



girls worldwide say



World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
Association mondiale des Guides et des Éclaireuses
Asociación Mundial de las Guías Scouts



World YWCA

Alliance of Youth CEOs

Human Rights Day Statement 2008 Violence against women: a threat to universal human rights

Geneva. December 10, 2008

The Alliance of Youth CEOs* joins the global community in commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sixty years ago, world leaders including women like Eleanor Roosevelt drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948 to ensure freedom, justice and peace prevailed in the world. This extraordinary document has contributed to the emancipation of many sectors of society including women and youth.

Subsequent documents like CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action that uplift women's human rights rely on the basic rights outlined in the Declaration. The advancement of women is central to achieving human rights and the Millennium Development Goals on gender equality.

The theme for this year's Human Rights Day calls for 'Dignity and justice for all of us'. Yet 60 years on, there remains a serious threat to dignity and justice for all—violence against women. Research shows that in every region and every country, violence against women remains endemic. Yakin Ertürk, the outgoing United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, has called the pandemic "... a pervasive and universal violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality."

The organisations represented by the Alliance of Youth CEOs have been active in ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are integrated into the human rights work of their member associations and the United Nations. The Alliance calls on governments, international organisations and civil society to:

1. Develop strategies to prevent violence against women (VAW)

In addition to carrying out research on the cause of violence, governments must consider initiatives that call for actions to prevent violence before it starts. A strategic way to prevent violence is to introduce laws that protect women from violence, and enforce those laws. One of the first obligations of CEDAW requires UN member states to entrench women's human rights in their constitutional and legal systems. Educating the public on such laws is crucial in preventing violence against women.

2. Support survivors of violence

Adequate and accessible funding must be provided for services that provide holistic care for survivors of violence. Lack of information prevents many women from accessing services that would help them to regain dignity in their lives; women's right to information must be upheld. Governments must include in their national plan of action on violence against women adequate training and awareness raising for civil servants, including law enforcement officers, to ensure they respond effectively to violence, and women and girls feel safe in their care.

3. Understand intersectionality of HIV and VAW

Socio-economic factors and legal challenges that put many HIV-positive women at risk of violence must be addressed. Recently, a number of countries have adopted laws that criminalize HIV. These laws have a particular impact on women and leave them vulnerable to violence. We can not afford to retreat on the progress we have made in human rights; the rights of people living with HIV, especially women and girls, must be upheld.

*The Alliance of youth CEOs is made of Chief Executive Officers of the International Award Association (IAA), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM), World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCAs) and World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA).