulfill a vital role in the Timorese judicial system, offering legal representation to those who cannot afford it (UN Photo).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The UN UDHR is the concrete foundation upon which our human rights stand upon, including CEDAW. Without this very important document there would be less of a sense of ethical standards in the world. Moreover, did you know that the UDHR was written under the leadership of a woman? Do you know who she is? (Answer at end).



A woman poses in front of a graffiti representing the sun on the occasion of the observance of the World Mental Health Day (UN Photo).

Woman Leadership

Women exhibit leadership throughout the world, be it at the household level trying to sustain a family on her own or to the highest ranks of the UN where women play increasingly influential roles. Margaret Cho is currently the head of the World Health Organization (WHO), The Director-General of UNESCO is Irina Bokova, and most recently Michelle Bachelet (the former president of Chile) is the director of UN Women. Okay, so this could've been in the "Who?" page but encouraging women to taking leadership roles and learning from those experiences is important to reach objectives such as reaching gender equality by 2015, as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals.



UN HQ, New York, New York (UN Photo).

When?

NOW, MORE THAN EVER

Much headway has been made in the cause of women's rights. For example, women compose 19% of the world's lower house legislatures in 2010. This is up from 11% in 1995. In addition to this, The Rwandan legislature is 56% women. However, more must be done. Sexual violence is used as a weapon of war and the incidence of HIV in women in sub-saharan Africa is 60% (UN Women). Moreover, poverty still plagues the world and disproportionately affects over half the world's population: women.



Two women workers feed toddlers at Vienping Orphanage in Chiang Mai, where a large percentage of the children are HIV positive (UN Photo).



US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton boldly stated, "Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights." at the 15th anniversary of the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. Held in 1995, Clinton as First Lady led the American delegation to this historic conference.

The continued need to recognize and reaffirm women's rights as human rights highlights the continued struggle for gender equality. Again, you and the rest of your generation can make a powerful difference by committing to keeping an attitude of good will and spirit, respecting human rights in living out your daily lives.

Where?

EVERYWHERE



By August 1995, the fighting in Chechnya had caused an estimated 250,000 people to flee to the neighboring autonomous republics of North Ossetia, Daghestan and Ingushetia. A similar number of people were displaced inside Chechnya.

Internally displaced persons from Chechnya run a small bakery in the vicinity of Magas Collective Centre for displaced Ingush people from North Ossetia (UN Photo).



Portrait of Mukhtar Mai, a Pakistani woman who became a world-renown education and women's rights activist after she was gang raped as clan vengeance in her native village for crimes allegedly committed by her brother (UN Photo)



A member of the Malaysian Medical Unit with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) checks test results inside the lab at Mission Headquarters in Laayoune, Western Sahara (UN Photo).

Why?

Because **Women's Rights are human rights** which are:

UNIVERSAL

Everyone has human rights

INTERDEPENDENT

Our level of human rights depends on the level to which others' are protected

INHERENT

We have human rights simply because we are human.

How?

Become Pro-Active! Be Creative!

A model captured at the "Fashion For Development" show - Introduced by Karolina Kurkova and featuring the work of designers who have helped make Microcredits an effective tool for development in their respective countries (UN Photo).

Raise awareness through activities through events such as movie nights, selling fairly traded goods made by women, debates on important women's rights issues. The possibilities are endless!

Remember: Everything starts with YOU.



“Be the change you want to see in the world”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Works Cited

“About UN Women — UN Women.” <<http://www.unwomen.org/about-un-women/>>. 1 Sept. 2010.

“Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979.”

<<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>>. 30 Aug. 2010.

“Facts & Figures — UN Women.” <<http://www.unwomen.org/facts-figures/>>. 1 Sept. 2010.

“UNTC.” <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en>. 30 Aug. 2010.

Answer to Question on “What” page: Eleanor Roosevelt