

# Restricted civil liberties



**Chapter 5 cover photo credits:** © Yannis Kontos / Polaris / Panos Pictures (2001).  
Afghanistan, Navabad. A girl reads at school, in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in the  
village of Navabad, northern Afghanistan, near the Kalakata front line.

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# Restricted civil liberties

## 1. Gender, restriction of civil liberties and poverty dynamics

### Definition and indicators

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) Civil Liberties Sub-Index captures women's freedom of social participation and consists of two variables: freedom of movement and freedom of dress. The first variable measures *freedom of women to move outside the home*, giving consideration to freedom to travel, freedom to join a club or association, freedom to do grocery and other shopping without a male guardian and freedom to see one's family and friends. The second variable measures *the extent to which women are obliged to follow a certain dress code in public*, for example being obliged to cover their face or body when leaving the house.<sup>1</sup>

The sub-index includes data for 123 countries, 30 of which show moderate or high inequalities. Most countries with mild to moderate discrimination are in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries with high discrimination are primarily in the Middle East and North Africa and South or Central Asia, but also include countries from sub-Saharan Africa and Muslim countries in East Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia). The five worst performers are Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen. SIGI analysts tie high restrictions on the sub-indicators of women's mobility and dress to deeply rooted traditions and customs, as well as gendered economic roles often interacting with conservative interpretations of religion – particularly Islam, as manifested in Sharia law, for example (Branisa *et al.*, 2009; Jutting and Morrisson, 2005; Morrisson and Jutting, 2004).

In this chapter, taking a somewhat broader view of civil liberties, and focusing more particularly on girls and younger

women, we expand and redefine the parameters of analysis to include three distinct but interrelated dimensions: 1) the degree to which girls' rights to a separate identity are established through birth registration which, we argue, sets the foundation for other civil rights and liberties; 2) particular restrictions on mobility outside the home that girls and young women may face. We do not consider dress codes, rather, we focus on gendered ideologies of 'public'/'private' spaces; and 3) restrictions on the ability of girls and young women to participate in decision making on issues of concern to them, including through freedom of association and participation in civic affairs. We attempt to identify explicit linkages between patterns of gender discrimination in civil rights and liberties, as so defined, and particular poverty dynamics. Promising initiatives to overcome gendered barriers to civil liberties are examined, along with ongoing challenges in this domain. A number of policy implications are highlighted as a means of advancing reflection on the way forward.

### Civil liberties and safeguards against gender discrimination in international law

Civil liberties, in the broadest definition, are considered to be among the most fundamental individual rights, such as freedom of speech, opinion, movement and assembly, as well as the right to information, to be protected by law against unwarranted governmental or other interference. Key sources of civil and political rights safeguarding civil liberties in international law include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which together make up the International Bill of Human Rights. Particular safeguards for the civil and political rights of women and children include: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), which guarantees women the right to liberty and the security of personal human rights, as well as fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field;<sup>2</sup> and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), which

**Birth registration, as a fundamental human right, represents a state's official recognition of a child's existence, without which a child is essentially invisible.**

includes non-discrimination as a key guiding principle, thus encompassing gender discrimination, and entails a number of articles specifically guaranteeing children's right to participation, to organisation and peaceful assembly, to information and to freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion (Articles 12–17; 31).<sup>3</sup> Article 31 on the right to play and Article 23.1 on the rights of children with disabilities strengthen and broaden the domains of participation that must be made available for all children. (Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities also strengthens the right of children with disabilities to participate in their society.) The UNCRC also provides for the right to immediate registration after birth, with a right to a name, nationality and identity (Articles 7 and 8). The importance of birth registration is also recognised in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 24) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990).

## 2. Dimensions of restricted civil rights and liberties: Statistics and lived realities

### Gender barriers in birth registration: Causes and consequences

Birth registration, as a fundamental human right, has been termed the 'first right' of the child. It establishes the right to a name, nationality and family relations. It represents a state's official recognition of a child's existence, without which a child is essentially invisible. As such, it is a passport to citizenship and participation in society, as well as the foundation for the realisation of other rights and entitlements. Without birth registration, children's access to basic social services, such as education and health care, may be at risk: a number of countries require birth certificates for entry into formal schooling as well as for public health care. Its importance continues through the lifecycle, for activities ranging from employment and marriage to obtaining a passport, voting, opening a bank account and accessing credit. Moreover, registration provides a measure

of protection against violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination, such as, for example, engagement in exploitative child labour, recruitment into armed forces, child marriage and child trafficking. It also helps safeguard a child's rights to inherit property and land. Lack of universal birth registration as an element of overall civil registration systems hampers a government's ability to plan and allocate budgets according to viable statistics (UNICEF, 2005b; 2007b).

Education rights are equally in jeopardy: in Cameroon, a birth certificate is a prerequisite for school enrolment, whereas in Nepal unregistered children can be allowed to attend with the permission of the school principal but are not eligible for free school materials and scholarships. In Ghana, some farmers exploit the lack of birth certificates to hire minors as cheap labourers in the cocoa industry (Cody, 2009).

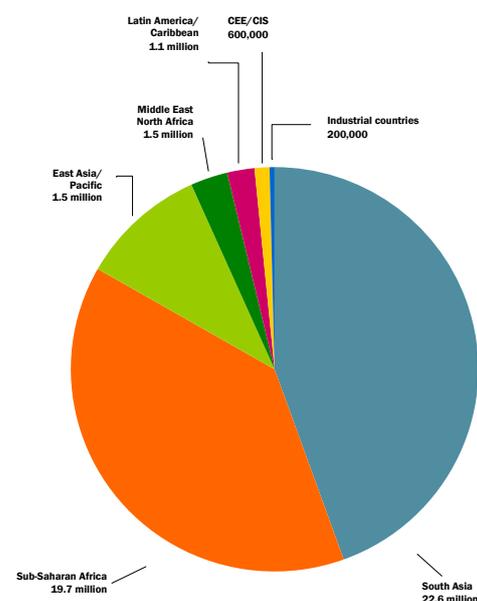
So, too, lack of birth certificates favours child trafficking, with prosecution not easy without proof of a child's identity and age. Girls face particular risks of trafficking for sexual exploitation, particularly in regions of low birth registration, such as in north Thailand in the Mekong sub-region (UNICEF, 2002a). Without birth certificates, police may be unwilling to intervene: in a number of cases of Bangladeshi and Nepalese girls rescued from Indian brothels, repatriation was delayed for months or even years pending identification processes. In the Philippines, 50 percent of child abuse cases, mainly of child sexual abuse, prostitution and child labour, do not reach courts because birth certificates are not available (Cody, 2009). In Pakistan after the 2005 earthquake, apart from increased vulnerability to trafficking, which also occurred after the

### Box 51: Links between birth registration and child well-being

Registration can play a part in connecting children to services. A multivariate analysis of household survey data from 63 developing countries reveals a number of correlations between health, nutrition and birth registration. In Burundi, Myanmar, Niger and Trinidad and Tobago, children with the lowest birth registration had also received no vaccinations; in Northern Sudan, 72 percent of registered children versus just 50 percent of unregistered children had access to appropriate medical care; in Myanmar and Zimbabwe, well-nourished children were more likely to be registered (43 percent) than malnourished children (32 percent) (UNICEF, 2005b).

**Figure 11: Births not registered**

Around 51 million children born in 2006 have not been registered  
Number of annual births not registered, by region (2006)



Source: UNICEF (2007a)



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Niger, Agadez. Zeinabou Obono, who has six children, registers the births of her three-year-old son and her newborn baby at a birth registration session in the Toudou Quarter.

Asian tsunami, girls without a birth certificate could not exercise their right to inheritance (ibid). This is also the case with children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, who do not have the necessary documentation to qualify for financial assistance such as small grants or other support, or even to inherit their dead parents' land or other property.

Lack of birth registration thus has clear linkages to the persistence of intergenerational poverty trajectories, with intertwining causes and consequences. For women and girls, repercussions may be especially severe, building on and magnifying other pervasive patterns of gender discrimination and vulnerability.

As a result of concerted efforts on the part of national governments, international partners and civil society, the global proportion of children with birth certificates has risen in recent years. Nevertheless, birth registration is far from universal, and many challenges remain. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2007a), one out of three countries in the developing world has birth registration rates of less than 50 percent. Around 51 million children born in 2006 were not registered at birth; 44 percent of them live in South Asia, which is the region with the largest overall number of births and the largest number of unregistered children (22.6 million) (see Figure 11). Sub-Saharan Africa, with two out of three children

under five not registered at birth, is the region with the highest percentage of unregistered children under five and, in some countries in the region, registration levels declined between 2000 and 2005 (UNICEF, 2005b; 2007a).

A number of barriers persist in efforts to promote universal birth registration. These include: lack of political will; administrative weaknesses; legislative gaps and hurdles; economic burdens putting registration out of reach of the poorest households; geographic barriers impeding access to services of all sorts; political instability and conflict; and neglect of cultural and community realities (UNICEF, 2002b).

Gender barriers figure within this last category of difficulty, and are linked to both values and practices. In a number of countries, birth registration as a whole suffers as a result of a gender bias that excludes women as actors from the process (UNICEF, 2002a). This has been found to be the case, for example, in India, where registration is far more likely to be delayed if the father is absent (Plan International, 1999; Serrao and Sujatha, 2004), as well as Nepal, where laws requiring registration by the most senior male household member can effectively disempower mothers and shut out single women (Team Consult, 2000, in UNICEF, 2002a). In Lesotho, a patrilineal society, single women are sometimes urged to register their children with the name of their own

### Box 52: Gender, ethnicity and birth registration in Thailand

Many hill tribe girls and women in Thailand do not have Thai citizenship: their children are also stateless. Parents without documents cannot register the birth of their child and unregistered children in turn cannot enrol in school. Thai citizenship is a prerequisite for access to health care; employment opportunities are also limited for non-citizens. Young girls and women are often forced to leave their villages and migrate in search of jobs, with vulnerability to exploitation and abuse by traffickers, employers and the police intensified by their lack of official papers. Many experience abuse by employers as 'they are hill tribe people, and employers think they can do whatever they want to them.' Some end up in shelters that have been established to offer support and guidance. 'There is an Akha (hill tribe) girl here who was in school until the 9th grade, but she can't continue because she has no papers. She went to beauty school at night [while living in the shelter] and does all the girls' hair here. She wants to open her own salon, she has a lot of skills.' In spite of initiatives taken, many such girls become trapped in poverty, with limited opportunities to improve their lives.

Source: Physicians for Human Rights (2004)

father (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1998, in UNICEF, 2002a). In many cases, the registration problems facing a single mother can be insurmountable. In Ecuador, for example, the mother may have to negotiate with the child's father to persuade him to acknowledge his child (Campana Nacional de Inscripciones Tardias, n.d, in UNICEF, 2002a). In Peru, officials may refuse to handle a registration unless the child's father is present (UNICEF Peru, in UNICEF, 2002a).

Particular problems may arise for children whose parents are of different nationalities, particularly when the mothers are married to foreign nationals who are not citizens in countries where patriarchal national laws grant citizenship according to the father's nationality only, such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Dow, 1998, in UNICEF, 2002a).

Gender discrimination leading to disparities in education for girls also has a significant effect on birth registration, with both 'upstream' and 'downstream' implications. Women with little or no education are less likely to register their children at birth. In both Tanzania and Chad, for example, children of mothers who have had some level of secondary education or more were significantly more likely to be registered than those of mothers without education (49 percent versus 2.7 percent in Tanzania; 50 percent versus 20 percent in Chad) (UNICEF, 2002a). Equally importantly, in countries where attending school is also a mechanism for registration, girls may miss out on both of these valuable opportunities (ibid).

Birth registration rates for boys and girls do not in themselves show clear-cut patterns of gender disparity: a multi-

### Box 53: Closing vistas for adolescent girls

The exact start and end of adolescence are arbitrary, but adolescence is the time when puberty brings about physical changes, gender role definition is intensifying and girls move from childhood to adult roles as wife, mother, worker and citizen. During this period, health and social behaviours are established that have a lifetime of consequences. Puberty triggers a marked divergence in gender-based trajectories, usually resulting in greater possibilities for boys and greater limitations for girls. The stronger emphasis on gender roles at the onset of adolescence often underscores the distinct cultural disadvantages that girls face, particularly with regard to opportunity, individual choice and the freedom to err. On the whole, adolescent girls in developing countries spend less time in school than boys, perform a disproportionate share of domestic work, have less mobility outside the home and fewer acceptable public spaces for leisure activity and claim fewer friends, mentors and social outlets.

Source: Levine et al. (2009)

### Birth registration suffers as a result of a gender bias that excludes women as actors from the process.

- UNICEF (2002a)

country analysis (UNICEF, 2005b) found gender parity in birth registration in around two-thirds (65 percent) of the countries studied. Gender disparities that do exist favour boys in some cases (in Cameroon, 80 percent of boys are registered compared with 77 percent of girls) and girls in others (in Brazil, 93 percent

of girls compared with 91 percent of boys are registered). UNICEF concludes that gender is a less significant variable than others (for example household wealth, residence and mother's education), and that existing gender disparities will be considerably reduced when overall birth registration levels in a country rise above 50 percent. Nevertheless, particular action may be needed in a number of countries where significant gender disparities in birth registration persist – rendering girls particularly vulnerable – including the following: Afghanistan: male/female ratio 1.21; Equatorial Guinea: 1.16; the Gambia: 1.12; Guinea-Bissau: 1.05; Maldives: 1.11; Mauritania: 1.07; Niger: 1.07; Sierra Leone: 1.05; and Tanzania: 1.39. In some instances, gender may intertwine with other categories of exclusion to negatively impact on girls (see Box 52).

### Restricted mobility for adolescent girls and women

In many cultures and societies, the mobility of girls as they reach puberty and beyond is increasingly restricted – sometimes for reasons of safety and security but also as a result of gender

### Box 54: Gender differences in mobility – country examples

In Allahabad, India, 93 percent of boys compared with 22 percent of girls reported being able to travel unaccompanied to visit a relative (Sebastian *et al.*, 2004).

In the urban slums of Nairobi, two-thirds of boys, compared with only one-third of girls, reported having a safe place to meet same sex friends (Erulkar and Chong, 2005).

Data collected for the Harvard Adolescence Project showed that, in Morocco, increasing gender differentiation during adolescence included closer monitoring and restriction of girls' activities to the home, where they were expected to take on greater responsibilities (Davis and Davis, 1989, in Mensch *et al.*, 2000).

Ethnographic work in Egypt suggests similar patterns (Hoodfar, 1997). In contrast with Egyptian boys, who find expanding areas of action, Egyptian girls in adolescence have traditionally experienced an abrupt end to the relative freedom and mobility they enjoyed in childhood. Around the time of puberty, girls are expected to display increasing modesty and to withdraw from some public spaces to which they had access as children (Ibrahim and Wassef, 2000, in Mensch *et al.*, 2000). In rural Upper Egypt, the only non-familial social outlet for girls is school (Brady *et al.*, 2007).

ideologies of family honour linked to control over females and social definitions of 'public' and 'private' domains. Restrictions of girls to the home, where they are responsible for a variety of household chores, are linked to their socialisation into socially prescribed gender norms and preparation for their future role as wives. This in turn is a contributing factor to early withdrawal of girls from schooling, and – particularly – post-primary education, depriving them in this way of the well-documented advantages and empowerment accruing from education at this level. Socially isolated, confined to the family, household and gender-sanctioned spaces and engaged in childbearing activities at an early age, it is often difficult, if not impossible, for many girls and young women to participate in wider social networks, skills training opportunities, civic activities or political affairs related to the governance and social development of their communities.

This same restricted mobility often contributes to a spatial disadvantage for adolescent girls and young women, who may be denied access to many public spaces where resources are found and/or key political and economic development processes occur, including governance and paid employment.<sup>4</sup> In the most extreme cases of *pardah* and other forms of female exclusion from the public domain, women become almost totally dependent on male family members for access to external resources and stimuli. Although much has been written about the different forms of female autonomy and power that can be, and are, created within the private realm of family and household, gendered patterns of restricted mobility can help perpetuate gender disparities in access to social and economic resources and contribute to processes of disempowerment of women.

Hallman and Roca (2007) point out that restrictions on mobility are closely related to girls' exclusion from social, political and economic life (thus from participation), and as such are part of the processes that perpetuate disparities in education, health and economic development and exacerbate poverty. Although girls face restrictions early in life, their

transition to adulthood entails greater restrictions and barriers. Girls may enter adolescence earlier and mature faster than boys, but their entrance into adulthood is often a retreat into the domestic sphere, as they take on more family roles and their mobility, public participation and economic, social and political rights are increasingly restricted (Lloyd, 2005).

The increasing physical limitations encountered by girls as they enter puberty have been documented in a number of studies, which contrast this with the growing independence and mobility often experienced by adolescent boys (see Box 54).

For many girls, marriage is the only socially acceptable avenue for exiting a poor and overly protective natal home, and many girls eagerly anticipate marriage with the view that it will expand their social horizons (Brady *et al.*, 2007; Colom *et al.*, 2004). This expectation frequently does not materialise, however. Population Council research (in Hallman and Roca, 2007) shows that married girls have more limited peer networks, less social mobility and freedom, more limited access to media and other sources of information and lower educational attainment than their unmarried age mates.<sup>5</sup> Compared with women who marry later, married adolescents (often with much older spouses) have less freedom of movement, less autonomy and decision making in household and reproductive decisions and, in some settings, increased risk of gender-based violence, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV infection.<sup>6</sup>

Girls and women in many societies are often, in effect, considered social minors, passing from the authority of father (and brothers) within their natal home to the authority of the husband (and in-laws) on marriage – each of which may impose restrictions on movement as one element of control. Young married adolescents may be in a particularly weak position, as they often have much older husbands, who may consider it their prerogative to make all household decisions and control the movements of family members. In an analysis of household data on the impact of early marriage on the lives

**Box 55: Extreme cases of restricted mobility and autonomy for women and girls**

The Pushtun-dominated Taliban imposed strict gender segregation and exercised tight control over the bodies and lives of women and girls in Afghanistan. Under Taliban rule (1996 to 2001), girls and women experienced movement restrictions, arbitrary detention and physical abuse, and were denied their right to work and to education. They were not allowed to exit their house without a close male relative as their guardian (*mahram*), even when visiting a hospital for health issues or childbirth, and had to completely cover their face and body using the burqa or chadori. The oppression was more intense in urban areas, where in the pre-Taliban period women had enjoyed freedom of movement and participation. The vast majority of girls over eight did not receive any education, especially in urban areas: although some secret schools remained in operation, the UN estimated that only 3 percent of girls had some education during the Taliban regime (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Progress for women and girls in Afghanistan remains uncertain under the Karzai regime, which has not upheld principles of equality before the law. A 2009 law imposed restrictions on Shia women, such as the requirement to seek the husband’s permission to leave the house apart from for unspecified ‘reasonable legal reasons,’ and affirmed the husband’s right to cease maintenance to his wife if she does not meet her marital duties, including sexual ones. Adolescent girls’ education in particular remains precarious, for a variety of reasons, including lack of schools, traditional restrictions on girls’ movements, violence and insecurity and early marriage (only 11 percent of secondary school-age girls are enrolled in lower secondary school and 4 percent in higher secondary school). Both girls and women can be, and are, regularly harassed or attacked outside the home if they are not accompanied by their male guardian; insurgents, conservative religious factions or even family members can threaten women if they believe that her attitude, such as visibility in public spaces or participation in public roles, challenges traditional gender roles and brings shame upon her family (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

of young women, women whose husbands had the final say over their visiting the paternal family were more likely to have been married early in seven out of eight countries (UNICEF, 2005a).

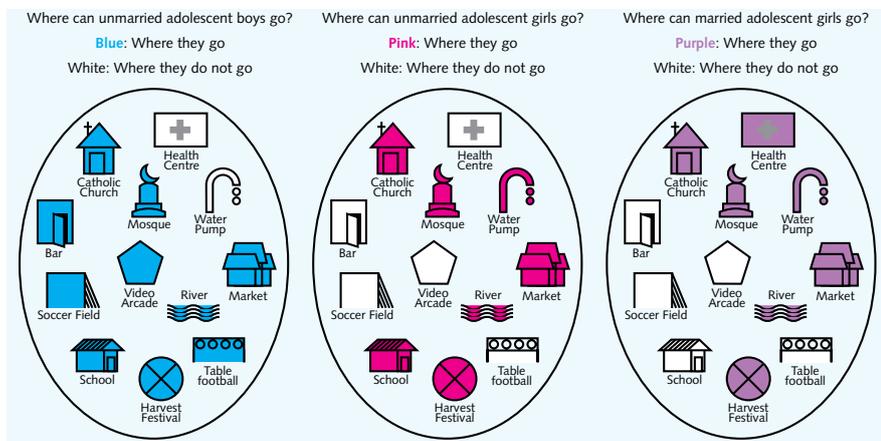
Further analysis indicates particularly high proportions of women in sub-Saharan Africa reporting that their husbands retained sole decision-making power over their ability to visit friends and relatives: this was the case, for example, in over 50 percent of the households in Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria (UNICEF, 2006, see Annex 5). Household decisions regarding women’s mobility directly affect their ability to provide for their own needs, as well as the needs of their children and, in

effect, represent a socially prescribed restriction of public space available to women (see Figure 12 for a graphic depiction).

The gendered division of labour, whereby women and girls are responsible for the bulk of work in the home, coupled with early childbearing, can significantly hamper women’s movements. So too, patriarchal cultural traditions, social values linked to complexes of ‘honour and shame’ and particular religious interpretations often intertwine to accentuate tendencies towards restricted mobility and the seclusion of adolescent girls and women. Extreme examples include the cases of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, where state structures uphold cultural restrictions on women through law and punitive enforcement measures (see Box 55). Together with Sudan, these two countries are rated as ‘worst performers’ on the SIGI freedom of mobility variable of the Civil Liberties Sub-Index.

**Figure 12: Constricting circles for married girls**

Married girls in Burkina Faso have few places to go



Source: Population Council (2007, in Plan International, 2009)

through law and punitive enforcement measures (see Box 55). Together with Sudan, these two countries are rated as ‘worst performers’ on the SIGI freedom of mobility variable of the Civil Liberties Sub-Index.

Saudi Arabia imposes some of the strongest restrictions in the world on the movement of women and girls. Every Saudi girl and woman is required to have a male guardian – usually the father or husband – who is responsible for making decisions on her behalf, including decisions concerning children. This practice is justified by an ambiguous

**Box 56: Mobility and gender-based violence in conflict settings**

'In times of crisis brought on by war, forced displacement, or natural disasters, incidents of gender-based violence tend to increase due to social upheaval and mobility, disruption of traditional social protections, changes in gender roles, and widespread vulnerabilities. Conflict situations greatly increase the mobility of populations. Often women and children are forced to flee without male family members, resulting in increased vulnerability to gender-based violence as they are isolated and without traditional protections. During conflict, women frequently lack the traditional protection of their families and spouses, and often face the additional threat of armed soldiers who regard them as spoils of war. Even when abuses are not aimed at them individually, women suffer violations of their human rights disproportionately when normal codes of social conduct are ignored in times of crisis. During conflict or other emergencies, women may also be forced to assume traditional male roles, such as taking responsibility for the household because men are engaged in fighting or have been killed. Certain responsibilities may put them at greater risk of harm; for example, in the course of collecting firewood, water or food, they must venture away from protected areas. They may have to walk near military encampments and checkpoints in order to collect resources, exposing them to harassment and possible sexual assaults. Vulnerability increases when individuals become refugees, internally displaced, and are forced to live in camp settings. The vulnerability of women and children in these settings is particularly acute, as they comprise 80 percent of refugee and displaced populations worldwide.'

Source: Benjamin and Murchison (2006); see also Ward and March (2006) on the intensified dangers to girls and women needing to seek subsistence outside of refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

verse in the Quran which, according to some scholars, has been misinterpreted by the religious establishment: *Sura 4 Verse 34* of the Quran states that 'men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means.' Apart from male guardianship, the Saudi government imposes strict gender segregation, with negative consequences for women's civil liberties. Girls' access to education often depends on the goodwill of their male guardians, whose permission is needed for enrolment; women's economic participation is extremely low and again dependent on male permission; some hospitals require a guardian's permission for women to be admitted (even for labour) or to administer a medical procedure on her or her children. The imposition of male guardianship on women makes it nearly impossible for victims of domestic violence to independently seek protection or to obtain legal redress, and lack of full legal capacity affects divorcees and widows. Women cannot travel with their children without written permission from the children's father and, in cases of air travel in particular, need their male guardian's written permission to travel alone, with details required on the number of trips and days permitted. Saudi Arabia is also the only country in the world that prohibits women from driving: combined with limited accessible public transport, Saudi women are effectively prevented from leaving their homes and participating in public activities (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Societal concerns for the security of daughters are not always unfounded: girls do face grave problems of insecurity or threats of violence linked to mobility, particularly in societies where crime and/or gender-based violence may be prevalent. Unconstrained mobility in South Africa, where violence of all sorts is well documented, is identified as 'the route to disaster

for girls,' who are considered under threat of attack, robbery or rape while walking on the streets or riding in vehicles, or in encounters with 'sugar daddies' ready to offer money for sex (Dunkle *et al.*, 2007, in Porter *et al.*, 2010). In Ngangalizwe, South Africa, Cecilia, 12 years old, sometimes travels into town by minibus taxi with her mother or a friend, but is nervous about travelling alone:

'I don't like travelling alone when I am sent to town to buy things for the house [...] The thing I fear about travelling on a minibus taxi is that the drivers propose love to us [...] I am scared that they might kidnap me or rape me if I am alone in the taxi [...] The taxi conductors are very rude. Just because we are girls they talk trash and vulgar language to us. They don't have respect' (in Porter *et al.*, 2010).

Conflict zones may also be marked by intensified gender-based violence, with both causes and consequences linked to issues of mobility (see Box 56) (see also Chapter 4 on Physical Insecurity).

One particularly negative manifestation of the restricted mobility of girls and women is its contribution to lower rates of schooling for girls, particularly at post-primary level. Parental concerns for adolescent girls' safety and 'honour' in and on the way to school are often heightened by the lack of a sufficient number of schools at this level, resulting in greater distances to travel or the necessity of boarding. Persistent practices of early marriage combine with restrictions on married girls' mobility to further diminish adolescent girls' chances of continuing education. A number of studies in South Asia highlight the various cultural beliefs and systems that shape parents' attitudes towards their daughters' schooling, including patterns of female seclusion and restricted mobility (Herz, 2006; Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008). This in turn has a clear influence on poverty dynamics, given that both the social and economic returns to girls' schooling at secondary level are particularly high.

Even when girls may be able to take advantage of educational opportunities, restrictions on mobility may limit their ability to seek out and take on available paid employment. This has been seen to be the case, for example, in Egypt, where women’s rising levels of education, in contrast with men’s, have not been accompanied by rising levels of employment, with one explanation suggesting a linkage to restricted job mobility and travel options (Ragui and Arntz, 2005, in World Bank, 2006). Conversely, where young women are more mobile, they are more able to engage in and benefit from the potentially empowering effects of paid employment.

Limitations on mobility can also have health consequences for women and girls who may not be able to access available services. In Pakistan, for example, where just 18 percent of women report that they have ever travelled alone, unaccompanied by others, and 28 percent indicate that they could travel alone to a health centre should the need arise,

restrictions on mobility hinder their access to and use of reproductive health services (Mumtaz and Salway, 2005). So, too, for girls and women living in rural areas of West and Southern Africa that are characterised by limited access to services and markets owing to the poor quality of roads and inadequate transport. Here, the impact of immobility is severe in terms of access to education, health services and markets. Restricted mobility affects girls’ school-going opportunities, women’s access to maternal health services and livelihood possibilities for both women and girls for off-farm income through access to markets, recognised as a protective factor against ‘deep poverty.’ Such restrictions on mobility are therefore seen to contribute to the persistence of intergenerational cycles of poverty (Porter, 2007; Porter *et al.*, 2010).

**Box 57: Social isolation and exclusion**

‘Hundreds of millions of girls in poor communities in the developing world, with especially high concentrations in Sub-Saharan Africa, are socially isolated from their peers, lack access to mentors, safe and supportive spaces, schooling opportunities, livelihoods skills or prospects for decent work. They are at significant risk of gross violations of their human rights (child marriage, female genital mutilation, exploitative work), forced sexual relations, poverty-driven exchanges of sex for gifts or money, excluded from meaningful civic participation, and unable to realize their human potential.’

Source: Bruce (2007)

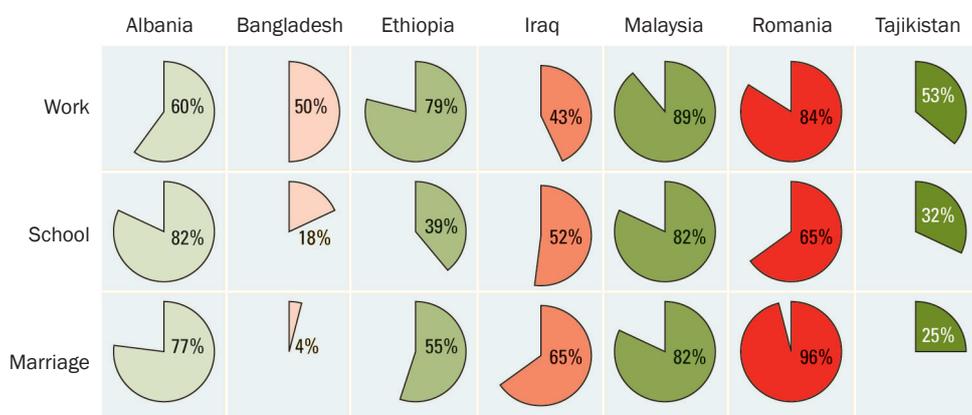
**Gender disparities in participation and voice**

The civil liberties that are the hallmark of true citizenship are often denied to adolescent girls, who have limited opportunities to participate in discussions and decision making within their families and wider communities. Adolescent girls and young women have extremely limited voice in family matters, whether as daughters – subject in most cases to patriarchal authority structures, often compounded by patterns of son preference, whereby brothers may dominate, or as young wives who fall under the authority of husbands and in-laws. As with mobility, for young girls, being married to a much older man or inserted into virilocal residence patterns where older in-laws wield power is particularly silencing in terms of voice and agency. This can lead to a particular gender-based experience of the poverty trap of limited citizenship in their own societies, characterised by limited opportunities

to participate in associative groups, leisure activities, educational programmes and/or extra-curricular activities and both political and economic development processes.<sup>7</sup>

Social norms, values, customs and ideologies may conspire with poverty and its attendant dearth of opportunity to deprive women and girls of their rights to participation. These include gender distinctions that define ‘public’ and ‘private’ spaces and constrict spheres of action (as seen above); a division of labour that often burdens girls and

**Figure 13: Young women and girls with little say in life decisions**



Note: The Figure shows the percentage of people aged 15-24 who answered ‘myself’ (rather than parents, government, or other) to the question: ‘Thinking of [each transition: your current or most recent occupation, your years of schooling, and your marriage partner], who has the most influence?’  
Source: World Bank (2006).



© Dieter Telemans/ Panos Pictures (2002)  
India, Bombay / Mumbai. A girl sleeps outside the house where she is employed as a maid.

young women with sole responsibility for household labour, thereby limiting the time and energy available to engage in outside activities; ideologies, both cultural and religious, that may attribute lesser importance to the individual or collective opinions and capabilities of women and girls; and authoritarian family, community and wider political structures that limit voice and participation according to gender, age, social class and other hierarchies, among others. Limited access to information, coupled with low levels of literacy and education, also inhibits the ability of girls and women to participate in society. The result may be that women and girls exercise little control over key issues of concern to them (see Figure 13).

Girls face multiple forms of discrimination in which gender combines with other factors to limit their ability to make their voices heard and exercise their rights to participation in society. Bruce (2007) identifies four categories of girls who may encounter particular barriers to participation owing to extreme social isolation: those living outside family structures, including especially girl migrants to urban areas who often work as domestic servants in the households of others; poor girls who are on their own or have to support their families, including orphans; girls at risk of child marriage; and girls already married. Hallman and Roca (2007) add another category: girls belonging to minority groups who may be clothed in a double cloak of invisibility, woven of intertwining strands of gender and ethnicity that combine to inhibit

### Box 58: Categories of exclusion

In urban Ethiopia, girl migrants working as domestic servants lack family, friends and any supportive mechanism to protect them, while experiencing increased risk of sexual abuse by their employers owing to their dependence on them for shelter and food, their isolation within the domestic sphere and their invisibility. Their request to participate in a programme offering them basic literacy and numeracy skills, health information and friends was not favoured by their employers, who often did not want to let girls out of the house (Erulkar, *et al.*, 2010).

participation in public processes. Box 58 provides examples of such categories of exclusion that may combine with and amplify gender-based exclusion and isolation. (See also Theis, 2004.)

In Guatemala, girls are less likely than boys to engage in social activities as well as schooling. Minorities make up three-quarters of out-of-school girls: school enrolment rates are 75 percent for non-indigenous children and 71 percent for indigenous boys, but only 54 percent for indigenous girls, dropping to 43 percent for extremely poor indigenous girls (data from 2000, included in a study by Hallman *et al.*, in Hallman and Roca, 2007).

Data from studies by the Population Council (Hallman and Roca, 2007) reveal that poor girls in particular tend to feel threatened and insecure: they are often socially isolated, lacking friends and networks of support, and do not engage in any social or recreational activities. In the urban slums of Nairobi, for example, only a third of girls report having a safe space to meet same sex friends (compared with two-thirds of boys); in Addis Ababa, girls reported having an average of 2.7 friends compared with the average 4.7 of boys; in South Africa, girls reported feeling insecure in their neighbourhood, experiencing harassment and lacking sources to support them in case of need; in rural Upper Egypt, with many girls out of school, there is no socially acceptable space to meet with others outside the family household.

Social isolation may be experienced differently in different settings. In Nepal, for example, where female adolescents have far less opportunity for social interaction than boys, the situation seems particularly acute in urban areas, where 20 percent of girls spend no social time with their peers at all: urban girls who are not in school or not working have few legitimate social outlets (Malhotra *et al.*, 2000, in Levine *et al.*, 2009).

The lack of opportunity for girls to participate in social activities not only is a denial of rights but also entails serious dangers for well-being in terms of physical health and emotional development, as well as educational opportunities and improved job prospects. Overloaded with domestic tasks, lacking access to schooling and essential information about themselves and their bodies, with limited chances of having friends with whom to voice concerns and from whom they can receive support, girls often lack basic life skills and the confidence needed to make choices and decisions for themselves and later for their children (e.g. Bruce, 2007). In KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, for example, where three times as many women as men aged 15 to 24 are infected with HIV, girls who were socially isolated tended to be more at risk of experiencing non-consensual sex (Hallman and Diers, 2005, in Levine *et al.*, 2009).

Constraints on girls' participation in decision making and social activities outside of the household may in turn set the pattern for limitations on women's later ability to participate in the economic and political life of their community, as capabilities in these domains need to be built on strong foundations over the lifecycle.

### 3. Promising programme and policy initiatives

#### Linking birth registration and gender equality

Advances have been made in strengthening and expanding national birth registration systems, a number of them addressing specific gender barriers to registration. Legal reform, for example, has included the elimination of discriminatory practices that do not allow women to register their children without the presence or the approval of the child's father. In Nepal, a landmark Supreme Court ruling of 2005 declared that, in the absence of the father or in cases of uncertain paternity, a child's birth must be registered based on the mother's citizenship, including children born to women engaged in prostitution (Cody, 2009). Peru amended its legislation in 2007 to ensure the right of children born out of wedlock to be registered under the father's name. Morocco adopted a new Law on Civil Registration in 2008. Thailand reformed the Nationality Act in 2008 to ensure that all births are officially registered regardless of the parents' legal status (UNICEF, 2009). Other strategies to strengthen birth registration in general include: increasing budget allocations; coordinating actions between central authorities and local structures; integration of birth registration into existing structures and services such as health and education; involving the widest possible array of stakeholders; and awareness raising around the issue.

One successful approach in India has promoted birth registration as an effective strategy to protect girls' rights. The Kopal Project, supported by Plan International, has operated since 2004 in selected districts of four Indian states with

#### Box 59: Birth registration and cash transfers – examples from India and Bolivia

In India, a number of different programmes have been designed specifically to raise the status of girls in society and promote their rights, starting from the right to an identity through birth registration. In the Ladli scheme, for example, the government of New Delhi makes parents' possession of a birth certificate for their daughters a prerequisite for regular cash transfers into accounts established for each girl (10,000 rupees on her birth and 5,000 rupees at different stages throughout her education, dependent on her family's income).

In Bolivia, the Bono Juancito Pinto scheme was initiated in 2006 to provide financial incentives to parents or guardians to enrol and maintain their children in school: as in the example above, possession of a birth certificate is required for participation.

Source: Cody (2009)

### Box 60: Safe spaces and schools for girls and women in Nepal, Pakistan and Yemen

With support from Save the Children UK, a core group of 18 girls in Surkhet, Nepal, met regularly to gather information about safe and unsafe spaces in the locality. They then met with community members and authorities to raise awareness and call for changed attitudes, in order to transform unsafe spaces into safe ones, to improve girls' mobility and to expand access to public services and opportunities. The group has developed strong networks with local authorities, police and teachers' and women's groups, all of which now recognise the group as an important agent for change. The initiative has led to behavioural change among teachers, boys, parents and community members. Meanwhile, the girls have become more confident, articulate and able to negotiate for change.

Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province is a conservative tribal area, where gender disparities in literacy are striking: 59 percent for men and 21 percent for women. The dearth of qualified women to fill teaching posts in rural areas contributes to parents keeping their daughters out of school. UNICEF's Mobility Support Scheme, in partnership with local authorities, teachers and parents, hired local vehicles and trusted drivers to take women teachers to and from their schools. The scheme has been a resounding success: 300 female teachers initially benefited and some 150 new teachers have been appointed in three districts. In Upper Dir district, an 85 percent drop in absenteeism has been recorded. In Hangu district, 21 primary schools have been reopened and girls' enrolment has increased from 800 to 14,000.

Recent studies show that lack of accessibility and socio-cultural factors are among the main causes of low enrolment and high dropout rates for girls in Yemen. A scheme has been launched to facilitate the recruitment of female teachers in rural areas and to expand the educational infrastructure, thus eliminating the need to travel long distances to school. Girls' participation in school can be enhanced by acknowledging socio-cultural realities, including gender segregation and restrictions on mobility, and by bringing schools closer to girls, both physically and culturally.

Source: Alim *et al.* (2007); Bhandari *et al.* (2005); Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008)

### Box 61: Changing lives/changing perspectives

In rural Upper Egypt, where female education is discouraged and adolescent girls' mobility and participation are severely restricted, the *Ishraq* ('Enlightenment') programme was launched in 2001 to provide safe spaces for educational, health and social opportunities. Initially targeting 278 girls aged 13 to 15 years in four rural communities in one of Egypt's poorest regions, the programme offered literacy and numeracy training, health knowledge, life skills and, for the first time in Egypt, sport activities for girls. Local young women who had graduated from secondary school were employed and trained as teachers and mentors of the girls. Boys and especially the brothers of the participants were also involved in discussions on gender roles. An evaluation indicated wide-ranging results: girls made progress in their studies and gained self-esteem. By engaging in sports, they also gained team-building, cooperation and leadership skills while laying the foundations for a healthy lifestyle. This involvement in sports challenged traditional gender norms and local perceptions, making girls more publicly visible and leading to changes in 'how the girls are seen in the community and how they see themselves.' Programme successes have led to its expansion to 30 villages, involving 1,800 girls.

Source: Brady *et al.* (2007)

low birth registration rates, coupled with distorted female/male sex ratios resulting from practices of female foeticide. An evaluation in 2008 demonstrated that the project had been effective in both increasing birth registration rates and improving the sex ratio, particularly through the creation of a broad coalition of partners, including youth volunteers, actively working to raise awareness of the issues and implement activities. The project's success has been such that it has been replicated in four more districts by UNICEF (Cody, 2009; Das and Silvestrini, 2008). Another innovative approach to gender barriers involves linking birth registration with cash transfers for girls (Box 59).

### Enhancing mobility and creating space for participation

The importance of creating 'safe spaces' for adolescent girls to congregate has gained power in recent years as a strategy designed to overcome community fears about girls' participation in public spaces and the subsequent restrictions on mobility that this entails: 'For young women making the transition to adulthood, the existence of safe social spaces in which girls can interact with their female peers serves as a critical site for the development of self-esteem and identity, building the foundations for future community engagement' (Lloyd *et al.*, 2005). Specially designed centres have been built

### Box 62: Mobilising girls through sport

The Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya began as a sports league for boys but evolved to integrate girls after programme managers and team members saw women athletes during a trip to Norway in 1992. Parents' initial reluctance to allow their daughters to participate – linked to concerns that time would be taken away from household chores and that increased mobility would expose them to unsafe spaces – were slowly overcome, and mothers in particular became active supporters of their daughters. According to project documents, participation in the programme has: 1) expanded the gender roles available to young girls; 2) provided opportunities to build friendships and gain confidence; and 3) created an avenue to escape the socially defined confines of daily routines. There was a conscious effort to work against gender stereotypes in the organisation and, after some ten years of operation, a number of girls have risen through the ranks to be managers/coordinators, coaches and referees.

Source: Brady and Khan (2002, in Lloyd *et al.*, 2005)

and public facilities such as schools after hours have been used creatively for a variety of purposes, including catch-up education, peer-to-peer support networks, leisure activities and girls clubs, financial literacy and skills building (Levine *et al.*, 2009).

Strategies in education to address parents' concerns about security for their daughters have also led to the development of the child-friendly/girl-friendly school concept, which seeks to create safe, supportive environments in schools closer to communities, often employing female teachers (e.g. Herz and Sperling, 2004).

As in the example above, innovative efforts to promote girls' participation in physical activities and sport have sought to break persistent barriers and gender stereotypes in this domain, where lack of access to sport is often linked to cultural notions about the female body. This is also illustrated in Box 62. Renowned female sports figures can serve as potent champions of gender equality in this regard, and as influential role models for girls. In Morocco, for example, female hurdles champion Nawal El Moutawakel recognised her position as a role model for women, especially Muslims, noting that her main function as a member of the International Olympic Committee was 'to encourage more women to participate in sport worldwide' (in DAW, 2007). Tennis champion Serena Williams, motivated by her participation in the 2006 United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit, undertook a mission to Ghana and Senegal to highlight the role of sport in the empowerment of women and girls in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (*ibid.*).

### Amplifying voices and organising representation

In a growing movement to give voice to children, a number of national and international actors are involved in efforts to support and promote participation by children and young people in activities and decision making around issues that concern them. These include the creation of school clubs and extra-curricular activities linked to girls' concerns and broader community issues; the establishment of children's councils and parliaments; the reinforcement of child-to-

child outreach programmes and media and communications networks; the mobilisation of information and awareness-raising campaigns on different aspects of child rights; and the application of participatory research and programme planning methodologies as a means of integrating the views of children and young people in national development processes, including budgets. Such approaches seek to accompany the evolving capacities of children to engage with and effect change in progressively widening communities.

A number of efforts to promote and enhance girls' participation in particular have taken shape through coalitions of partners at international level. Others have been home grown. Boxes 63, 64 and 65 give just a few examples of some promising initiatives aimed at amplifying the voices of girls and young women and strengthening their ability to participate in political, economic and civic affairs.

What these examples, as well as the earlier ones, have in common is an approach seeking the 'empowerment' of girls in terms of enhanced opportunity and capacity for participation in society. Empowerment has multiple meanings and dimensions, but key elements have been defined as: 1) developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's own life; 2) gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power; and 3) developing the ability to organise and influence the direction of social change (UNIFEM, in Plan International, 2009). In this sense, the approach to empowerment corresponds with Sen's (1999) notion of 'development as freedom,' encompassing both processes and opportunities for expanding capabilities. These in turn require strategies for social mobilisation and communication, sustainable resourcing and support and the flexibility to evolve and adapt as contexts change over time. Movements by and for girls aimed at creating conditions of gender equality in civil liberties can in this sense gain from the experience of women's movements and collective endeavours, building strategies and partnerships around shared goals.

Recognising the particularly complex situation of adolescent girls, a number of different global coalitions of partners have been established to work together to develop specific strategies to overcome barriers to their full participation in society and

### Box 63: The importance of voice and leadership

It is increasingly recognised that consulting children and adolescents is a practical way to ensure the effectiveness of policies and practices relating to them. Building permanent mechanisms for children and young people to influence public planning and budgeting may not be easy, but it leads to encouraging results – in terms of developmental benefits but also effective community action.

In Cameroon, where persistent gender discrimination limits girls' participation in educational and social activities, a UNICEF-supported initiative enables girls aged 14 to 17 to take up leadership roles as junior mayors and councillors in municipal youth councils. A gender balance in the councils is compulsory, and all members receive appropriate training to be able to voice their concerns and work effectively. Over three-quarters (77 percent) of junior mayors are girls. Female junior mayors and councils are actively involved in, among other things, HIV/AIDS prevention as well as activities promoting the right of young people to express freely their opinions.

In Karnataka, in India, Bhima Sangha ('Strong Union') involved around 13,000 children by the mid-2000s. Children organised as a union have been able to negotiate access to health care and other services; taken action against employers who mistreat child workers; and gained permanent representation in decision-making processes at village level. Children's councils are led by children representing different interest groups, such as students, working children and disabled children. In some councils, 65 percent of members must be girls – because girls represent a majority of the child population in the area and are considered most vulnerable to exploitation. A general assembly has been created, with participation by over 1,000 children, who have gained confidence and experience in raising issues with local government officials and adult councillors.

Source: Chendi (2010); UNICEF (2009); Williams (2004)

### Box 64: Girls' clubs and other initiatives to break down obstacles facing girls

The Girls' Education Movement (GEM) is part of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). It is a child-centred, girl-led global movement of children and young people whose goal is to bring about positive social transformation in Africa by empowering girls through education. The network is active in Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, South Africa and Uganda. Girls take the lead, boys act as strategic allies and adults – women and men – provide guidance and support. In Uganda, girls' clubs have addressed the lack of appropriate water and sanitation facilities in schools, through lobbying ministry officials, participating in facility construction and maintenance and mobilising government funding for menstrual hygiene materials in schools, which has in turn helped break the silence on menstruation. In this way, girls are becoming valued change agents and catalysts for community development.

Initiated in May 2010, with the support of Plan International, the Girls Making Media Project is designed to contribute to the elimination of gender discrimination and low quality media reporting on adolescent girls' issues in West Africa, with a focus on Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo. Members of local children's and youth organisations and girls' clubs are trained on a variety of topics, including gender and the use of social media for advocacy, and selected girls are supported to receive an internship with media partners and/or courses in local media schools. Adult journalists receive training on ethical reporting on gender discrimination and violence against adolescent girls, with special support for female journalists who continue to engage with the girls' clubs as role models, mentors and coaches.

Source: Barebwoha (2007); UNGEI (2007); [www.comminit.com/en/node/322095](http://www.comminit.com/en/node/322095)

### Box 65: Engaging with national budget processes

In South Africa, children's capacities are being built to participate in national budget processes through the Children Participating in Governance (CPG) project initiated in 2005 by the Children's Budget Unit of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) – a civil society organisation. The aims of the project are: 1) to create opportunities for children in South Africa to monitor government budgets; 2) to improve children's participation in research monitoring for budgets and rights realisation that ultimately informs policy shaping; and 3) to contribute to the alignment of government budgeting to rights realisation. Four children's organisations representing urban and rural children from four provinces have participated in training, including on child rights and gender-responsive budgeting. The training itself was an empowering experience for the children, especially for girls, as expressed by one participant: 'I learnt that children do have a voice and that there are people willing to listen to us [...] I learnt to use my power I have as a child and I've become confident around a lot of people.' After two years of implementation, the CPG project enabled children to critique the national budget of 2006/07 and to lobby for inclusion of children within the budget development processes. Longer-term budget policy change will demand continued engagement and support.

Source: Nomdo (2006; 2007)

to foster sustainable approaches to empowerment (see also Chapter 3 on Limited Resource Rights and Entitlements). These range from the early joint initiative in 1999 by UN agencies supported by the UN Foundation to design and implement pilot projects aimed at meeting the development and participation rights of adolescent girls, to complementary initiatives by the Population Council, the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Family Care International, to the recent Adolescent Girls' Initiative supported by the World Bank and others.<sup>8</sup> Lessons learnt from the actions of these and other partners are feeding into global efforts to expand civil liberties for girls and young women.

#### 4. Lessons learnt and policy implications

Challenges encountered by some of the recent initiatives described above have included overall lack of accountability by states for their citizens, limited legislative reform and implementation, weaknesses in policy and budget structures and allocations, as well as lack of specific strategies at national level to support and strengthen the exercise of civil liberties by girls and young women. Holistic responses are required to address the multiple barriers that inhibit both the recognition and the exercise of civil liberties for girls and young women. Such responses must take into account the specific contexts in which girls live and grow up and the multiple sources of discrimination (such as ethnicity, class, caste, disability) that may combine with gender to diminish their opportunities and deny them their rights. Lessons learnt for policy development and implementation include the following:

- Efforts to promote birth registration in general, and especially for girls, are an essential prerequisite to strengthening girls' civil liberties. Legal reforms are needed to allow either parent or a guardian to register children, as are enforcement efforts promoted through enhanced budget allocations, improved coordination among central and local authorities, and awareness raising initiatives. Facilitating registration by providing opportunities in households' daily lives through, for instance, education or health services, is also critical.
- Creating safe spaces for girls and young women to meet, share experiences and gain new knowledge and skills helps overcome gender barriers to participation in the public domain and expands opportunities for social engagement. Activities to build confidence and capacity should be built into such measures, along with efforts to establish networks of mentors and role models for girls.
- Expanding quality educational opportunities for girls, particularly at the post-primary level, is critical to processes of social inclusion and preparation of young women for active participation in civic life. This is in turn a key component of improved governance. Strategies to enhance educational access and quality for girls include: addressing both the direct and the indirect costs of a daughter's schooling for parents; bringing schools closer to communities and promoting community involvement and support; making schools more girl friendly, including through provision of female teachers and safe environments; and enhancing overall quality so that the benefits of education can be felt.
- Amplifying the voices of girls and young women and promoting processes and structures through which they may make their voices heard are critical dimensions of empowerment and enhanced civic engagement. Care must be taken to ensure broad representation, to guard against formalism and to wed such efforts to expanded opportunities to exercise agency in acting on felt needs.
- Participation is not just about amplifying 'voice' but also about expanding opportunities to articulate and express that voice, providing the access to education and information necessary to participate in decision-making processes as equals and creating supportive structures for this participation, including structures created and led by girls themselves.
- Mobilisation of boys and men is required to contribute to changes in both attitudes and behaviours favouring gender equality and gender justice (Karkara, 2007). Such mobilisation is essential in addressing hegemonic forms of masculinities and patriarchal social structures (see also Chapter 4 on Physical Insecurity).
- Long-term commitment is needed for transformative social change for social justice that will alter perceptions and institutions, remove persistent gender biases and create the conditions for social justice. This entails everything from legal reform to guarantee rights, coupled with application of the laws; to social mobilisation and communication campaigns to counter resistance and shape opinions; and even to changes in the physical environment and technology.<sup>9</sup> Without such long-term efforts for multifaceted change over time, gains in one area may be offset by resistance in another: progress in each domain needs to be nurtured and supported so that the true benefits of gender equality in civil liberties can be transmitted from one generation to the next.

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## Notes

- 1 <http://genderindex.org/content/social-institutions-variables>.
- 2 CEDAW deals specifically with the rights of women, not girls, although there are references to girls in Article 10 on education in terms of 'the reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely,' and in Article 16 on early marriage, stipulating that 'the betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legal, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.'
- 3 Although the UNCRC includes gender discrimination under the overall principle and articles dealing with non-discrimination, it makes no specific reference to the girl child: girl children are, however, recognised as among the specifically vulnerable groups in the preamble to the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, with a provision in Article 9 that 'particular attention should be given to protect children who are vulnerable to such practices.'
- 4 Spatial disadvantage has been identified as a key element in 'poverty traps' that both foster and maintain people in situations of chronic poverty.
- 5 Amin *et al.* (2002); Erulkar *et al.* (2004); Mensch (2005); Santhya and Jejeebhoy (2003).
- 6 Amin *et al.* (2002); Clark *et al.* (2006); Kishor and Johnson (2004); Santhya and Jejeebhoy (2003).
- 7 'Chronically poor people have no meaningful political voice and lack effective political representation. The societies they live in and the governments that exercise authority over them do not recognize their most basic needs and rights' (CPRC, 2008).
- 8 [http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/index\\_girls.html](http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/index_girls.html).
- 9 Research has suggested, for example, that improvements in infrastructure, e.g. street lights (which enhance security), piped water and technologies that relieve the burden of household labour, are associated with increased agency and action by women and girls, removing as they do some of the key barriers to mobility and participation (Greene *et al.*, 2009). Other important infrastructural interventions include construction or improvement of roads; improved logistics include promotion of better transport options such as the use of bicycles and motorcycles (countering male monopolies but with attention to security); and technological advances include expanding the use of mobile phones, which increases opportunities of 'virtual mobility' (Porter, 2007; Porter *et al.*, 2010).

