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Empowering Women: Empowering Children

A MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL UNIT
AN INTRODUCTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

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Unless stated otherwise, the source for all charts, figures, maps, and statistics used in this unit is: United Nations Children's Fund, (UNICEF), New York. Additional sources are noted when they are required. Website addresses (URLs) are provided throughout this unit for reference and additional research. The authors have made every effort to ensure these sites and information are up-to-date at the time of publication, but availability in the future cannot be guaranteed.

UNIT OVERVIEW

Empowering Women: Empowering Children

A Middle and High School Unit
An Introduction to Gender Equality

Unit Overview

This lesson was designed as an introduction for students to explore gender equality issues. Students will:

- Become familiar with the terms “gender equality” and “gender inequality.”
- Understand basic facts about gender inequalities worldwide.
- Identify main ideas about gender equality in a video.

We hope this lesson will serve as an introduction to other units addressing gender equality available at www.TeachUNICEF.org.

Introductory Activities

This lesson includes a Visual Aids section with photos. The photos can be used to introduce the class to the role of women around the world. Suggested Introductory Activities include:

- 1. Photo Activity:** Visual Aids 1–8 show photos relating to the status of women around the world. Visual Aids 1–3 show some of the challenging situations women and girls face in the home and at work as a result of their gender. Visual Aids 4–7 show UNICEF-supported interventions promoting gender equality. Visual Aid 8 shows a head of state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President of Liberia.
- 2. Statistical Activities:**
 - a.** UNICEF’s annual flagship publication the State of the World’s Children report includes a feature that allows students to draw on social and economic data from 195 countries to create customizable statistical tables, or download data into an Excel spreadsheet. This allows deeper analysis of the situation of women in the world prior to the start of the lesson. This feature can be accessed at <http://www.unicef.org/sowc08/statistics/statistics.php>.
 - b.** Create graphical representations to visually communicate the information generated in the statistical tables.

Background Information

Women contribute in many ways to their communities and nations, but too often they are limited by lack of opportunity and education that restricts their ability to achieve their potential and to participate in decision-making and resource allocation in their families and communities. In countries throughout the world, when women are valued and given opportunity for education and access to resources, their communities and nations as a whole benefit.

UNICEF is the United Nations agency dedicated to protecting and improving the lives of children in developing countries through its programs which focus on immunization, education, health care, nutrition, clean water, and sanitation. Through years of experience in countries around the globe, UNICEF has found that helping improve the lives of women also promotes the well-being of **children and families**.

UNICEF refers to this as the “double dividend” of gender equality. Healthy and educated women tend to have healthy and educated children. They are more able to influence household decisions on nutrition, health care and education of children. They are also better able to achieve equality in the workplace and have a greater voice in the political sphere, helping to create a better world for children.

Men play a crucial role in the lives of children as well. The family is the fundamental unit of society and children’s emotional, physical and intellectual development is enhanced by the presence of caring and involved fathers. Children also benefit when the relationship between women and men in the household is based on mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and common concern for the best interests of the children. The attitudes and values of men, who in many countries and cultures hold greater influence in the home than women, are key to promoting greater equal gender relationships in the family.

Important Terminology

Gender: refers to the cultural and social differences that distinguish men from women.

Gender equality: the conditions under which girls and boys, women and men, can reach their full potential without discrimination, through equal access to nutrition, health care, education, and opportunities to make decisions in their households and communities. It also includes legal equality between women and men; for example, equal pay for equal work, and equal rights to own and inherit property.

Gender inequality: the unequal and often limited access of girls and women to health care, education, legal protection, the ability to earn a living, and the ability to make decisions in their households and communities.

Double dividend: a term used by UNICEF to describe the two main benefits of improved opportunity for women. First, women themselves become more healthy, educated and able to participate in household and community decision-making. Second, these women pass benefits on to their children. Healthy women tend to have healthier babies. Educated women tend to make sure that their children receive an education. Women who have a voice in how family income is spent tend to spend more on children’s nutrition, health care, and education.

Sex: refers to the biological differences that distinguish males from females.

Because women tend to be the primary caregivers for children, particularly in the early years, UNICEF works to promote gender equality as one way to improve the well-being of all children, boys and girls alike. UNICEF has identified three main areas of gender inequality that are widespread, the correction of which is important to enabling women to have more influence for the good of their children.

In the household: Women and men tend to have different roles and priorities in household decision-making. Women tend to be more likely to use the influence they have to meet the needs of the family and children, yet in many developing countries, women have little role in making decisions about household spending or health care. This lack of influence may be due to the fact that women tend to bring less income and material goods to a marriage, are generally younger than their husbands, and have less education.

Studies from developing countries show that when women have more influence on household decisions, their children's survival, health and nutritional status are improved. And their children, particularly girls, are more likely to attend school.

Employment: While women have become increasingly involved in types of employment once only open to men, there is still a long way to go to enable women and men to have equal economic opportunities. For many women, unpaid work in the home takes up more of their working day than it does for men, leaving less time for women to earn income through paid work. When women work outside the home, their average earnings are about 20 percent less than men's.¹ Women also tend to work more in the "informal" sector – selling goods in markets, for example, or doing domestic work; such employment tends to be low paid, provides little job security, and few or no benefits (such as health insurance or pensions). Women own fewer assets than men; in some countries, property and inheritance laws make it difficult for women to acquire assets, leaving them and their children at greater risk of poverty.

While greater income for women can benefit their children, this is not always the case. When women work excessively long hours or face unsafe or unhealthy working conditions, their children are negatively affected. In families where women do not have control over their earnings, adequate money may not be allocated to children's health care, nutrition, or education. Some women lack quality childcare while working, or must rely on older children (usually girls) to care for younger ones, with the result that these girls miss out on their own education.

Politics and government: Women tend to be under-represented at all levels of government. They make up less than 17 percent of legislators, 14 percent of cabinet members, and 6 percent of heads of government worldwide.² Their voices are rarely heard in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction in developing countries. There are a number of barriers to women's political participation. Attitudes exist that men make better political leaders than women is widespread around the world. And women's lower levels of income and education, combined with long hours of paid and unpaid work, make it difficult for women to be involved in the political process.

1 *The State of the World's Children 2007*, p. 39. UNICEF: New York.

2 *The State of the World's Children 2007*, pp. 56-57. UNICEF: New York.

Yet women are increasingly part of local and national governments. Their involvement tends to bring a greater focus in legislation on the needs of children, women and families. Rwanda and India are examples of countries that have recently increased numbers of women in government, helping decision-making processes become more democratic and gender-sensitive. Other countries have shown that advocating for children and families can help bridge divisions between political parties.

UNICEF has found that strategies for improving gender equality include:

- **Education:** Equal education for boys and girls is a powerful way to combat gender discrimination. Parents and communities must be encouraged to invest in girls' education. School fees must be abolished, and greater numbers of women teachers recruited. Schools must be created where violence and bias against girls is not tolerated, and the curriculum and teaching methods reflect gender equality.
- **Legislation:** Laws must be created to address domestic and gender-based violence. Property and inheritance laws can be reformed to give women greater access to land and property. And existing laws against gender discrimination must be enforced.
- **Financing:** Financial resources are necessary to achieving gender equality. Programs that benefit girls and women – in education, health care, enforcing laws relating to equal pay and property rights, monitoring inequality in the workplace, and investing in infrastructure (roads, wells, etc.) that reduce women's work loads and time burdens – all require adequate funds. Government budgets must consider the impact on women of how money is spent.
- **Women empowering women:** Community-based women's organizations can be effective in giving women a voice in shaping policies that affect women and children. They are sometimes overlooked by national governments and international agencies, and should be partners in all forms of development activities.
- **Engaging boys and men:** Men can be powerful allies in working for gender equality. When they are involved and when both men and women focus on each other's needs in addition to their own, there is the potential for women and men to develop cooperative working relationships, communication between the sexes, and more shared childcare and household responsibilities.

The strategies UNICEF is promoting are working. The rate of school attendance for girls around the world is steadily increasing. Women are accessing education, moving into jobs once dominated by men, and organizing with other women to create loan programs and income-generating opportunities. They are making steady inroads into decision-making at the community, state and national level. Many women are making these gains while balancing responsibilities toward their children and families. Much is being accomplished — and much remains to be done.

For more information on gender inequality, and strategies to address it, consult *The State of the World's Children 2007* at www.unicef.org/sowc07.

For up-to-date information, visit:

www.unifem.org

http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=article_s&id_article=791

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/daw/index.html>

National Standards

The TeachUNICEF lesson plans are designed in line with National Content Standards. Using the National Content Standards as a guide, these lessons can be aligned with State Standards.

National Organization
<p>National Council for the Social Studies (K-12) Source: Expectations of Excellence — Curriculum Standards for Social Studies</p>
<p>People, Places, and Environments Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.</p>
<p>Culture Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.</p>
<p>National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association (K-12) Source: Standards for the English Language Arts</p>
<p>Standard 1: Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace.</p>
<p>Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.</p>
<p>National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Source: Principles and Standards for School Mathematics</p>
<p>Data Analysis and Probability Develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based on data.</p>

EMPOWERING WOMEN: EMPOWERING CHILDREN

Objectives

Students will:

- Become familiar with the terms “gender equality” and “gender inequality.”
- Understand basic facts about gender inequality worldwide.
- Use listening and viewing skills to identify main ideas in a video about gender equality.

Session Plan

- Opening Activity: What Do You Know About Women In The World?: 15 Minutes
- Video: Gender Equality Can Help Children: 15 Minutes
- Making Connections: 10 Minutes
- Homework: 5 Minutes

Vocabulary

The following words may not be daily occurrences in a student’s vocabulary. Feel free to use this list as a resource for students to expand their working vocabulary as they encounter these words in this unit.

- Discrimination
- Empower
- Gender
- Under-nourished
- Vaccinated
- Wages

Materials Needed/Setup

- Four large signs on flip chart paper, labeled with the following: “0-25%,” “25-50%,” “50-75%,” and “75-100%.”
- Visual Aids (Visual Aids can be viewed on a computer, converted to overhead transparencies, or photocopied and given as handouts.)
- Equipment for showing Visual Aids (overhead projector, or computer and LCD projector) and video (TV and DVD player or computer with Internet connection).

Opening Activity

What Do You Know About Women In The World?

Directions:

1. Before students enter the room, tape one of the large signs with percentages in each corner of the room.
2. Show **Visual Aid 9**, “What do you know about women in the world?” Read the question aloud, and ask students to stand near the sign that best represents their answer to the question. After students have chosen a corner of the room, ask a few students from the different corners to share.

Question: What do you know about women in the world?

Answer: 66%; about two-thirds of those who cannot read or write are women.

Source: UNICEF, “Basic Education and Gender Equality,” http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_bigpicture.html

3. Move to the next questions and repeat the process.

Visual Aid 10

Question: What percentage of elected government representatives around the world are women?

Answer: 17%

Source: UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2007*, p. 56, www.unicef.org/sowc07.

Visual Aid 11

Question: Worldwide, women who work outside the home earn wages that are less than men's. How much less are women's wages?

Answer: about 20% less

Source: UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2007*, p. 39, www.unicef.org/sowc07.

Visual Aid 12

Question: In the African country of Cameroon, women do more than 75% of the farm work. What percentage of farm land is owned by women?

Answer: less than 10%

Source: UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2007*, p. 42, www.unicef.org/sowc07.

4. After the fourth question, have the class return to their seats. Discuss:
 - What was your reaction to these facts?
 - Which answers were most surprising to you? Why?
 - What can you conclude about the situation of women, compared to the situation of men in the world, from these statistics? (This is an opportunity to introduce the terms “equality” and “inequality.”)

Video

Gender Equality Can Help Children

Directions:

1. Explain that UNICEF is the United Nations agency that works to protect and improve the lives of children in developing countries through its programs of immunization, education, health care, nutrition, clean water and sanitation.
2. Ask the class:
 - Why do you think UNICEF, which works to improve the lives of children, is concerned about gender equality?
3. Explain to the class that they will watch a short (2 min. and 29 sec.) video which explains why UNICEF works to bring about more gender equality. The video will show short scenes of life in Djibouti, Indonesia, Brazil, Senegal and Iran. Students will also hear Ann Veneman, the Executive Director of UNICEF, speak about how improving the lives of women also helps to improve the lives of children.
4. Show Visual Aid 15, "Video Viewing Guide." (Visual Aid 15 can also be used as a handout for students to write their answers on the sheet or to take home for further consideration to write a brief essay response.)
5. When students are familiar with the questions, show the video, found at http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/ramfiles/6600h_sowcoverview.ram.
6. Have students discuss their responses to "Video Viewing Guide" questions. Then ask:
 - Were you surprised by what Ann Veneman said about how improving life for women benefits children? Why or why not?
 - What questions do you have after watching this video?

A Note on Terminology:

There is a difference between the terms "sex" and "gender."

"Sex" refers to the biological differences that distinguish males from females

"Gender" refers to the cultural and social differences that distinguish men from women.

Making Connections

Directions:

Help students make connections between the ideas discussed in this lesson and their own lives.

Choose the questions which are most relevant for your class:

- What types of gender inequality exist in the United States?
- (For coeducational schools) What is done in your school to make sure that girls and boys have equal opportunities?

- (For single-sex schools) How can single-sex schools benefit girls (boys)? Are there any drawbacks?
- Does more need to be done to create gender equality in schools?
- List examples that you know of (in your family or community) where improving life for women has benefited children and families.

Emphasize that gender inequality is not something that happens only in developing countries. Though women in the United States have made much progress toward gender equality, they still face discrimination and are under-represented in some areas such as government, sports and certain professions.

Homework

Assign students one of the questions from the list above, and have them write an essay or work in study teams to create a presentation.

Continue to Explore Gender Equality

TeachUNICEF includes other units dedicated to gender equality. Visit www.teachunicef.org to access:

- *Fatna's Story: Giving Girls the Chance to Learn.*
- *Ena's Story: Women and Economic Equality.*
- *Doly's Story: Adolescent Girls Take Action.*

Visual Aid 1

A girl cuts vegetables while her mother stirs a pot of soup behind her in a hut made of scraps of wood, cloth and plastic, in Bathore, a suburb of Tirana, the capital of Albania. In Bathore, families who have no other place to live have built homes, despite lack of running water and electricity. Around the world, many girls are not able to attend school because they are needed to help with household chores

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Visual Aid 2

Two women pound peanuts outside their house near Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. In many countries around the world, women have responsibility for running the household, but have little voice in decisions, such as how money is spent.

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Visual Aid 3

Women work in a clothing factory in Heart, a city in northwestern Afghanistan. The factory employs 350 to 450 women daily, and operates seven days a week. Workers receive the equivalent of U.S. \$2 per day. Without benefits such as child care, they must keep their children with them. When girls reach the age of seven or eight, they join their mothers at work. The scarves and shawls they make are sent to Belgium, where they are shipped for sale around the world. In many countries, women earn less than men for the same work. Their lack of education may make it difficult to find better paying jobs.

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Visual Aid 4

Members of a women's association meet with a UNICEF worker (wearing an armband), in Faizabad, a city in northeastern Afghanistan. The women's association runs a small candy making business to help its member earn income.

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Visual Aid 5

A woman learns sewing during a job training session at a UNICEF supported women's center at a camp for Palestinian Iraqi refugees in Syria. Children in the camp are able to go to school while their parents raise food or learn skills that will help them get jobs.

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Visual Aid 6

In Nigeria, a woman teacher helps three small girls seated at a shared desk with their schoolwork, in a primary school class in Ibadan. Making sure all girls have the same opportunity to attend school as boys have is a priority for UNICEF.

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Visual Aid 7

Two women from the H'mong ethnic group share a book during a UNICEF assisted training session at the women's union in the town of Yen Bai, in Viet Nam. The women are learning to read while learning important information about children's health and development.

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Visual Aid 8

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President of Liberia, speaks with reporters during a press conference in Monrovia, the capital. She was inaugurated as the country's new President on 16 January 2006, becoming the first Liberian — and the first African-woman Head of State. Though more women are being elected to local and national office, their participation in political life still lags far behind that of men. When women are active in politics, they often work to pass laws that benefit families and children.

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Visual Aid 9

What do you know about women in the world?

1. There are about 781 million adults in the world who cannot read or write. What percentage of these are women?

Visual Aid 10

What do you know...

2. What percentage of elected government representatives around the world are women?

Visual Aid 11

What do you know...

3. Worldwide, women who work outside the home earn wages that are less than men's. How much less are women's wages?

Visual Aid 12

What do you know...

4. In the African country of Cameroon, women do more than 75% of the farm work. What percentage of farm land is owned by women?

Visual Aid 13

Video Viewing Guide

- 1. According to Ann Veneman, what are two main ways that improving the lives of women affects children?**
- 2. In the video, you see a community meeting in Senegal where women are speaking up. What are two ways that this has helped children?**

