earning About the Human

Local Action Global Change

Rights of Women and Girls

By Julie Mertus
with Nancy Flowers
and Mallika Dutt

Foreword by
Charlotte Bunch

PUBLISHED BY UNIFEM AND
THE CENTER FOR WOMEN'S
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

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Foreword

by Charlotte Bunch

"Women's rights are human rights" has become an important rallying cry for women around the world in the 1990s. It expresses both women's determination to claim our full birthright as one half of humanity and our exasperation that such an obvious assertion has taken so long to gain international acceptance. As the recognition of women's and girl's human rights has grown over the past decade, so too has the need for more works that explore and expound upon their meaning.

Local Action/Global Change speaks to this need through human rights educational materials that explain and give examples of issues in women's human rights, while also providing exercises that allow for exploration of the particular ways in which these questions affect the lives of any group of women or men, girls or boys.

The idea that women's rights are human rights is at once both simple and complex. Its power lies in the fact that it is simultaneously ordinary and revolutionary. On the one hand, it makes common sense to declare that as human beings, women and girls have human rights. On the other hand, it is a radical reclamation of our humanity and right to equality which has transformative potential. The full incorporation of women's and girls' lives into human rights concepts and practice exposes the failure of countries worldwide to accord females the human dignity and respect they deserve simply as human beings. A human rights framework also provides tools to define, analyze, and articulate women's experiences of violation and to demand redress in ways already recognized by the international community. Finally, it provides a common framework for bringing together women's diverse experiences and developing a wide array of strategies for change.

The language of human rights cuts to the core of women's and girls' inequality. Denial of human rights means denial of the fundamental components of being human. It is the dehumanization of women that fosters and supports discrimination and violence against women and girls, from rape in wars across cultures to economic exploitation and culturally rationalized restrictions on basic freedoms. Human rights principles demand an end to practices that treat women and girls as less than full human beings. Thus, the language of human rights assists in the task of identifying violations and violators, who should be held accountable for these abuses, and what are the remedies for them.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 outlines the world's consensus on the human rights that all people have in relation to such matters as security of person, slavery, torture, freedom of movement and speech, as well as social security, work, health, education, and citizenship. In Article 2, it clearly stipulates that these human rights apply to all equally, "without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language...or other status." Nevertheless, tradition, prejudice, and social, economic and political interests have generally excluded women from prevailing definitions and interpretations of these basic human rights and relegated women to secondary and/or "special interest" status in human rights matters. Thus, how women and girls have experienced human rights abuse has been largely invisible or seen as exceptional. The "typical" human rights victim as well as human rights advocate has largely been seen as male. Only when women suffer the same violations as men do they generally evoke a response from the international community; and only recently have the gendered nature of many of these experiences, such as the sexual torture of political prisoners, begun to be recognized.

Women's peripheral status has been exacerbated and sometimes justified by the division of life into "public" and "private" spheres that prevails in so many societies. Since the "public" sphere is seen as the focus of interaction between state actors and citizens, abuses of that relationship have been the focus of human rights advocacy. However, much of the abuse of women and girls is at the hands of individual male partners and/or family members and is often overlooked by governments even when there are laws against it. Thus, many violations of women's human rights committed in the name of family, religion, and culture have been hidden by the sanctity of the so-called private sphere, and the perpetrators have enjoyed immunity from accountability for their actions.

The status of citizen has also often been exclusionary, entailing gender, racial and socio-economic bias and privileges which marginalize most women. It has been primarily men with privilege who predominate in

public and governmental realms. Therefore, the human rights issues which have been given the most attention have tended to be those to which they are most vulnerable — abuses of civil and political rights such as the right to freedom of speech, religion and assembly, or questions of arbitrary detention, political imprisonment and torture.

In the past few decades, there has been growing pressure on the international human rights community to give greater emphasis to issues of social and economic rights and the right to development as well as to issues of racial and ethnic discrimination. The demand for attention to women's human rights both builds upon and extends this call for a more inclusive human rights agenda. Women's ability to exercise civil and political rights and to participate in public life is often eclipsed by the ways in which their other human rights are denied. Understanding women's rights as human rights thus involves recognizing the interconnectedness of human rights and not placing one type of right above another.

A human rights perspective also helps to illuminate the complicated relationship between gender and other aspects of identity, such as race, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, culture and refugee or migrant status. The forms that discrimination and violence against women and girls take are usually shaped by how gender interfaces with such other factors. For example, if poor women of a particular ethnic group are forcibly sterilized, discrimination on the basis of class and race as well as gender contribute to this human rights violation. Or as the recent exposure of rape of women in war and conflict has demonstrated, the gender and racial/ethnic components of these violations cannot be separated out.

Action to Protect and Promote the Human Rights of Women and Girls

Taking action for women's and girls' human rights involves a shift both in thinking about human rights and in talking about female lives. It entails examining the human rights framework through a gender conscious lens, and describing women's lives through a human rights framework. Looking at the human rights framework from women's perspectives has revealed how much current human rights practices have failed to account for many of the ways in which already recognized human rights abuses often affect females differently than males. This approach does not deny the importance of existing human rights concepts and activities, but calls for more gender sensitivity in their application if they are to fully include the experiences of the female half of the population.

Viewing women's and girls' lives through a human rights framework has also brought new clarity and powerful tools to bear on "women's issues." For example, the movement to draw attention to violence against women as a human rights issue has built on the Universal Declaration's fundamental premise that "No one shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," as well as on other human rights treaties. Human rights vocabulary has helped to define and articulate women's and girls' experiences of violations such as rape, female genital mutilation, and domestic violence in ways that raise the level of expectation about what can and should be done about them. Understanding such violence in terms of human rights establishes unequivocally that states are responsible for such abuse whether committed in the public or private sphere. It also raises questions about how to hold governments accountable when they are indifferent to such abuses and what sorts of mechanisms are needed to expedite the process of redress for violations of women.

The concept of women's human rights has opened the way for hard questions to be posed about the official inattention and general indifference to the widespread discrimination and violence that women and girls experience around the world. Whether used in political lobbying, in legal cases, in grassroots mobilization, or in broad-based educational efforts, the idea of women's human rights has been taken up by women across many boundaries and has facilitated international networking and the creation of collaborative strategies.

Over the past decade, a global movement has emerged to challenge limited notions of human rights that have deemed the lives of women secondary to other human rights questions. The United Nations World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 became a natural vehicle to highlight new visions of human rights thinking and practice. Its initial call did not mention women nor did it recognize any gender-specific aspects of human rights in its proposed agenda. Since the conference represented a historic reassessment of the state of human rights in the world, it became the unifying public focus of a worldwide Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights—a broad and loose international collaborative effort which sought to integrate women into the conference agenda. The concept of women's human rights provided a common framework for collaboration around broad and similar concerns about the status of women, while also providing a way to articulate the diverse pressing human rights issues specific to particular political, geographic, economic, and cultural contexts.

By the time the World Conference convened, the idea that "women's rights are human rights" had become the central focus of thousands of advocates all over the world and one of the most discussed "new" human rights debates. The *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, signed by 171 governments present at the conference is intended to indicate the agreement of the international community on various aspects of human rights. It states unequivocally that:

> "The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, are priority objectives of the international community."

Another achievement of women growing out of the Vienna conference was the appointment by the UN Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women whose job it is to report each year to the Commission on such violence and what the UN and governments should be doing about it as a human rights issue. Women also continued to lobby for and gain wider recognition of women's human rights at subsequent United Nations Conferences. For example, at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, women's reproductive rights were explicitly recognized as human rights. The *Platform for Action* at the IV World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 became an agenda outlining the human rights of women and what it will take to achieve them. Most recently, advocates for women's human rights succeeded in getting rape, forced pregnancy, and sexual slavery recognized as crimes against humanity in the statute for the creation of an International Criminal Court at its founding in Rome in 1998.

The framework of women's human rights is not only useful in efforts to lobby for legislative and policy changes but also provides an important tool for grassroots organizing. Education about the human rights of women and girls both teaches about the range of rights that governments must honour and functions as a kind of gestalt by which to organize analyses of gendered experiences. The human rights framework creates a space in which the possibility for a different account of women's lives can be developed. What is so useful about this framework is that it provides principles by which to develop alternative visions of women's and girls' lives without suggesting the substance of those visions. The fundamental principles of human rights that accord to each and every person the entitlement to human dignity give women a vocabulary for describing both violations and impediments to the exercise of their human rights. The large body of international covenants, agreements and commitments about human rights gives women political leverage and a tenable point of reference. And finally, the idea of women's human rights enables women to define and articulate the specificity of the experiences in their lives at the same time th at it provides a vocabulary to share the experiences of other women around the world and work collaboratively for change.

This book seeks to demonstrate how the language of human rights can help express, examine and address the stories of women's and girl's lives and put them into a larger framework. Human rights helps us move beyond rhetoric to action. Women may have vastly different dreams and may work on different issues in different ways, but the fundamental point that brings us together is recognition that our struggle for equality is part of the broader struggle for human rights for all. Indeed the future of human rights for all depends on respect for women's human rights. For if the human rights of half of humanity can be belittled and bargained away, then the universality of human rights for all is undermined.

Human rights systems provide a way to hold governments, communities and international institutions accountable to some basic ethical standards. A crucial part of this is human rights education and the recognition of one's rights. This book aims at helping advocates to identify and recognize such claims in many aspects of women's and girls' lives. The next step is moving from rights recognition to rights empowerment. Each section of this book provides ideas for organizing for action at the community, state, regional and/or international level. When advocates for the human rights of women and girls are challenged at home, regional and international documents can help to keep one from feeling isolated and be used to demonstrate that governments have already undertaken obligations to recognize and respect these human rights. We must always work to ensure that these documents and concepts amount to more than "nice" words on paper. Together, we must find ways to turn the vision of human rights into action that leads to meaningful change in our lives and in the world. As this book seeks to demonstrate, through local action, we can bring global change.

Why *Local Action/Global Change?*

All human beings, female and male alike, are entitled to the same human rights. Yet women and girls have been consistently neglected in international human rights law and practice. Historically violations based on biological and gender differences have not been recognized as human rights violations. Even organizations dedicated to the protection of human rights have often failed to devote attention to abuses against women or to develop effective methods to investigate gender-based violations. Most women and girls themselves remain ignorant of their human rights and of the documents and mechanisms that define and protect them.

We use the terminology "human rights" to emphasize that we are talking about fundamental, indivisible claims that governments must protect. At the same time, we stress "*women's* human rights" to underscore that the practice of human rights is not gender neutral. Women and girls often experience human rights violations in a manner different from men and boys; the resources women and girls bring to addressing human rights issues differ as well; and the solutions for bias and abuse against women and girls must reflect their needs.

A worldwide movement is working toward the recognition and protection of the human rights of women and girls. Central to that effort is education. Only women who know about their human rights can take effective action to exercise and advocate for them. *Local Action/Global Change* was written to be a flexible, practical tool in the service of this movement—to share information about women's human rights with women, men, and organizations everywhere, and to initiate and develop strategies for translating these rights into action for positive social change.

WHO CAN USE *LOCAL ACTION/GLOBAL CHANGE?*

Because everyone needs to learn about the human rights of women and girls, *Local Action/Global Change* was designed for the broadest possible audience. It combines information on the principal topics of women's human rights with exercises for making them meaningful and strategies for taking action to realize them. The exercises require no special materials or resources, only time to meet and talk. Every effort has been made to allow for wide differences in culture, age, religion, geography, economics and politics.

Local Action/Global Change is intended for men and women, individuals and groups, literate people and those with little or no formal education, and others such as:

- Governmental, non-governmental or inter-governmental organizations holding trainings for staff about how specific issues impact women
- Community organizations holding workshops for activists on the rights of women and girls
- Social workers, health professionals, and youth organizers seeking to educate the communities they serve
- University or senior high school students studying or researching women's studies, political science, sociology or human rights
- Teachers of professional training courses for health workers, para-legals, law enforcement officers, social workers and teachers
- Secondary school teachers preparing classes on gender studies, contemporary issues or social studies
- Groups of friends meeting monthly to read and discuss the issues
- Discussion groups in refugee camps, shelters for battered women, hostels or prisons
- Rural women visiting a health clinic or literacy programme
- Women and men working together in collectives, cooperatives or unions
- Girls and boys working together in youth groups, camps, religious organizations, and other gatherings
- Individual women and men who want to learn more about the rights of women and girls.

HOW IS *LOCAL ACTION/GLOBAL CHANGE* ORGANIZED?

The Foreword by Charlotte Bunch provides a general introduction to the subject of women's human rights and establishes a foundation for the topical chapters that follow. Chapter 1, **"Introductory Exercises,"** links personal experience to human rights concepts, introduces interactive methodologies and starts the process of critical analysis for taking action.

The topical chapters use the following general framework to address specific topics in women's human rights:

- **Objectives** for the chapter
- **A Getting Started section** introduces and defines the topic area
- **Discussion and activities** focus on the principal issues of the chapter topic
- **Boxes within the text** offer statistics and special information
- **Strategies and examples** for taking action
- **Examination** of the *Beijing Platform for Action* on this topic
- **A Making Your Own Law** exercise followed by excerpts from CEDAW and other relevant documents.

The Appendices contain tools for human rights education and advocacy:

- **Analytical charts** for use in workshops
- **Methodologies** for human rights educators and facilitators
- **A guide to Using Human Rights Systems and Mechanisms** that includes a listing of human rights Web sites
- **Selected human rights documents**
- **A glossary** of human rights terms.

WHAT METHODOLOGY DOES *LOCAL ACTION/ GLOBAL CHANGE* EMPLOY?

Local Action/Global Change invites readers to engage fully in learning about the human rights of women and girls. To this end, it provides both factual information and participatory exercises. Some people may read *Local Action/Global Change* on their own and others may experience the book collectively with the aid of a facilitator. Some will use the whole book while others might focus on a single topic. In all cases, however, women's human rights need to be seen in a holistic context. Leaving out any one perspective can weaken advocacy or exclude some women.

The Conceptual Context

Every woman's human rights issue needs to be understood in both its theoretical and concrete particulars. The concepts of human dignity and equality inform all discussion of women's human rights. Chapter 2, "Women's Human Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination," sets forth these and other fundamental human rights concepts such as universality, interdependence and indivisibility. Even the most pragmatic activist would want to be grounded in this framework, with its principles woven into every educational effort.

Furthermore, because all human rights are interconnected and interdependent, no issue can be considered in isolation. A woman's right to education, for example, cannot be separated from her rights in the family, the workplace, the economy or public life. For this reason *Local Action/Global Change* provides frequent cross-references among chapters. In Chapter 3, "Women's Human Rights in the Family," the discussion of resistant authorities directs the reader to a related section on fundamentalism, and a description of the "public-private split" refers to a passage in Chapter 7, "Women's Human Right to Freedom from Violence." Facilitators should emphasize this interrelatedness of human rights whenever they use the book.

The Personal Context

Human rights begin, as Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the UN commission on human rights from 1946-51, observed, "in small places...close to home." Each chapter of *Local Action/Global Change* also begins close to home, with a "Getting Started" section that draws on individual experience with a human rights topic and opportunities to tell personal stories and bring in local culture and history. The focus shifts continually

between the objective and the subjective, with background information and data on specific subtopics followed by exercises that elicit personal reflection and discussion. To create an empowering learning environment, facilitators need to establish a similar balance between introducing external, "expert" information and honouring the first-hand knowledge of the participants.

The Factual Context

Each chapter of *Local Action/Global Change* provides substantive information, including background, statistics and illustrative examples of both human rights abuses and victories. Although not intended as a resource documenting human rights abuses, *Local Action/Global Change* includes factual illustrations in order to define the issues and delineate their principal subtopics. For example, Chapter 12, "Women's Human Rights and the Environment," includes information on environmental hazards for urban women, for rural women and for women in their workplaces. It also examines the responsibility of businesses and governments, the relation between environment and development (including land reform, fuel and deforestation, water, and pesticides) and the interface between human rights and the environment. Such material serves to inform the individual reader and also to provide facilitators with a basis for mini-lectures or handouts.

Where possible factual information is drawn from United Nations sources, as these are widely available and widely accepted. In addition the text draws extensively from the *Beijing Platform for Action*, the final document of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Although the *Platform for Action* is not a legally binding document, it does provide an indication of worldwide understanding of the human rights of women and girls. Moreover, the *Platform for Action* may impact the future development of international treaties or international customary law. Thousands of advocates for women's human rights played a role in the drafting of the *Platform for Action,* and thousands more are playing a role in its interpretation and implementation.

The Legal Context

Learning about women's human rights also requires grounding in local, regional and international law. Every woman, even those with little education and no experience of the law, is empowered by knowing how her human rights are recognized and protected by such documents.

Each chapter of *Local Action/Global Change* culminates with an exercise entitled "Making Your Own Law," which emphasizes that human rights law is an evolving code made by and for people. Having examined the aspects of a particular human right, participants are invited to outline a legal document that would protect that right for women. Next they compare their ideas on how to enforce this right with those in the *Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (also known as CEDAW or the Women's Convention) and other relevant documents. (For additional information on the international legal context, see Appendix III, "Using Human Rights Systems and Mechanisms.")

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Principle 1: Dignity. The core basis of human rights is the protection and promotion of human dignity.

Principle 2: Universality. The universal nature of rights does not mean that they are experienced in the same manner for all people. Universality means that governments and communities should uphold certain moral and ethical values that cut across all regions of the world.

Principle 3: Equality and Non-Discrimination. The *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and other international human rights documents affords the same rights and responsibilities equally to all women and men, all girls and boys, by virtue of their humanity regardless of any role or relationship they may have. When violations against women are not recognized as human rights abuses, women are collectively diminished as human beings and denied their inherent personhood.

Principle 4: Indivisibility. Women's rights should be addressed as an indivisible body, including political, social, economic, cultural and collective rights. These cannot be "prioritized" or divided into "generations" of rights, some of which should be achieved before others.

Principle 5: Interconnectedness. Human rights concerns appear in all spheres of life—home, school workplace, elections, court, etc. Violations of human rights are interconnected; loss of human rights in one area may mean loss in another. At the same time, promotion of human rights in one area supports other human rights.

Principle 6: Government Responsibility. Human rights are not gifts bestowed at the pleasure of governments. Nor should governments withhold them or apply them to some people but not to others. When they do so, they must be held accountable.

Principle 7: Private Responsibility. Governments are not the only perpetrators of human rights violations against women. Corporations and private individuals should also be held accountable; cultural mores and social traditions that subordinate women should be challenged.

▼▼▼

Introductory Exercises

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This chapter provides a variety of exercises for introducing the human rights of women and girls. Section I, "Thinking About Our Lives," contains exercises introducing basic human rights concepts. The exercises in Section II, "Taking Action for Women's Human Rights" help women strategize for action. In addition, a brief section of 'energizers' provides techniques for restoring focus or energy to a group or providing a change of pace.

No group should expect to use all the exercises in any section. Select those best suited to the group and if necessary adapt them to meet the group's needs. Most exercises can be changed to accommodate illiterate or disabled women and few require photocopying or even electricity. These exercises have been used in countries around the world and no two 'performances' have ever been exactly alike.

All exercises in Section I can be combined with any of the substantive chapters that follow. Facilitators should include at least one 'taking action' exercise like those in Section II near the conclusion of any workshop. For example, after reading the chapter on education, consider how to move from analysis to action by doing Exercise 1, "From Analysis to Action" in Section II, or apply the "Effects Wheel" (Exercise 10) to think through possible solutions.

If you can do only one introductory exercise, do Exercise 9, "Wheel of Equality" which relates individual experience directly to human rights concepts. It also leads participants to examine primary human rights documents including, for example, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW).

SECTION I: THINKING ABOUT OUR LIVES

OBJECTIVES

The exercises in this section will enable participants to work towards the following **objectives:**

- Establish common ground among participants
- Help participants focus on themselves as women and girls and to validate their experiences
- Discuss differences among women and girls and to recognize our own fears and stereotypes about women different from ourselves
- Explore the difficulties we may face working in diverse groups
- Explore ways in which we could communicate more with other women and girls and the importance of including all women's voices in human rights discussions
- Understand the difference between sex and gender
- Identify rights that have been denied, hidden or disregarded in the daily lives of women and girls
- Discuss ways in which women and girls can support each other.

Exercise 1: Active Listening

Objective: To emphasize the importance of respectful listening to human rights discussions

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: None

1. Active Listening:
Ask participants to work in pairs: One participant speaks about herself for five minutes while the other listens carefully without interrupting or taking notes. The "listener" then has two minutes to repeat to her partner what she has heard. The partners then switch roles.

2. Discuss:
Invite participants to share their experiences with the group. Discuss:
- What was it like to be listened to intently? To hear your words repeated?
- What was it like to listen and repeat?
- In what situations in our lives do we have similar opportunities to be given full attention? In what situations would we like to be given such attention?
- Why is respectful listening essential to human rights discussions?

Exercise 2: Standing Together/Sitting Alone

Objective: To explore participants' diverse and shared experience and relate to human rights

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: None

1. Action:
Ask participants to sit in a circle. Explain the object of the exercise and how it works: anyone may stand and name a category she belongs to; others who wish to acknowledge that they also belong to this category stand up with her. Emphasize that no one is forced to participate unless she so desires. Start by demonstrating the process with a relatively ordinary category to which you belong such as "oldest child" or "left-handed."

Generally the categories grow more personal and sensitive as the exercise proceeds. Draw it to a close when you feel that the objective has been accomplished.

2. Discuss:
Point out the multiple identities we bring to the workshop. Discuss:
- What were the largest shared categories? What were the smallest?
- Were some of the minority categories sources of pride? Of shame or embarrassment?
- How did it feel to be in a minority category?
- What kinds of women were not represented at all in this group?
- How do the differences, similarities and omissions of the group relate to human rights?

Exercise 3: Identifying Ourselves

Objective: To explore the diversity of women

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Chart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk
Paper and pens (optional)

1. List/Compare:
Ask each participant to list three groups with which she personally identifies. Then divide participants into pairs and ask them to explain their list to a partner.

Next ask each pair to join another pair and have each participant in the group of four to explain her partner's list. Compare lists and consider which categories are unique and which are held in common.

2. Discuss:
In one group, ask participants to call out the categories they named. Check those that are most common. Circle those that are unique.

Did anyone include "girl" or "woman"? Ask why or why not.

3. Read/ Discuss:
Read this paragraph aloud:
Women are, of course, a composite of many different identities. We may be sisters, daughters, mothers, girlfriends, and wives. We may identify as part of religious, ethnic, national, social, political, cultural and professional groups. Our refugee and/or citizenship status, age, sexual orientation, health, and/or disability may define our identity. Too often the part of us that is "woman" is submerged within other identities. People may often perceive us and treat us as woman plus something else (for example, poor woman, refugee woman, disabled woman, woman lawyer, or woman of a particular country, clan, or village). But within all of these groups and all of these imposed labels and self-definitions, we are still women.

Discuss:
- Do you think this is important? Why or why not?
- Can we recognize a group of people called "women" while also remembering that there is no single "type" of woman?
- What are the defining features of "women"?

Exercise 4: Equal Opportunity?

Objective: To explore the connection between equal opportunity and human rights

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: None

1. Action:
Stand at one side of an open space facing participants, who line up in the middle of the space and hold hands. Explain that as you call out a category, those who belong to it should step one foot-length forward or backward as instructed. They should try to keep holding hands during the whole activity.

Then call out statements that separate people. For example:

- "All those whose parents attended an institute of higher learning take one step forward."
- "All those who live in rural areas take one step backward."
- "All those who are healthy and fully physically able...."
- "All those who were born in this country...."
- "All those who belong to the minority [ethnic group, religion, etc.] ...."
- "All those who are single...."

When participants are scattered across the space and unable to maintain their handholds, then turn to the wall behind you and say, "This is the Wall of Success. When I say, 'Go,' everyone should run to the wall, touch it and stand flat against it to claim a place." Of course, those with advantages will almost be there. Others will still be far at the back of the room and arrive too late to get a place at the wall.

2. Discuss:

Invite participants to share their experiences in this exercise.

- How did it feel to be in the front of the group? At the rear?
- How did it feel when you were forced to let go of your handhold with the rest of the group?
- Did you reach the wall? How quickly? How did it feel not to find a place at the wall?
- What can be done to provide more equal opportunities for everyone?
- What is the connection between equal opportunity and human rights?
- Can respect for human rights be achieved through equal opportunity alone?

Exercise 5: Acknowledging Unheard Voices

Objective: To recognize the importance and inherent problems of inclusiveness

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Chart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk

1. Analyze:

Ask participants to look around the group and analyze its composition:

- Is this group representative of women in your community? In your region? In your country?
- Are some categories of women not present? For example, are women of certain ages, religions, ethnic groups, classes, professions, physical disabilities or sexual orientations absent? Make a list of women who are totally absent from the group.
- Are some women present but only as numerical minorities? If the women present who belong to this minority agree, add this group to the list.

2. List/Discuss:

Divide participants into small groups. Ask each group to choose one or two categories from the list to discuss; however, no woman belonging to one of the chosen categories should be represented in the group addressing that category.

Each small group should do the following:

- List the things they would not want anyone to say about them if they were a member of the chosen category. For example, a disabled woman would not want to be called any of the insulting names used in this society, nor would she want to be seen as helpless, unproductive or "a burden on society"
- Discuss their fears of talking to this woman and/or of working with her in a group.
- Discuss what needs or rights may be especially important to this woman.
- *Optional:* Dramatize some of these women's voices. For example, role-play a dialogue with this woman or a monologue in which she expresses her needs and feelings.

3. Report/Discuss:
Ask someone from each group to report on their discussion and/or present their dramatizations. Discuss these questions:

- Although no group can include all types of women, why is it important to include a diversity of voices?
- How do you as individuals and as members of groups communicate with other women?
- Do you already do so? Can these efforts be improved?
- What are the barriers to improving communication? Is breaking down these barriers important? Why or why not? Is breaking down these barriers possible? Why or why not?
- What happens when the voices of some women and girls are excluded from human rights discussions?

Exercise 6: Sex and Gender

1. Read/ Discuss:

Read this passage aloud:
One important concept in seeing and analyzing the role of women in society is the difference between sex and gender. "Sex" refers to the biological differences between men and women, the few differences that we can say are natural in that they are given from birth. "Gender" refers to the social relationships between men and women and the way that relationship is made by society. In other words, gender is how we are shaped after we are born into society. As some trainers explain, "We can understand gender as a set of ideas that gets attached to us through stereotyped social images of women and men. To get imprinted by these stereotypes, persons must pass through complicated socioeconomic processes related to the class and culture" [Sabala and Kranti, Na Shariram Nadhi: My Body Is Mine, ed. Mira Sadgopal (Bombay, 1995), p. 33].

While biological attributes can sometimes be altered, biological sex is essentially fixed. In contrast, gender definitions are in a constant state of flux in response to changing social and economic conditions. For example, in a crisis situation women may take on traditional male roles, e.g., heads of families, industrial workers or soldiers. Because gender is constructed by society and not fixed, stereotypical notions of male and female roles can be challenged. When we say that men and women are not the same, we refer not only to differences in biology (sex differences) but also to the different roles that have been created by society (gender differences).

Because of both sex and gender differences, women and men have different needs. Human rights and development concepts that recognize gender differences seek to address these different needs in a way that promotes women's full participation in community and political life. (See Chapter 3, "Women's Human Rights in the Family," for more on sex and gender.)

2. Gender Quiz:
Read the following statements to the group. Have participants stand if a question is about gender and sit if it is about sex. When disagreement occurs, ask them to justify their opinions. Add local examples if you wish.

Sex or gender?

- Women give birth to babies, men don't.
- Little girls are gentle and timid; boys are tough and adventuresome.
- In many countries, women earn 70% of what men earn.
- Women can breast-feed babies; men use a bottle for feeding babies.
- Women are in charge of raising children.
- Men are decision makers.
- In Ancient Egypt, men stayed at home and did weaving. Women handled family business. Women inherited property and men did not.
- Boys' voices break at puberty; girls' do not.
- According to United Nations statistics, women do 67% of the world's work, yet their earnings amount to only 10% of the world's income.
- Women are concerned about the standard of education for their children.
- Women are forbidden from working in dangerous jobs such as underground mining; men work at their own risk.

3. Discuss:
- Did any of the statements surprise you?
- Where was there disagreement? Could you resolve the disagreement?
- How do gender roles vary across age differences, classes, races, cultures and historical periods?
- In what ways do women in different countries experience power and oppression differently?

Exercise 7: What I Like/ What I Do

Objective: To explore general stereotypes and their effect on women's lives

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials: Chart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk
Paper and pens (optional)

1. List:
Ask each participant to list two things in each of these categories:
- Things that I do and like that are considered "women's activities."
- Things I do but don't like that are considered "women's activities."
- Things I do that are considered "men's activities," regardless of whether I like them or not.
- Things I don't do but would like to do that are considered "men's activities."

Go around the group asking participants what they listed in each category. Record their responses under four headings: "Women's Work I Do and Like," "Women's Work I Do and Don't Like," "Men's Work I Do," and "Men's Work I Would Like to Do."

2. Discuss:
Ask the group to consider the four lists and discuss these questions:
- What generalizations about the roles of males and females can you make from these lists?
- To what extent are gender roles unconscious and/or internalized?
- How have stereotypical images of women influenced your personal history?
- How does women's internalization and acceptance of these roles affect women's lives?
- How has your own life been affected by stereotypical images of women?
- What experiences have you had in challenging gender roles?
- What is needed to improve the gender-determined roles assigned to women?