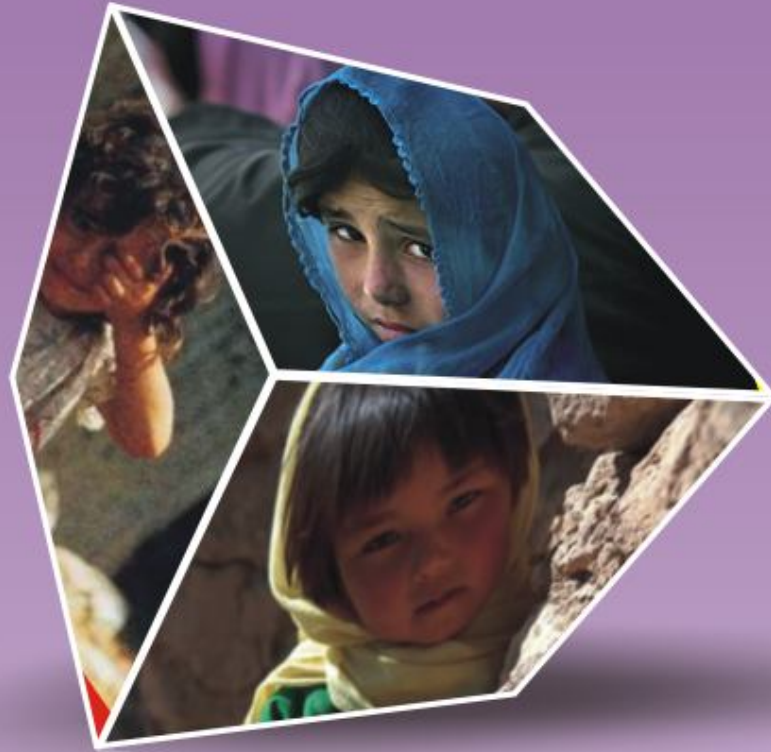




Save the Children
Sweden-Norway



Girl - Children Situation within the Families

*Research report prepared by Women and Children
Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF)*

2009

Girl – Children Situation within the Families

Introduction of the Book

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Few words about Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF)

Women and Children Legal Research Foundation was established in March 2002 in Kabul city. Primary purpose of its establishment has been disclosing injustices within Afghan society under the name of indecent traditions and customs being imposed on women and children in Afghanistan.

Women and Children Legal Research Foundation has been doing its research activities both in rural and urban areas of Kabul, Parwan, Balkh, Badakhshan, and Nangarhar provinces.

Women and Children Legal Research Foundation is trying a society to be created in which legal rights of women and children have been guaranteed by law, women and children are not victims of injustice, and society in which they have full access to their legal rights. In addition, it is seeking a society in which women and children are not victims of indecent and bad traditions and customs, they will have better life and economic independence and will have full awareness of their fundamental human rights that have effect on their life. Thus, they will be able to fight for making positive social changes in the society.

Basic goals of Women and Children Legal Research Foundation are as follows:

- Undertaking more efforts to fight violence against women and children in Afghanistan;
- Work locally for the purpose of changing attitudes and behaviors that lead to violence against women and children;
- Undertaking advocacy and propaganda for making changes in the current local structures, if needed, to create safer and better life conditions for women and children;
- Building capacities of local leaders through increasing their awareness level in terms of negative impacts of violence against women and children and encourage them to make positive changes

in their communities so that they will support the needs of women and children;

- Reducing violence against women and children through undertaking research , propaganda and publication activates; and
- Making aware Afghan women of their social, political, economic, and legal rights

Short history of Save the Children of Sweden-Norway Afghanistan Program

Save the Children of Sweden-Norway, as a restorative organization of the children rights, aligns its activities through implementing children-oriented programs and tries to empower the officials that are responsible for children rights in the country so that these in -charges will be able to restore children rights in a proper manner.

Save the Children program mainly emphasizes on empowering children to understand their rights and responsibilities and refers to cooperation between government and non-government organizations in the area of implementing and developing children rights as a big achievement in Afghanistan.

Save the Children of Sweden-Norway has been cooperating with the Ministries of Women’s Affairs, Education, Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, and Haj and Endowments and more than 45 non-government organizations active in the country.

Save the Children of Sweden-Norway, programs in Afghanistan are as follows:

1. Protecting children against ally types of violence, physical and sexual misuses and discrimination
2. Providing quality and inclusive education for children; and
3. Developing and promoting children rights in the society.

Protecting children against all types of violence, physical and sexual misuses and discrimination

Save the Children of Sweden-Norway programs have been designed to aim the creation and strengthening of violence free environment and consider protecting children from misuse, violence, exploitation, and other issues that cause psychological, physical, and sexual problems for children as their top priorities. Save the Children of Sweden-Norway tries for better accountability of the officials in terms of restoring children rights and empowering children. Analyzing the situation of children, comprehensive research, training programs, strengthening capacity and direct support are among the main activities of this organization.

In addition, establishment and strengthening of protecting bodies at the national and local levels to better protect and restore children rights has been taken into account. Our programs in the area of legal support for designing and developing policies that can help restoring children rights can be used by other entities as a reference and guidance. In the recent years, Save the Children of Sweden-Norway has increasingly been focusing on the elimination of physical and psychological punishments against children.

Providing quality and inclusive education

Save the Children of Sweden-Norway programs in the area of education mainly focuses on helping vulnerable children and strengthening the capacity of other partner organizations through holding seminars. Also, increasing the quality of education in private and public schools through developing and holding seminars to train teachers in the area of children rights and eliminating physical punishment of children, psycho local and social issues and problems and encouraging students to take part in the development and class activities is the main purpose of this organization.



Furthermore, Save the Children of Sweden-Norway has organized training programs for developing the capacities of parent-teacher association. These training programs aim to empower members of the association to take more and active part in education activities and make more children involved in the development activities of their schools and society. Save the Children of Sweden-Norway tries to implement the policy developed by the Ministry of Education with the help of other partner organizations to strengthen the capacity of education in the country.

Developing and promoting children rights in Afghanistan

Program of developing and promoting children rights in Afghanistan aims to strengthen capacity of government and non-government organizations in terms of children rights and restore them through holding trainings, conferences, consultations with elders and children and giving awareness at national and local levels. For giving awareness to society, Save the Children of Sweden-Norway has been using, with the help of Ministry of Haj and Endowments, the messages of children rights from the viewpoint of Islam and Convention of the Child Rights.

Section One

Introduction and definitions

1. Introduction of the report:

Violence and violating human rights generally exists among all human groups and all human societies. Nevertheless, young women and girls due to their age and sex have totally different experience in terms of violence and violating their human rights. Violence against girls or girl-children not only includes sexual violence against them but also this depends on different conditions in which these girl-children have been living. Girls take responsibility of house affairs earlier than their peer-boys do. In addition, in the same way, they leave schools earlier than boys do. In many parts of the world, dropout rate of girls from schools is very high than the dropout rate of boys.

In addition to that, girls in comparison with their peer-boys have little opportunities and facilities in their life. Furthermore, these are only girls who experience high rate of early and childhood marriages and in the result high rate of early and childhood births while they do not have access to health services and while they themselves still are children.

Paragraph two of article 16 of Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women says about the marriage of children as follows: *“Engagement and marriage of children are not considered legally effective and executable. All necessary measures including making laws to determine minimum age appropriate for marriage have to be undertaken. All marriages have to be registered in courts and government offices.”*¹

¹ Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women(CEDAW), paragraph two of article 16

Taking into account whatever mentioned above, girls/ girl children have been exposed to more violence and discrimination in comparison to boys in different parts of the world. Therefore, discrimination against girls is not justifiable socially, politically, and emotionally.

Situation of girl- children in Afghanistan, as a country in conflict and in taking into consideration that gender discrimination and cultural sensitivities against girls and women exist within families and society, need special attention. This report is another research report of Women and Children Legal Research Foundation aimed at unveiling life realities of girl children in Afghanistan. It is expected that this report will become a major step toward understanding special needs of girl children at whole and especially in Afghanistan and will be able to focus more attention to removing gap in ensuring equal rights of girls and boys at national and international levels. Thus, it is anticipated that this report will be used for strengthening commitments made in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and provision of effective opportunities to reach these goals.

This report tries to convey the voice of tens of thousands of Afghan girl-children who have been facing violence and discrimination within their families, and thus have been deprived of their childhood life pleasures, to people, government, different organizations, and more importantly to families of these girl- children.

To this end, this report calls on government and national and international entities and organizations to develop accountability mechanisms for ensuring girls rights and pay more attention to the implementation of these mechanisms. In this report, it is emphasized that special needs of girl children require particular attention and programming to meet these needs. We all are responsible to listen to the voice of girl children. Society, government, and international organizations have to use different available opportunities in particular to develop and implement policies and programs for supporting girl children against violence and discrimination.

Treating with the phenomenon of discrimination and violence against women especially within families causes that insecurity and poverty cycle breaks down within society, which is, in fact, considered the origin of discrimination against girls. In order that girl children enjoy their natural and legitimate rights and will be able to have normal life, it is necessary that urgent and serious attention to be paid to the access of girls to their basic rights including the right of access to education and health care.

Post- conflict countries including Afghanistan have internal causes that increase violence against girls; in the meantime, they also have good opportunities for making positive changes. Afghanistan is a country emerging from long conflict and civil war. More than 50% of its population is under 18-year age with high percentage of girl children. However², challenges in front of girl children in the country are far more than the expectation. Among these challenges, having access to health and education are on the top which in turn also have origin in the culture of gender discrimination.

We believe that paying attention to reforming laws and focusing more on the access of girls to education will lead to fundamental changes in the life of girl children in the country. This report also talks to those who have key positions and executive powers to ensure survival and development of girl children and those having the ability of ensuring girls participation in the decisions that relate to them and their life. These target groups are government, civil society organizations, community, families, and girls themselves.

The focus of the present report is on the status of girl children within the families. Our assumption is that discrimination and violence against girl children in Afghanistan is more widespread within their families than any other environment, and this in fact causes spreading of violence against them in the society and other structures.

We expect this report will bring more changes in the attitude and behavior of families towards girl children. Because, if we do not pay attention to

² Statistical yearbook of 1382, pages 7- 11

special needs of girls now, there will be more chances that they will be exposed to more violence and discrimination in their adulthood.

The present report has four sections. First section of the report introduces basics, concepts, and international standards in terms of child rights in particular girl- child rights. Second section of the report presents findings of the report in terms of access of education, health, marriage, issues related to discrimination and violence against women and sexual harassment against them. In addition, third part of this report states the reasons and impact of discrimination and violence against girl-children within the family and finally fourth and final part of the report has been allocated to general conclusions and proposed strategies.

2. Why a girl-child?

Girl-, children in Afghanistan are among those who have always been kept backward. Emphasis on girl-children in fact can pay for connivance and renunciations that have taken place during decades in terms of their rights and needs. Preparing reports in terms of girl- children situation in Afghanistan can bring changes in the status of girls within their families.

The first report of world conference about women's situation in the globe in 1387 shows that girls generally have lower status than their brothers do all over the world. This report says that girl children have been deprived of primary education, do not have access to necessary health facilities, and have been put to sexual and physical harassment. Girls have been put to economic exploitation and sexual harassment more than their peer-boys have. In addition, in comparison with boys, more girls do not reach their adulthood. There are multiple reasons for high mortality rate of girls in comparison with boys in the world. Nevertheless, undoubtedly, malnutrition, economic exploitation, lack of attention to girls special needs and wants, forced and early childhood marriages, lack of access to health facilities, and the existence of indecent and unhealthy customs and traditions are the reasons for high rate of girls mortality. In addition, affection to HIV/AIDS, multiple pregnancies in the early childhood, lack of

childbirth facilities for women, abortion in an unhealthy environment are among the reasons for high mortality rate among girls.

Beside the above-mentioned reasons, poverty, social and economic problems to which women have been facing in a patriarchal society, make girl-children severely vulnerable. In addition to damages, resulting from war and conflict has always had negative impact on women human rights and causes increasing violence against children and in particular against girl- children. In addition, this document emphasizes that in the initial years of 20th century girl children, as the most neglected part of unequal society, have tolerated multiple harms.

In this conference, United Nations has specifically emphasized that all organizations having impact in a way on the life of girls in cooperation with each other, have to embark on eliminating the violation of rights of girl-children. They have to deploy their efforts at different levels on using all opportunities and facilities of the society in private and public sectors, academic institutions, government, non-government organizations, families, and other entities for the elimination of discrimination against girl-children.

Global report in terms of girls' situation writes in a part of its conclusions, that girl children have been facing multiple discriminations due to their sex and age. Therefore, in many societies, girl children are at the bottom list in terms of their enjoyment of economic and social opportunities³.

National and international mechanisms for drafting policies have rarely taken into account special needs of girl- children. Although there is thinking, that investment on health and education can guarantee the existence of a strong, developed, and safe society, but for the implementation of this belief, little has been done in practice.

As mentioned before, girl-children have been facing both violence and discrimination due to their sex and age. When access to health services is

³ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/cswsi>

limited and inaccessible, their health is faced with more threat and hazards more than boys are. Girl children, for economic problems of families or traditional beliefs of families have been deprived of their education earlier than boys have and for these factors, they have been forced to marriage earlier than boys have.

3. Who is a girl-child?

According to the definition of the Convention of the Rights of the Child of the United Nations, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years. For the purpose of this report, girl-child is any girl below 18-year age regardless of her social and civil status.

4. Millennium Development Goals and girl-child:

If the issue of ensuring the rights of girl-children and eliminating discrimination and violence against them is not paid attention seriously and effectively, it is, most probable that on-time implementation of at least six Millennium Development Goals out of total eight goals will be faced with challenges.

Millennium Development Goal One: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger: based on this goal it is expected that the number of people living with extreme poverty and hunger and have daily income of less than one dollar, will at least decrease 50%.

Most of the people living with the daily income of less than one dollar are women in most of the countries. Energy and capacities of women are rarely used for economic development, which has caused the increase of poverty in the world. Any year added to the educational opportunities of girl-children, will increase their economic empowerment in the long- term.

Second Millennium Development Goal: Achieve Primary Universal Education- based on this goal until 2015; all children will have access to universal primary education.

This goal is met whenever third millennium development goal is met and efforts for keeping girls in schools are followed seriously. At present, 62 million girl-children are not able to attend schools globally and thus deprived of their right of access to education.

Third Millennium Development Goal: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women- based on this goal, it was expected that gender equality in the time of primary and secondary education would be implemented until 2005.

However, there is some progress in this regard, but still this goal has not been met until 2005.

Fourth Millennium Development Goal: Reduce Child Mortality- thus infant mortality has to be decreased by two-third until 2015.

Generally, it is understood that in most parts of the world, in comparison with boys more girls die before they reach the age of five. If effective measures are not undertaken, fourth development goal will not be met. One of the strong factors, which have caused concerns in this regard, is giving preference to boys within the families, which paves the way for better nutrition and treatment of boys in comparison with girls.

Fifth Development Goal: Improve Maternal Health: based on this goal maternal mortality rate during childbirth will be decreased by two-third until 2015.

Pregnancy and childbirth related problem is one of the most important reasons for mortality of young mothers between the age of 15 and 19 in developing countries. The lower is the age of pregnancy and childbirth for women, the higher the threat and danger of death will be due to problems resulting from this.

Sixth Millennium Development Goal: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases- based on this goal HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases will be stopped until 2015 and will have decreasing trend.

Young women and girls in comparison with peer boys have little information and knowledge about the virus of HIV/AIDS and thus are vulnerable more to be affected by these diseases. Combating HIV/AIDS and reversing its quick prevalence will require combat for decreasing the danger and threat of affection of girls and young women to this disease through unequal methods in the area of decision-making for establishing sexual relations between men and women.

5. Role of family in support of girl-children

Family is one of the most important structures in the life of girls. That is why families in most of the societies have not been able to care for and support their girl-children due to long conflicts and other reasons. These reasons may cause that girl-children take the responsibility such as work and earning income in the absence of necessary support from their parents and adult members of their families, which in turn put them to more threat and jeopardy. However, whatever has proved to be more dangerous for girls is giving preference to boys by other family members in particular by parents. This situation especially puts girl-children to the threat and danger of lack of access to basic life needs when family has limited access to financial and living resources. Some families force their girl-children to marry in their early childhood in order to decrease the responsibility and economic burden over the family and ensure the future of their girl-children.

6. Role of government in support of girl-children

Based on national and international rules and regulations, governments are the most important responsible entities in terms of supporting children and ensuring that the responsibility for the rights of children has been met through providing direct services, legal support and mechanisms for access to justice when their rights are violated. Governments that have experienced long conflicts and lack of rule of law, usually have weak executive structures, incapable management, corruption, and inability for providing

basic services such as education and health care to the people. In the meantime, these systems and services are critical and necessary for supporting children in particular girl-children. Because, even in ordinary circumstances government and judicial systems treat girls and women with discrimination because of which women and girls have been facing serious problems in the way of access their legal rights such as the rights of marriage, divorce, ownership, and others. In addition, laws do not pay serious attention to equal rights of girls and boys make discrimination in their enjoyment of their rights. Thus, when legal and law enforcement systems are weak within a country, then in comparison with boys girls are damaged as a result of this.

Furthermore, when public service delivery such as education is weak within a government system and thus is not able to meet needs of its public, in this case yet it is seen that girl-children are damaged more than boys are. Because, usually girls are not allowed to go long distances to reach schools and girls are more susceptible to dropping out their schools in comparison to boys and in the result, they are not able to develop their skills and capacities.

7. Role of international community in support of girl-children

International organizations such United Nations and non-governmental organizations have the responsibility to ensure the existence of laws and mechanisms that support girls and boys equally. International organizations cannot replace governments, but in countries in conflict and post-conflict, the governments usually lack all necessary opportunities and facilities to implement their obligations towards children. In such cases, international organizations have to strengthen the capacities of local agencies and people so that they are able to ask governments to accomplish their responsibilities and in addition to that provide necessary and essential assistance. International agencies also can hold justice-seeking programs for the implementation of gender equality based programs and strengthening of legal support mechanisms so that they ensure the interests of girls.

8. What are girls' human rights?

Human rights are universal. Political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights relate to all human beings. In addition to that, children have a series of other rights taking into account their status as minors and taking into consideration their special needs as children. Girl-children in particular are more vulnerable to some of the cases of human rights violation in comparison with other children and thus need more and special support.

Human rights of children and girls have comprehensively been enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child which has been ratified by most of the world countries. These rights have been included in other international instruments such as Universal Declaration of Prohibition of Discrimination against Women, Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination and Violence against Women and other credible and authentic international instruments.

Human rights of girls have the following irresolvable and correlated rights in terms of their contents:

- Human right of freedom from any type of discrimination based on sex, age, ethnicity, color, language, religion, and any other status related to him/her or his/her parents;
- Human right of having appropriate level of life for physical, psychological, skills, and confession development;
- Human right of having a safe and good environment;
- Human right of having the highest possible standards for health and equal access to health care;
- Human right of having equal access to food and appropriate alimentary regime;
- Human right of life and protection against selection of sex by parents;
- Human right of freedom and protection against implementing indecent traditions and customs that are harmful to children including circumcision of girls;

- Right of education including right of access to free, and compulsory primary education, equal access to all forms of secondary and tertiary education and freedom from discrimination in all periods of education;
- Right of having access to information on health, gender, and pregnancy;
- Right of protection against all forms of physical and psychological exploitation;
- Right of protection against economic and sexual exploitation, prostitution and human trafficking;
- Human right of protection against forced and early childhood marriages;
- Human right of having equal access to inheritance; and
- Human right of expression of views and opinions about any decision that has impact on his/her life

1- Explaining the concepts and terms:

- a. **Discrimination:** discrimination means any unequal behavior with a person or a group because of age, language, religion, sex, and marital status. Discrimination in this report means any unequal treatment and behavior with children within the family based on their sex.
- b. **Violence:** any action, which results on physical, physiological, and sexual harms and damage that is called violence.

2- Introducing objectives and method of research:

This report is focusing on identification, documentation, and introducing of life conditions of girl-children in the families. In addition to that, other objectives of this report are improving life conditions of girl-children in Afghanistan through data and information collection, analyzing and evaluating causes and reasons of violence against girls, and assessing life conditions of girl-children in the private sphere.

In addition, analyzing discriminatory views of parents towards girls in the field of education, health and creation of means and protective tools for preventing the increase of cases of violation of girls' rights in the families is another objective of this report. This report is also necessary to make clear and emphasize on the importance of acceptance of viewpoint of lack of discrimination against girls in order to create a safe environment within the families, which will be jointly used by men and women.

Information in this report has been collected using the methods of interview, filling questionnaires, group discussions, and registration of cases in Kabul, Balkh, Parwan, and Nangarhar provinces. In each of these provinces, a rural and an urban area has been selected for preparing this report. Total filled questionnaires for this report have been 1800 that have been prepared by using the information provided by parents, girls, boys, and lay people. Out of these 1800 interviews, 560 interviews have been undertaken with girl-children, 240 interviews with boy-children, 800 interviews with parents, and the remaining 200 interviews have been undertaken with lay people.

In addition, 10 unorganized and ad hoc interviews have been undertaken with experts of the child rights in Kabul city. Furthermore, group discussions have been organized in four provinces with the participation of the representatives of departments of Education, Public Health, Human Rights Commission, Women's Affairs, and other national and international organizations, which are active and working for children rights. During these group discussions, investigation group has identified and analyzed cases related to discrimination against children within the family and its consequences.

Evaluating quantitative information and relation between independent and dependent variables in this report has been done by SPSS software, but for qualitative analysis of the information, accepted theories have been used.

In addition, this report as other social researches has been accompanied with some challenges. Of course, taking into account that the method of interviewing children is a new phenomenon therefore participating

children in the provision of information in Afghanistan has been one of the main challenges for the use of skills for interview with children.

Also, due to lack of a comprehensive system for data entry, lack of access to data that can illustrate situation of girl-children in Afghanistan at whole and can be used in this report, has been another problem in this regard.

Furthermore, cultural sensitivities, and sensitivities within the families for sharing information about their families and children in particular in rural areas have made data collection more difficult.

Section 2

Research Findings**1. Descriptive Information:**

As mentioned earlier, in this report totally 800 children (girls and boys), 800 parents (mothers and fathers), and 200 ordinary individuals the attributes of each of this category is presented in the following tables.

Table Number 1: Descriptive information about girls and boys

Girl-children			Boy-children		
Percentage	Age		Percentage	Age	
25,5	Up to 12 years		26,3	Up to 12 years	
31,2	13 to 14		30,4	13 to 14	
47,3	15 to 17		39,7	15 to 17	
Residence			Residence		
Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
99,8%	28,6%	67,3%	97,9%	41,3%	56,7%
School enrollment rate			School enrollment rate		
Total	No	yes	Total	No	yes
99,8%	40,5%	59,3%	96,7%	25,0%	71,7%

Table number (2) General information about parents

Residence					
Total	Rural			Urban	
98,5	41,5%			57,0%	
Age					
42.5 %			From 18 to 30 years		
40.5 %			From 31 to 40 years		
% 14			From 41 to 50 years		
1.5%			Beyond that		
Education level					
Total	Master and beyond	Bachelor	High school graduate	Can read and write only	Illiterate
99 %	0,5%	8,0%	22,0%	28,5%	40,0%

Table number (3): General characteristics of lay people

Residence					
Total	Rural			Urban	
(100%)	(34, 8%)			(64, 4%)	
Education level					
Total	Master and beyond	Bachelor	High school graduate	Can read and write only	Illiterate
98,9%	2,0%	7,9%	21,0%	22,1 %	45,6%
Job					
Total	Jobless	Skilled labor	NGO staff	Employee	Trader
96,5%	46,4%	22,3%	6%	18,1%	3,1%

2. Girls access to education

International community has been committed in terms of children's access to education. Article 28 of Convention of Rights of the Child stipulates the right of children to education and article 29 of this Convention says that education should help the child to reach his/her highest human capacities psychologically and physically.

In 2000, in world education forum in Dakar, around 180 countries committed themselves that until 2015 all children especially girls, children living under difficult situations including those in conflicts and those who belong to minorities, will have access to free and compulsory primary quality education. Since then up to now, many efforts have been undertaken for ensuring children's access to quality education with special focus on girls' education. But, still in 9 countries including Afghanistan that are in conflict, the average enrolment of boys in schools is 51% while for girls this enrolment is only 44%. Based on international reports on Afghanistan in 2002, the enrolment rate of boys in school has been 37% while this rate for girls has been only 18%. Nevertheless, these figures based on the statistics of 1396, have been increased to 35% for girls and 65% for boys.

One of the important factors in the area of unequal access of girls to education and schools relates to families and the dominant culture over the families. Because when, for example, families for economic reasons are not able to pay for the school expenses of their children, therefore boys more than girls have the opportunities to go out and work and pay for the expenses of their school, while girls are not able to do so for family limitations.

On the other hand, poverty dominant on families also make girls more vulnerable to deprivation from education. Because when families face problems in terms of their living costs, it is possible that they will send their daughters out of the houses to work or families will ask them to stay at home and take care of smaller children and do other chores within the house so that elders can work outside the house. In addition, this situation can pave the way for their early childhood marriage and this way family will be able to decrease their costs for living. Or, money received as bride

price can be used for paying the expenses of other family members. Thus, because of marriage and requirements of husband's family or problems related to pregnancy, girls will not be able to continue to be present at schools.

“Education is the right of all Afghan citizens which will be provided by the government in all public educational institutions up to the bachelor degree. Government is obliged to design and implement effective programs for the expansion and distribution of a balanced education in Afghanistan, ensuring primary compulsory education in their mother language.”⁴

Having access to education right is one of the most fundamental rights of citizens and this is government constitutional obligation towards its citizens. In addition, government is committed in all international conventions and agreements to provide for their people all necessary conditions in order that they can overcome illiteracy and will be able to become literate.

In spite of the efforts of the government and in particular the Ministry of Education to pave the way for all children of the country to attend the schools, so far out of 11.5 million⁵ children of the country eligible for schools, only 5.4 million⁶ children of school age children have been enrolled in the schools. Out of the 5.4 million children enrolled in the schools, only 35% of them are girls.

The above-mentioned figures show clearly that more than 50% of girls in the country have been deprived of their right of having access to education. Deprivation of education right for girl-children will have negative and unpleasant consequences in different dimensions and causes their political and social isolation in the long term. Girls as a result of deprivation of their right of education will become the victims of early and childhood marriage in the first instance and finally within their husband families, they are not

⁴ Afghan Constitution, article 43

⁵ www.moe.gov Ministry of Education official website, 12-07-2009

⁶ Yearbook of Central Statistics Office, year 1385, introduction

able to have decision making role in family related issues which causes that they will lose the opportunity for social participation⁷.

Out of the total number of girls between the age of 12 and 17 interviewed in this research report, 40.6% of them are those girls who have school age but do not attend schools. These girls mentioned multiple reasons for absence and not attending the schools. About 49.1% of them were not allowed by their families to go to schools, 29.6% of them have not been able to attend schools because of the weak economy of their families, 10.2% of them for security reasons and 11.1% of them have not been able to go to schools for the lack of school facilities for girls.

Reasons for not attending of girls in the schools

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Family does not allow me to attend the school	106	18.9	49.1	49.1
Our economic situation is weak	64	11.4	29.6	78.7
There is no school for girls	24	4.3	11.1	89.8
Security situation is not good	22	3.9	10.2	100.0
Total	216	38.6	100.0	

While the figures for boys are very different and give a different picture. Out of total number of interviewed boys in this report, 25% of them did not go to schools. In addition, the percentage of the reasons for lack of attendance of boys in the schools also gives a different picture. Around 11% of them for weak economic situation of their families, 2.4% of them for the lack of schools in their neighborhood, 7% of them for security problems,

⁷ Notes from group discussions in Parwan province

and 4% of them for prohibition of their families have not been able to attend their schools.

Comparison of figures and information show that attitude of families about access of girls to school is very different from their viewpoint about their boys and usually there are many obstacles and problems before girls for their access to education.

The above-mentioned figures also make clear one another aspect and that are, in addition to difference in the attitudes of families in terms of attendance of their daughters in the schools, facilities and services provided by government to girls and that are less than facilities and services provided to boys by the government. Figures show that 11.1% of girls are not able to attend schools for the lack of or unavailability of schools, while this figure among boys is only 2.4%.

According to the above-mentioned figures, prohibition of parents from going of their daughters to schools is another main reason that has been mentioned by girls that based on that girls have not been able to go to their schools. Interviews undertaken with parents also affirm this situation. Out of 800 parents who participated in this project, at least 43.6% of them mentioned that their daughters do not go to schools, while 56% of the parents expressed that their daughters attend schools and in addition that they mentioned that this is their human and religious obligation to send their daughters to schools. Parents whose daughters do not go to school, 22% of them mentioned insecurity, 15.8% of them mentioned weak economy, 20.9% of them mentioned long distance to school, and 13% of them mentioned the existence of indecent traditions and customs as main reasons for not sending their daughters to school. In addition to that, it is worth mentioning that 14.7% of the respondents that is the biggest portion of interviewed mothers, have said that their husbands do not allow their daughters, on unknown reasons, to go to school.

The figures from the interviews made with fathers in terms of enrollment of their daughters in school, show that at least 42% of fathers are opposed with the education of their daughters and do not want their daughters to go to school, while only 15% of fathers are opposed with the education of their sons.

It has to be mentioned that one of the main reasons in shaping the opinions of families in terms of sending their daughters to school, is the existence of general indecent traditions and customs. Our research shows that significant percentage of ordinary people of Afghanistan believe that their daughters do not have to go to schools. Out of 200 lay people who have been interviewed in this research report, at least 31% of them believe that girls should not go to school. Around 58.8% of them mentioned lack of security for not sending their daughters to school, 7.5% of them mentioned long distance between school and house as a main reason for not sending girls to school, while the other 7.5% of this group say that the cost of education is the main obstacle in the way of education of their daughters. Additionally, the remaining 25% of the respondents have mentioned that it is useless to send their daughters to school and this will not bring any benefit to them and their families. In addition, findings of group discussions show that in many remote and rural areas of the provinces lack of security, the existence of indecent traditions and customs and that sending girls to school is against their honor and zeal are the factors on the basis of which villagers do not want to send their daughters to school.⁸

The main reasons of deprivation of girls of their education have also been mentioned in other national and international reports published about Afghanistan.

According to fourth report of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission on social and economic situation of Afghanistan, educational opportunities for girls are limited in comparison with boys.

In addition, it is difficult for parents to accept that their daughters will go long distances in order to attend schools. Based on this report, other reasons that limit the access of girls to school, is shortage or lack of female teachers. According to activity report of the Ministry of Education, out of 158000 teachers, only 28% of them are females. Still, around 40% of school age girls do not attend schools. Some of the families do not allow their daughters to co-educate with other boys and sit in the same classes with boys. Some of the families prohibit their daughters to attend schools

⁸ Sarwar Hakimi, Head of Child Protection Section, Save the Children of Norway and Sweden

on the probability of sexual harassment or rape in the schools or along the way to school⁹.

In addition, findings of the report of access of children to quality education published by Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission show that out of 311 interviewed girl-children, 160 girls have never had access to schools¹⁰.

They mentioned that reasons such as long distance to schools, non-prevalence of girls' education, lack of school for girls in their villages, lack or shortage of female teachers in the schools, prohibition of parents and others prevent them to attend their lessons.

In addition to that, the recent report of the organization of Human Rights Watch on the status of girls and women in Afghanistan also reaffirm this and says that families in many cases, and on multiple reasons, do not allow their daughters to attend schools especially in secondary and tertiary periods. *"I studied in my village up to the grade six. Then, I asked my parents to allow me to continue my studies, but they said that since there is no secondary school for girls in the village, they could not allow me to go to another school to continue my lessons. I am getting unhappy when I see that my brother can continue his studies, but I can not- Sameera, a 13-year girl from Kapisa province- April 2008"*¹¹.

*Based on findings of the report of the organization of Human Rights Watch, out of 8 provinces of central Afghanistan in which research has been undertaken, in six provinces girls who wanted to continue their studies in secondary schools, had to spend at least one hour to, six hours a day to go to school and return their homes*¹².

⁹ Fourth report of Economic and Social Situation in Afghanistan, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, 1388

¹⁰ Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, equal and fair access of children to quality education, year 1387, page 27

¹¹ " We have the commitment of international community with us"- women' situation in Afghanistan- the report of the organization of Human Rights Watch- December 2009

¹² " We have the commitment of international community with us"- women' situation in Afghanistan- page 79 of the report of Human Rights Watch- December 2009

Report of the organization of Human Rights Watch also mentions that fear of parents and families for sexual harassment of their daughters along the way from their school to home is one of the main reasons that parents do not allow their girls to attend their schools especially secondary schools and universities. And this is one of the sensitive and important issues in the process of girls' access to education. *“Most of the girls not attending their school who have been interviewed in this report, have mentioned that one of the main reasons that their parents do not enroll them in school or make them drop out their schools is that they are afraid for the safety of their daughters. They think that their daughters will be abducted along the way to school or will come under sexual harassment”*¹³.

Sexual harassment of schoolchildren is one of the sensitive issues for most of Afghan families. Families and society in many circumstances blame the girls for creating the conditions that result in their sexual harassment. In such circumstances, families keep their daughters from going to schools for the shame resulting from sexual harassment of their daughters. *“ Ahmad Khan one of the grandfathers from Mirza Mir village of Kapisa provinces says that he has never been to school and is not educated, but knows the importance of education in the life. Although he allowed his grand daughter to complete her primary education, but he will never allow her to continue her studies and complete secondary school. He says that secondary school is far from their village and it takes at least three hours for her granddaughter to get to school and that there is no security along the way to school. He believes that it is more probable that some powerful people will kidnap girls who commute alone along the way to school or they will harass them sexually. He says if school is near to their house, he himself will help his grand daughter in commuting to school, but will not allow her to walk three-hour distance up to school without an adult escort”*¹⁴.

¹³ “We have the commitment of international community with us”- women' situation in Afghanistan- page 80 of the report of Human Rights Watch- December 2009

¹⁴ “We have the commitment of international community with us”- women' situation in Afghanistan- page 81 of the report of Human Rights Watch- December 2009

3. Girls access to health services

Access of people to health services and paving the way for prevention and cure of diseases is one the fundamental rights of the people and governments are bound to provide these services in accordance with the internal laws and their international commitments.

Access of children to health services is the issue, which has been mentioned in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and member countries are required to provide children with these services. Based on this commitment, all necessary facilities and services have to be provided to keep the safety and health of children in a good shape. Access of children to health and hygiene services is one of their basic needs and very important for their physical and physiological growth and development.

Article 24 of Convention of the Rights of the Child in this regard stipulates as follows:” *States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.*¹⁵ “ Also, article 30 of this convention binds state parties to ensure all rights stipulated in this convention in the territory of their governments for every child, without any discrimination and regardless of their race, color, sex, language, religion, ideology, national affiliation, social and ethnic origin, and disability.”

In the meantime, the role of families is of special importance in ensuring children’s access to health services and guaranteeing the principle of equal treatment among their children in terms of their health. According to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, families are, first, responsible for ensuring the rights of their children. In addition, the government is responsible to help those families who are not able by themselves to carry out their responsibility.

¹⁵ Convention of the Rights of Child, article 24

In addition, resolution of General Assembly of the United Nations approved on February 19, 2008, in terms of report of Third Committee of this Assembly about the situation of girl-children stipulates in its article 28 about the access of girls to health facilities as follows:

” All state parties and international community is asked to increase their resources at all levels in particular in the areas of health and education for the purpose of empowering young generation especially girls to be able to access to knowledge and necessary skills for preventing the disease of AIDS and early pregnancies and access to the highest expected standards of physical and physiological health including sexual and maternal health.”

It is obvious to all that in case, children do not have access to health services, during pregnancies and childbirth and then after birth during the period of their growth, they can be easily affected to different illnesses in all these periods. Even in some cases, they can become permanent disabled or die. That is why Afghan government is committed to design and implement programs to support mother and child. Supporting mother and child is one of the most important working areas of the Ministry of Public Health. Children to be paid special attention in the areas of education, recreation and others and in addition to that they have to have access to health services. Access to health services has important role in their physical growth and paves the way for their better social position. While in practice a large number of girls do not have access to health services due to multiple reasons such as economic weakness, lack of attention of family to the health of girls, shortage of female health workers in health centers and some others.

Referring to the findings of this report shows that in response to the question that whether girls can go to doctors in case they are sick or not, around 21.9% of them said that they do not have access to health services in case of their illness. These girls mentioned multiple reasons for this. Around 82% of girls have mentioned that their weak economies do not allow them to have access to health services. Around 5.9% of these girls said that their parents do not pay special attention to their health care, while

11.8% of them mentioned that lack or shortage of female doctors and workers in health facilities prevent them from going there.

From the percentages above, it is seen that weak economy of families is one of the important reasons because of which girls are not able to have access to health services. During interviews with these girls, only 2.7% of them have had good economic situation. Around 29.5% of the girls belonged to very poor families economically. While 64.4% of patients referring to health centers have to purchase their prescribed medicine from private drugstores¹⁶. Taking into account weak economic situation of our people, provision of medical treatment cost of the patients is very difficult and most of these families are not able to do medical treatment of their children.

Based on the information received from interviewed girls, 21.9% of these girls do not have access to health services, while 15% of boys have not had access to health services. In addition, 78% of interviewed girls have mentioned that in case of their illness, their family members bring them to health centers for treatment and therefore they have access to health services. Around 82% of boys have mentioned that in case of their disease they are taken to doctors for treatment by their parents. The figure of 78% of girls, who are brought to hospitals and other health facilities for treatment in case of their illness, is a good improvement in girls' situation and shows that families are more careful about health of their girl-children. but, at the same time, the figure of 21.9% of girls who are not able to have access to health services and also 6.9% difference between girls and boys in the area of their access to health services is of great concern. Government and families shall respond appropriately in this regard.

Early and Childhood Marriages :

Child marriage is one of the cases in which the life of girls is threatened and their fundamental rights are violated. Families are among the main groups that contribute to the realization of this type of marriage. Early

¹⁶ Violence against women in Afghanistan, Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, 1387, Kabul, page 63

pregnancy which is the result of early and childhood marriage, is dangerous for the life of girls. Problems associated with childbirth are the main causes of mortality of young mothers whose ages are between 15 and 19. The lower is the age of marriage; the higher is the danger of violation of life right for girls. Girls between 15 and 25 years of age are twice more vulnerable to the threat of dying because of pregnancy and childbirth in comparison to girls beyond 25-year age¹⁷. Girls with the age of lower than 15 years who become pregnant are five time more susceptible to the death threat. Mothers' mortality because of pregnancy and childbirth in Afghanistan and [Sierra Leone](#) in comparison with Sweden in which is only case for 30,000 births is one in every seven births¹⁸. Around 57% of marriages in Afghanistan take place before reaching legal marriage age¹⁹.

Around 29% of lay people interviewed in this report, have mentioned that they want that girls have to be married before the age of 14. Around 48% of the interviewed people mentioned that they think that the age between 17 and 29 is an appropriate marriage age for girls. In the meantime, this group of interviewed people in 70% of cases, think that the age between 19 and 25 is better marriage age for boys.

Interviewed families and parents think the same way. Around 29% of parents believe that the age up to 14 years is a good and appropriate marriage age for girls. Around 51% of parents think that the age between 17 and 20 is a good marriage age for girls. Around 16% of interviewed parents in this report said that the age of 18 years is a good marriage age for boys, while around 40% of interviewed parents mentioned that the age between 19 and 24 is a better age for the marriage of boys. At whole, the reasons in this report for the childhood marriage of girls in comparison with boys are prevention of immorality and obliquity of girls.

¹⁷ For I am a girl, world girls situation during the year 2008 with special focus on war shadows, page 50

¹⁸ For I am a girl, world girls situation during the year 2008 with special focus on war shadows, page 51

¹⁹ Afghanistan National Development Strategy(ANDS)

In addition, in terms of giving importance to getting the consent of girls for their marriage, referring to the opinions of lay people, it is found that around 59.5% of these people condition consent of girls for validity of their marriage, while other 39% of these people believe that the consent of girls is not a condition for the marriage. This group of people believes that girls are not able to choose a good spouse for them and it is a shame for them to ask their daughters for their consent for marriage.

Findings of the research report of “Early and Childhood Marriages”, published by Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, show that reasons such as living location, literacy rate of parents, and weak economy of families are effective in marriage of their children. In addition, it is mentioned in the report that 34.1% of girls married in their early childhood, have borne physically weak children, and 8.9% of them have borne disabled and handicapped children. Furthermore, 69.2% of mothers have been complaining from different physical, physiological, and gynecological diseases²⁰.

There are multiple reports on the rampancy of child marriage in Afghanistan and each of these reports emphasizes that girls are the victims of these marriages. “Forced and child marriages violate girls and women human rights and can have negative impacts on their physiological and physical health. Special 2006 United Nations report on violence against women has conclusions on Afghanistan and says that child and forced marriages are the root causes of many types of violence which take place within families. Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and UNIFEM state that at least 57% of marriages in Afghanistan happen before reaching the legal age for marriage²¹.

Mother of Rangina died when she was 12 years old. In 2003, she was forced to marry a mentally ill man in exchange for marriage of her father with a girl. She says, “ I was the only daughter of my father. Moreover, when my mother died, my father wanted to re-marry. He gave me to a mentally and psychocologically ill man in return for his marriage. There

²⁰ Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, Child Marriages’ Research Report, page 19

²¹ We have international commitment with us- condition of women in Afghanistan- page 50 of the report of Human Rights Watch, December, 2009

was no help for me because my father did not want to listen. He was only thinking about his own marriage. He did not think about his daughter.²²”

In addition to that, Afghan Independent Human Rights 2009 report on economic and social situation of women in Afghanistan expresses its concern in terms of child marriages in Afghanistan. Out of 12074 families interviewed in this report, 1662 families speak about child marriages in their families. Out of this number, 1494(90%) of these marriages have been girls'. Around 55% of these marriages happened for solving families economic problems while 30% of them have been exchange marriages, which again have connection with economic issues, because in exchange marriage the expenses of marriage come down²³. In addition, recent report of the organization of Human Rights Watch on women's situation in Afghanistan says that there is clear connection between violence and marriage of young and child girls. According to this report, a survey which has been done by Global Rights says that girls married between the age of 10 and 14 are experiencing almost all types of family violence in comparison with girls married in the age of 15 and beyond. Around 33.3% of girls married between the age of 10 and 14 have encountered sexual violence and this is the figure, which is twice higher than the figure reported about girls of 15 years and beyond that. In addition, 62% of girls of first group have reported to be faced physical violence, while this figure for girls of group two has been 52.3%²⁴.

5. Gender discrimination:

Gender based cultural sensitivities and discrimination associated with this mindset have impact all aspects of the life of women and girls. The impacts

²² We have international commitment with us- condition of women in Afghanistan- page 52 of the report of Human Rights Watch, December, 2009

²³ Report on Economic and Social Situation of Afghanistan- Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission- 2009

²⁴ We have international commitment with us- condition of women in Afghanistan- page 51 of the report of Human Rights Watch, December, 2009

of discriminatory treatment with girls can be different. Need to affection and care is a human natural requirement and when their families in terms of their daughters do not meet this need, this causes that their daughters become obsessive. Based on this, when these girls receive a loving and affectionate treatment outside their houses, they are attracted to that. Later on, this issue causes social problems including run-away of girls from their homes. On the other hand, they face social problems that difficult or sometime impossible to compensate²⁵.

One of the manifestations of discrimination against girls within families is the excessive imposition of home chores on girls. Families and in particular mothers have an important role in this regard. Children labor within their families is as a cooperative activity with their parents in particular with their mothers is usual in Afghan society. Nevertheless, this assistance is acceptable and good to the extent that does not jeopardize child safety and health, does not damage physical growth of child, and in addition to that does not create any type of discrimination among children within their families. In many Afghan families, usually the bulk of home chores pressure is on girls. Girls are not able to find time for recreation and education. On the other hand, boys have sufficient time and resources for recreation and education. This kind of treatment of parents is the manifestation of violence and discrimination against girls²⁶.

Around 87% of parents interviewed in this report, have mentioned that their daughters are helping them in home chores. Out of this, 23% expressed that their daughters are starting to help them in home chores when they are only seven year old. Replying to the same question about work of boys in the house, 38% of parents have given positive response. Main reasons mentioned by families that why boys do not take part in home chores are such as boy does not have to work at home. Around 27.4% of families have mentioned that this is not a tradition and custom that boys have to work. Other 12% and 4.13% of parents believe that home chores are specific to girls.

²⁵ Anjeela Quomi, Program Officer in Save the Children of Norway and Sweden, 5/5/1388

²⁶ The results of group discussions in Parwan province, dated 5/1/1388

As it also was mentioned in the topic of access of girls to education, findings of this report state that in some families, parents keep their daughters from going to school. Findings of this report depict that there is a bare and palpable discrimination between girls and boys within families in terms of girls' access to education. Out of 42% of parents who did not want to send their daughters to schools, 10% of them mentioned security problems as the main reason for not sending their daughters to school. Around 49% of them have mentioned that it is common in their tribe to send daughters to school, while 6.8% of families mentioned that fathers do not allow their daughters to attend their schools. The remaining 9.6% mentioned that long distance to schools is the reason they do not want to send their daughters to school. While only 15.8% of families have mentioned that, they prohibit their boys to go to school. In addition, long distances to school and lack of security have been other reasons for not sending their boys to schools.

Hamida Barmaki, Commissioner of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and Officer of children rights confirms the existence of discrimination between girls and boys in the area of their access to education as one of the reasons of this. In addition to that, main reasons for not sending daughters to school are that families consider the role of girls in the economic life of their families insignificant. She says that parents do not want to face any trouble in terms of their daughters, because they believe that their daughters will soon join other families and will be serving for them²⁷.

Discrimination against girls within their families not only includes home chores and deprivation of their right of education, but also includes their deprivation of their recreation activities that are needed for any child. Convention of Rights of Child stipulates about recreation of children as follows: “***States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts***”²⁸.” The word

²⁷ Pahanyar Hamida Barmaki, Head of the Office of Save the Children of Afghanistan Human Rights Commission and lecturer in the faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Kabul University, dated: 7/5/1388

²⁸ Convention of the Rights of Child, article 31

child in this Convention includes both girls and boys. Nevertheless, about this right many parents have discriminatory view in terms of their daughters and, in many cases, prevent their daughters to take parts in play and recreational activities. Around 60% of parents interviewed in this report mentioned that they have never taken their daughters for play and recreational activities outside; 23% of them mentioned the reasons such as lack of security and that this is not customary to take daughters for play and recreational activities outside their houses. While 52% of parents have mentioned that, they usually take their boys for play and recreational activities outside their houses and believe that sons should spend more time to be used and familiar with society. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan parents prevent their children in particular their daughters to rest, play, and consider their presence outside and within people as an inappropriate and shameful act. However, rest, play and recreational activities are necessary for physical and intellectual development of children and this is one of their fundamental rights²⁹. In addition, out of total number of girls interviewed in this report, around 75.1% of them have been deprived of their right of having access to rest and recreational activities out of their houses, while only 40.6% of boys have not been able to have rest and play outside their houses. However, higher percentage of girls and boys have been deprived of this fundamental right, but comparatively it can be mentioned that there is 34.5% difference which is a clear and significant difference and shows a clear discrimination against girls in this regard.

Fariba, a 14-year old girl from Balkh province quotes her experience in this regard as follows: " My parents always discriminate between us (sisters and brothers). This happens even in very small issues for example: one day my little sister and I have been busy working home chores, while my brother was busy playing, resting, and watching television in another room. Suddlently, he broke our television screen and then went out. One hour later, he came back with my mother and when my mother came in, she started beating me with broom without asking me the reason of breaking TV screen and told me that why I have broken the screen. She told me that watching television is for boys and they have the right to rest, play, and have recreational activities. You know how much will cost a television set. She

²⁹ Sarwar Hakimi, head of Child Protection Unit, Save the Children of Norway and Sweden

beat me to the extent that I got unconscious. I insisted that my brother has broken television screen but she did not listen to me because my brother had told her that I have broken television screen. When I saw that my mother does not give importance to my sayings and does not want to listen me, got angry and entering kitchen poured benzene on my body and and set fire. This was the time my little sister saw me, cried, and informed my mother. They extinguished the fire and took me to doctor. Later on, my brother admitted that he had broken television screen³⁰.”

6. Preferring boys to girls:

Preferring boys to girls is widespread and rampant in many developing and third world countries. The act of preferring boys to girls exist in different forms such as killing girls in their fetus and before their birth and systematically ignoring the rights and needs of girls. This also causes that the population of girls' versus boys is reflected unrealistically in the countries of south and east of Asia, North of Africa, and Middle East³¹. While observing justice and equality among children are the main responsibility of parents. Experts of education field say that the way of treatment with any child is different from age, physical, and psychological perspectives and you have to, taking into account the mentality and knowledge of you children, treat them appropriately, know that if you support a child more than other, it means that you oppress others, and thus make them pessimistic³². In addition, Convention of the Right of the Child makes bound States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment based on the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.³³

³⁰ Alias

³¹ Report on different types of violence against women in the world presented by Secretary General of the United Nations- July 2006

³² Dr.Murtaza Rohani, Etlat Daily, 16/3/1378

³³ Convention of the Rights of the Child, paragraph two, article two

Out of 800 parents (mothers and fathers) interviewed in this part of the report, 69% of them said that they prefer their sons to daughters. Among them, 74.1% of them were illiterate. These parents mentioned multiple and different reasons for this behavior. Around 44.3% of them said that girls finally join other families and therefore are the commodity of others. About 41.7% of them mentioned that girls do not serve any purpose. Around 13.9% of parents mentioned that girls cause pain and torment to families. In addition, in response to the question that families give more importance to boys, parents mentioned many reasons. Around 13.2% mentioned that boys are aides to their fathers and work together with them. Around 43% of them mentioned that boys are bread-takers of their homes. Around 25.9% of parents said that their senility belongs to their sons. About 18% of them said that boys keep name of their families alive and all of them are reason because of which they prefer boys to girls.

Reasons for giving importance to boys by their parents

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Because boy works	87	10.9	13.2	13.2
He is a bread-taker for our family	284	35.5	43.0	56.1
Our future belongs to our sons	171	21.4	25.9	82.0
He keeps the name of our family alive	119	14.9	18.0	100.0
Total	661	82.6	100.0	

About 80% of interviewed mothers in this report stated that having son is more important for their husbands in comparison with daughters. These mothers have mentioned that having son is so important for their husbands that in case if they give birth to daughters, they will be exposed to different types of violence. Around 13.4% of women are made by their husbands to have successive childbirths in order to give birth to sons. Other 6% of these women mentioned that their husbands have embarked to re-marry because they have been successively giving births to daughters. In addition, 7% of

women have been beaten, insulted, and humiliated by their husbands because they have not been able to give birth to sons.

Other findings of this report from the interviews with lay people also show that majority of people believe that not giving birth to son is the problem of women and if a woman is not able to give birth to son, then man has the right to re-marry. Around 54.5% of interviewed lay people believed that in case of not having son, man has to take another wife, while, 45% of these people have been against this belief.

Sex of a newborn baby, sometime, significantly affects the way of feeding and care of mothers by their families. Whenever a woman gives birth to a boy, and then her family becomes very happy, welcomes her beyond its economic potential, and tries to meet all her needs in order to guarantee the safety and health of the baby. Nevertheless, if a woman gives birth to a girl, then she is not welcomed in some families and in addition to that, she is treated as criminal³⁴.

Referring to teachings of holy religion of Islam, it is seen that this indecent phenomenon (preferring son to daughter) has been common in pre-Islam time and that is why Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be upon Him) has paid special attention and kindness to girls in his sayings. Ebne Abass has quoted Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be upon Him) as follows:” *Whoever goes to market for shopping and buys a gift and takes it to his family, he is considered as alms-giver to needy people and has to give priority to women and girls in comparison with men and boys*³⁵”. Also, based on another tradition, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has said as follows:” *treat your children fairly as you treat others. Behave each other with beneficence and kindness.*³⁶”

³⁴ Notes from group discussions in Parwan province, 5/1/1388

³⁵ Mokarim-Ul- Akhlaq, page 221

³⁶

Discrimination against girls and preferring boys to girls within family has negative impacts on psyche of girls. The results of medical and psychological researches show that when a girl sees that her parents prefer boys to her, she is getting disappointed from this behavior of her parents. In addition, these cause her to think that she is an isolated human being who is not treated fairly. There have been cases when these unfair treatments and behaviors have resulted in running away from house, self-burning, self-immolation, and suicide of girls³⁷.

“In mid- 1387, (N) a 13-year girl has run away from her house in one of the districts of Nangarhar province and refers to relevant police office in that district. Police takes her to a children correction center in that province and try to find her family. (N) Explains the reason of her running-away from her house as follows: my mother has always treated me discriminatively and unfairly within my family. She was always insulting and humiliating me before my brothers. She always complimented my brothers. She was misnaming and mistreating me without any mistake from me. She always made me to do home chores and when I asked her to purchase notebooks and other school necessities, she refrained to do that and said that it is a pity to buy notebooks and other stationery for me. She was telling me that I am of no use. I am only eating and sleeping. My income is not so higher to spend money on you she was saying. She was saying that instead of spending money on me, she has to spend money on her sons so that they will be helpful to her when she gets elder. You will get married today or tomorrow, thus will go to your husband’s house, and thus will be helping him she was telling me. This behavior of my mother finally caused that my family prevented me from going to school in order to do home chores. Getting obsessive by this behavior of my mother, finally I ran away from my home. “N” returned her home after Police gave advice to her mother and asked her not to keep her at home and let her attend her school and change her behavior toward her.³⁸”

³⁷ Karima Mayar, Head of Maternal Fertility Health in Public Health Hospital, dated 15/5/1388

³⁸ The above-mentioned has been quoted from a group discussion from Nangarhar province in 1388

7. Violence against girls:

Since violence against girls is mainly relates to gender based violence, therefore in order to assess it in a better and comprehensive manner, it is necessary to have a definition of violence against women in the first instance. Commission on Women Status of General Assembly of the United Nations for the first time in 1993 defined violence against women after the approval of Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women as follows:

”Any type of violent act based on gender which causes physical and psychological damages and harms or trouble and harassment of women through threatening so that they will lose their freedom within their families and society.³⁹” This Declaration condemns any type of tyrannical and inhuman acts that cause suffering and harassment against girls and women. It has asked the State Parties to take special and necessary measures for elimination of gender-based violence.

Findings of this report show that violent acts of parents against their daughters are applied in the form of physical and verbal violence. Out of girls interviewed in this report, 44.8% of them have mentioned that their parents beat them. Of course, these physical acts can be in different forms such as slapping, pinching, kicking, boxing, beating and stoning and other violent acts.

Verbal harsh and annoying behavior is very common case of violence that girls experience in their daily life and consider it as part of their normal every day and routine life. Around 64.2% of interviewed girls stated that they have been encountered verbal violence by their parents many times and up to 20 times in the recent one month.

³⁹ Convention of Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women, General Assembly, 1993

Who has committed these beatings?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Father	34	6.1	14.5	14.5
Mother	150	26.8	63.8	78.3
Parents	46	8.2	19.6	97.9
Brother	2	.4	.9	98.7
Sister	1	.2	.4	99.1
Other family members	2	.4	.9	100.0
Total	235	42.0	100.0	

According to findings of this report, their parents have committed around 63.8% of physical violence and 36.4% of verbal violence against girls. Nevertheless, on the other hand, 28.3% of these mothers have been literate, while 58.7% of fathers have been literate.

Literacy rate at the national level has been low and only 68% of the total population can read and write, and are literate. Out of this, 50% are men and only 18% are women⁴⁰.

8. Girls and Sexual Harassment:

Another example of the problems girls are faced with is misuse and sexual harasses. Sexual misuse of children includes all types of sexual violence including incest, forced and early childhood marriages, pornography, sexual exploitation, indecent contact, using sexually exciting words, and showing pornographic means and items to children.

In other words, sexual exploitation or sexual violence is a term, which is used in terms of all acts associated with sexual harassment such as rape;

⁴⁰ Joint statement of UNISCO and UNICEF on the Week of Global Action about Education for all, Kabul, April 29, 2009

committing forced acts and forced sexual behavior. Sexual violence can happen in different forms. This act is not limited to forced sexual relation, but it also includes a series of sexual behaviors such as attempting to establish sexual relation, sexual harassment, forcing to sexual intercourse, trafficking of children for sexual use, circumcision of girls and others. A large number of children that come under sexual violence are girls and the committers are men or boys. In many cases, the committer of sexual violence is a person that victim child knows him or has a kind of trust and confidence on him. It is possible that a child can come under sexual violence in different places. These locations include house or any residence including orphanages, workshops, schools, prisons, roads, parks, fields, and other places. The committers of sexual violence against children can include family members, friends and relatives, teachers, and others who are in contact with children including police officers, employees of orphanages and others. In addition, it is possible that the committer of sexual harassment is totally an alien whom the child does not know at all.

Due to legal and social obstacles on the way to sexual violence against children including lack of mechanisms of registration and mechanism of complaints, justice reverse results, social shame and the hazard of accusation to the victim, very few women and girls report cases of sexual violence. Women and girls who are violated sexually particularly those who are raped, in many circumstances have been killed for honor since they have brought shame to their families⁴¹.

Findings of this report show relatively lower figures of reporting in terms of sexual harassment of girls in comparison with other cases of violence. One of main reasons for lower rate of reported figures of sexual harassment is the existence of social sensitivities about reporting such cases and understanding different aspects of this issue. Out of 560 girls interviewed in this report, only 40 girls or 7.2% of them have experienced different types of sexual harassment. Sexual harassments these girls have experienced have been different. Around 2% of them have had unusual body contacts with ill intention, 0.5% of them have received immoral letters, and 0.2% of them have faced with the cases of hearing sexual vulgar and immoral jocular.

⁴¹ " We have international commitment with us" a report on the situation of Afghan women in 2009- the organization of Human Rights Watch

Around 5.5% of these girls have received winking, around 1.6% of them said they have had stare at their body lambs, 0.2% of them have been invited to sexual intercourse, and around 0.7% of them have been raped.

Around 0.2% of these girls have faced with the cases of hearing sexually harassing and harsh songs. Many cases of sexual harassment have happened to girls on their way from home to school.

Findings of the report show that out of total number of 73 cases of sexual harassment that girls have faced with, boys of the neighborhood and close relatives have committed 36 of them. But, what is more important in this report and has to be focused more, are not the figures related to sexual harassment of girls, but the way and behavior of families towards cases of sexual harassment against girls. Out of total interviewed parents in this report, 39 of them (parents) said that their daughters have been sexually harassed and have been informed for this through their daughters, friends of their daughters, schools, or through their close relatives.

Reaction of parents in terms of these cases has been different. Some have embarked on beating of victim girls, others have prevented their daughters from going out of their houses or going to school. Some others have supported and coddled their daughters who have faced with this situation, and some parents have talked with member of harassing families in order to prevent repeating of such acts in the future. Based on sayings of girls who have been harassed sexually in this or that form, the worst types of reaction have been beating, insulting, and humiliating by their own families. While supporters and advocators of the rights of children believe that children have never been guilty for their sexual harassment and therefore do not have to be punished or teased for that⁴². Brutish treatment of parents with children who have been victims of sexual harassment, affects negatively on psyche of children and challenges rehabilitation and constructive presence of children in the society. Parents have to have a heartfelt, easy, and amicable behavior with their daughters who have been victimized sexually and thus soften the burden of sorrow and anguish they have been faced with because of this harsh and obscene act⁴³.

⁴² Interview with Mohammad Sarwar Hakimi, Head of Children Protection Unit of Save the Children of Norway and Sweden, Kabul, dated 27/7/2009

⁴³ The above-mentioned source

In addition, findings of this report show different behaviors of parents towards sexual harassment of girls and boys. Parents mostly have had good and logical behavior toward their sons in comparison with their daughters and have resorted effective ways for preventing sexual harassment of their sons such as contacting harassing member family, changing commuting route of the child, observing visiting places of the child and others. While in case of sexual harassment of their daughters, in many circumstances, parents have insulted and put them to violence and blamed them for taking place the incidents.

Section 3

Factors and Consequences of Discrimination against Girls within Families

1. Factors of discrimination against girls within family:

Discriminative activities against girls in the families are the result of multiple factors, which determine social relations between men and women in traditional societies such as Afghanistan at whole. In this part of the report, taking into account the results of undertaken researches some of these factors are mentioned as follows:

a. Dominant traditional beliefs in the society:

Patriarchal dominant mindset, which has its origin in the traditions and customs of this country and is more widespread and dominant in our society, is among the first factors which causes gender based discrimination among children within families⁴⁴. Girl-children, in the result of a traditional mentaliy, which is dominant in our society, are not able to play sensible and determinant role in their social life. That is why families look at their talents and potentials with suspicion and doubt and pay little attention to education and health and other basic needs of girl-children.

⁴⁴ Notes from group discussions in Balh province, dated 12/1/1388

b. Education and literacy level:

Education and literacy level of parents is one of the characteristics that have effect on the level of discrimination and violence committed against girl-children. Families whose heads are illiterate people, have traditional views in terms of their daughters. They do not believe on the empowerment, promotion, social participation, and improvement of living level of their daughters. But, in families in which parents are literate and have information about the rights of their children, the situation is totally different and thanks to the knowledge parents have in these families, there are more facilities and opportunities for their girl-children to develop their skills and capabilities and thus they will experience less violence and discrimination in their families⁴⁵.

In addition, the level of access of girls to literacy and education can make them prepared for inappropriate treatments and behaviors and give them the capabilities to analyze wisely their problems and challenges. Multiple researches done globally and in Afghanistan show that access of girls to education, at least to secondary education, causes that they can react strongly towards early and childhood marriages and be successful in their family relations and planning for formation of their future families. Findings of a report about running away of girls from their homes reveal that, 82.7%⁴⁶ of girls who have run away from their homes were in fact illiterate or had lower education background.

Furthermore, findings of the report on early and childhood marriages, published by Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, reveal that 88% of girls, forced to marry in their early childhood, are those who have been illiterate or with primary education level⁴⁷.

Maternal and child mortality rate will come down with the increase of the level of education among girls. In Afghanistan, this issue is of

⁴⁵ Notes from group discussions in Parwan province, dated 5/1/1388

⁴⁶ Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, Overview of Cases of Running away of Girls from House, page 15

⁴⁷ Women and Children legal Research Foundation, Research Report on Early and Childhood Marriages, pages 17

great importance since it has very low level of health facilities .In addition to that, the important role of education in health of people, improving education level of girls can also increase the level of their social and economic participation.Thus; women and girls can have significant contribution to the economic development of their countries. Paying attention to girls’ education in their childhood can help them to actively participate in their social and economic life and make them prepared to respond their existent needs in particular in the areas of health and education. One of Afghan officials in this regard said:” We will not be able absorb and appoint women and girls in professional positions unless they have well and appropriate educational level⁴⁸.

c. Living Environment :

Social environment is another characteristic, which may, based on the findings of this report, have role in decreasing or increasing the level of discrimination against girls. Multiple researches including current research in the field of violence and family relations has proved the reality that there is less violence in urban families towards women and girls. Of course, living in the city solely cannot prove this issue, but since urban life has some facilities such as better access to education, media and others, therefore it is proved that girls in cities have been facing less violence in comparison with rural girls. Rural life in terms of lack of access to the above-mentioned facilities have different and opposite picture and according to social structure of rural environment there are limited opportunities and facilities for developing the capacities of girls and their empowerment⁴⁹.

Also, limited opportunities and facilities in rural areas and little attention of governments to provide welfare facilities in the rural areas is amongst reasons which will impact life situation of girls and the

⁴⁸ “ We have world commitment with us” Afghan women’s situation, the report of the organization of Human Rights Watch, December 2009

⁴⁹ Sarwar Hakimi, Head of Children Protection Unit, Save the Children of Sweden and Norway

way of treatment of families towards their daughters in rural areas. Shortage of professional teachers, weak and inappropriate educational infrastructure, and lack and shortage of female teachers are important factors in the rural areas that also affect girls⁵⁰. In addition, other national reports confirm that child marriage is one of the phenomenon that happen due to the existence of common traditions and therefore they marry their daughters as soon as they reach their puberty⁵¹.

d. Economy:

Economic dependence of parents to sons on the reasons such as supporting them financially in their senility by their sons and prevalence of the belief among parents that girls are not able to support them financially in case of need is another reason, which has an important role in discriminatory behavior of parents towards their daughters. Thus, they deprive their daughters of their fundamental rights including their right of education⁵².

Receiving high dowries and bride- prices and difficult economic situation of families is another factor, which causes early and childhood marriage of girls⁵³. According to the report on Social and Economic Situation of Afghanistan in 2009, 23% of boys and 10.1% of girls have not been able to attend their schools regularly because of their work and employment⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ " We have international commitment with us" women's situation in Afghanistan, report of the organization of Human Rights Watch, page 8, December 2009

⁵¹ " We have international commitment with us" women's situation in Afghanistan, report of the organization of Human Rights Watch, page 79, December 2009

⁵² Pohanyar Hamida Barmaki, lecturer in the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Kabul University and Commissioner of Children Rights in Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, dated 29/07/2009

⁵³ " We have international commitment with us" women's situation in Afghanistan, report of the organization of Human Rights Watch, page 8, December 2009

⁵⁴ Social and Economic Situation of Afghanistan in 2009- Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission- www.aihrc.org.af

Economic poverty of families and lack of livelihood opportunities is another factor, which makes families, have discriminatory behavior towards their daughters. Economic problems cause that parents use their limited resources for developing and educating of their sons, because they think they will be dependent on their sons in the future and consider the sustainability of their future life for the financial and moral support of their sons. While if families have good economic situation, they will take into account balance in provision of material and physical needs of their children⁵⁵. Based on the results of the research, at least 10.3% of parents mention that poverty is the main reason for not sending their daughters to school. While another 10% believe that poverty is the main factor, because of which they are not able to send their daughters to doctors for treatment in case different diseases affect them.

Furthermore, findings of many reports confirm the role of economy and economic problems in increasing domestic and family violence in particular gender- based violence including violence against children. Based on the report of the Foundation in terms of running away of girls from homes, around 46.3%⁵⁶ of girls who ran away from their homes belonged to poor and economically weak families. In addition to that, 4.2%⁵⁷ of girls who have been forced to marry in their early childhood related to families with weak economic situation.

e. Lack of Security:

Security is one of most important challenges in Afghanistan. Insecurity affects negatively all aspects of economic and social life and makes difficult the implementation of reconstruction, and development investment programs. Insecurity is increasing day-by-day and recently penetrated to northern part of the country. Based on

⁵⁵ Notes from group discussions, Nangarhar province, 28/12/1387

⁵⁶ Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, Research Report on Running away of Girls from their houses, page 16

⁵⁷ Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, Research Report on Early and Child Marriages, page 18

the United Nations report in Afghanistan, security incidents have increased 31% in comparing with the past year (2007)⁵⁸. According to the same report, in second half of the year 2008, on average 857 security incidents have been registered in each month, while in the first six months of 2008, on average 625 incidents have been registered every month⁵⁹.

Insecurity and lack of rule of law are of important factors in the area of application of discrimination against girls. This factor widely prevents presence and participation of girls in the society and makes them more vulnerable⁶⁰. In addition, insecurity prevents girls from accessing to education. One of reasons for deprivation of girls of their education, according to different groups of interviewees in this report, is security problem. Around 4.3% of parents mentioned that security problems prevent their daughters to have access to education.

Based on figures of the report of social and economic situation of Afghanistan, security problems are more effective in deprivation of girls from their education in comparison with boys. Out of total figure of interviewed girls, 149 girls and out of total number of boys interviewed, 56 boys have mentioned that security problems prevent them from going to school⁶¹. Report of Access of Children to Quality Education, published by Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), also says that security problems are among the main cause for not enrolling of girls in the schools and prevent them to continue their studies. Based on this report, 6.9% of girls interviewed

⁵⁸ Report of the Secretary General, the situation of Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security, page 5

⁵⁹ Social and Economic Situation of Afghanistan in 2009- Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission- www.aihrc.org.af

⁶⁰ Marzia Basil, Director of the Organization of Development of Law of Afghanistan, Kabul, 30/07/2009

⁶¹ Social and Economic Situation of Afghanistan in 2009- Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission- www.aihrc.org.af

during this report, have mentioned security problem the reason for a lack of access to school⁶².

Research done by the Organization of Human Rights Watch also shows that concerns associated with the insecurity are among the factors that keep girls from accessing to education. Other national reports also confirm these findings and say that significant number of families, although they are interested in their daughters' education, need mechanisms to ensure security and safety of their daughters between school and home⁶³.

2. Consequences and Effects of discrimination against girls:

As observing the principle of justice among children paves the way for good education and development of their talents and promotion in their life, in contrary making difference and discrimination among children, especially gender based discrimination, prevent their good education and development of their intellectual talents and personality. This also causes their depression, isolation, illness, obsesses, lack of confidence, self-burning, running away from homes, immorality and other problems⁶⁴.

“Soraya⁶⁵, a seventeen-year girl from Parwan province, runs away from her home due to her father’s harsh and discriminatory behavior and comes to house of one of her relatives in Kabul and is living with this family for the time being. And her own family still does not know about the whereabouts and location of their daughter.⁶⁶”

⁶² Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Equal Access of Children to Education in Afghanistan, year 1387

⁶³ “ We have international commitment with us” Women’s Situation in Afghanistan, report of the Organization of Human Rights Watch, page 10- December, 2009

⁶⁴ Notes from group discussions in Nangarhar province, 18/03/2009

⁶⁵ Alias

⁶⁶ Detailed description of the case, Balh province, 01/04/2009

The above-mentioned case is one of the incidents girls are repeatedly experiencing in their life. This reality is obvious to all that there is no safe and secure place for a person than his/her own family. Family is the only place where its members including girls can feel themselves secure and comfortable. When girls do not feel themselves secure and comfortable in their families, it is natural that there is no place, which can replace her family environment. So, running away of a girl from her home in order to be freed from problems not only is not an appropriate solution, but also creates more problems for a girl. One of its negative consequences might be that her future social good life comes under question though there was no help for her but to run away⁶⁷.

“A woman from one of the districts of Balkh provinces has given birth to eight daughters and when she becomes pregnant for ninth time, her husband warns her from his ultimate anger that if she gives birth to daughter this time, he will kill or divorce her. This woman, in order to be aware in advance about this problem and her pregnancy, finds a person, comes to Mazare-Sharif city without the knowledge of her husband, and goes to a clinic to do ultra-sound checkup in Mazare-Sharif city. After checkup and getting informed that her child is a girl, she dies on the spot.”⁶⁸

Likewise, there are many cases that happened in different parts of the country and women and girls have been victimized by harsh and brutish behaviors of their family members, but have not referred to official justice authorities and therefore there are no precise figures for this type of incidents. The above-mentioned case is one example of such cases, which explains clearly the viewpoint of families in terms of girls and clearly reflects dominant mindset of society against girls⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Note from group discussions, Parwan province, 25/03/2009

⁶⁸ Interview with Mohammad Sarwar Hakimi, Head of Child Protection Unit in Save the Children of Sweden and Norway, 27/07/2009

⁶⁹ The above-mentioned source

Section 4

Conclusion and Recommendation

1. Conclusion

Results of this report shows that girls in their families, in many cases, become victims of violence, discrimination, and unequal treatment of their family members. This behavior includes almost all spheres of their life and, in some cases, has had negative and unexpected consequences and effects on their personality and capabilities. Parents as responsible people for education of their children both girls and boys, have caused, as a result of their discriminatory behaviors towards their children, that their girl-children have been deprived of their basic rights of having access to love, care, and mercy of their parents. This deprivation widely violates the rights of education, health, good nutrition and recreation of their children. Doing home chores continually, deprivation of leisure and play, deprivation of expressing views in terms of their personal issues, and early and childhood marriages are other manifestations of violating rights of girls within their families. Mistreatments of families such as verbal insult and humiliation and beatings are cases that girls have been facing with continually and they have been experiencing those in their daily life.

Parents, believing that girls are very different from boys from the viewpoint of their abilities and potentials and they are not able to occupy a good social position throughout their lifetime, look at their talents, merits, and capabilities with skepticism and doubt and do not want to pave the way for development and productivity of their talents and capabilities.

On the other hand, the principle of gender-based discrimination shadowed social relations of men and women in Afghanistan from long ago, victimize

girl-children in the first instance. Gender based discriminatory view dominant on families and society and false beliefs of inequality between men and women have deeply affected minds of our people the consequences of which have more effects on girl-children and prevent them to have equal access to their human rights. The existence of these traditional beliefs along with economic problems that families have been facing with, promote the mentality that girl-children have no role in improving their economic situation and increasingly strengthen their role as sole spending elements in the minds of their families and society. This, in turn, has had impact on the attitude and mentality of families towards their daughters.

It has to be paid attention that girls often have responded all these problems, discriminations, and violence with silence, but this silence sometimes has been broken and led to acts such running away from home, self-burnings, and suicides. The consequences of violence on girl-children have not been limited to this. The results of our research in terms families in particular mothers of these girls showed that these discriminatory acts against girls in their childhood determine their behavior with their own children when they become adult.

Mothers of these girl-children have committed most cases of violence within families including verbal and physical violence.

Our research showed that unfavorable social condition, security problems, lack or shortage of equal services for women in the areas of health and education including lack of health workers, health facilities, lack of female teachers in schools, or long distance of educational and health centers have been effective in application of unequal and discriminatory treatment and behavior against girl-children. These factors are effective in equal access of girls to their basic and fundamental rights within their families and society and cause violation of most of their rights.

In the meantime, there have been a significant number of parents and families that have had full trust and confidence on observing justice among their children and considered commitment of discriminatory acts against

girls as harsh, inhuman, and non-Islamic. Girls and boys within these families, proportionate with the social condition of their families, have had access to their basic rights and benefited available facilities and opportunities on equal terms.

2. Recommendations

1. Raising Public Awareness Level

- 1.1. Media have a very important mission and role in raising the awareness level of families of the negative impacts of their behavior with girls. Media can play a positive role in promoting and advocating essential issues that can prevent violation of the rights of girls through implementing effective awareness-raising programs.
- 1.2. Teaching of fundamental and Islamic rights of girls to families is very important. Government, non-governmental organizations, and media should, using Islamic and religious teachings, inform them of the girls' rights and the importance, which Prophet of Islam (PBUH) gave to girls. In addition, media should inform families of girls that Islam emphasizes on equal rights and position of girls with boys.
- 1.3. Teaching of Islamic and human rights of girls have to be done in schools, therefore school have to find the capacity to include this in their curricula.
- 1.4. Holding training programs in rural areas with the assistance of civil society organizations since, based on the results of research, girls are more vulnerable to violence and discrimination in those areas. This can enlighten minds of society and can change their behavior with girl-children.
- 1.5. In addition, girls have to be trained to react logically and appropriately to discriminatory behaviors of their parents and other

family members. Through learning living skills and empowering girl-children, increasing their level of knowledge, paving the way for developing their analytical and decision-making skills and powers they have to be made prepared to fight against the phenomenon of gender-based violence.

2. Ensuring equal access of children to education

One of the reasons that cause parents to do discrimination in accessing their children to education is lack of access to educational facilities and services including female schools in residential areas, and lack or shortage of female teachers in the schools. Therefore, design and implementation of effective programs can play effective role in ensuring equal access to education for girl-children.

3. Establishment of health and clinical centers anemployment of medical female personnel in the rural areas

Based on the research results, many families have been complaining from the lack of health centers and clinics and lack of medical female doctors and workers of health services in their residential areas and they considered this as the main reason for their deprivation of their right of having access to health care. Therefore, design and implementation of programs that can solve this problem can in turn ensure equal access of girls to health facilities to the extent possible.

4. Ensuring Security

Lack of security in many parts of the country mostly causes deprivation of girls of their rights by their families. Improving security measures in particular along the way to schools and residential places and making aware families about these measures have impact on improvement of life conditions of girls.

5. Combating Indecent Traditions and Customs

As the results of research shows, activities of discrimination and violence against women within families have their roots in our incorrect traditional beliefs. Therefore, in order to eliminate these indecent traditions, customs including early, and childhood marriages, there should be a joint combat through making adjustments in the laws and making strategies to implement laws and have access to justice. In addition, a cultural combat has to be carried out within the society for decreasing the negative impacts of these traditions on girls and this should be undertaken all over the country through joint and coordinated efforts by government and civil society organizations.

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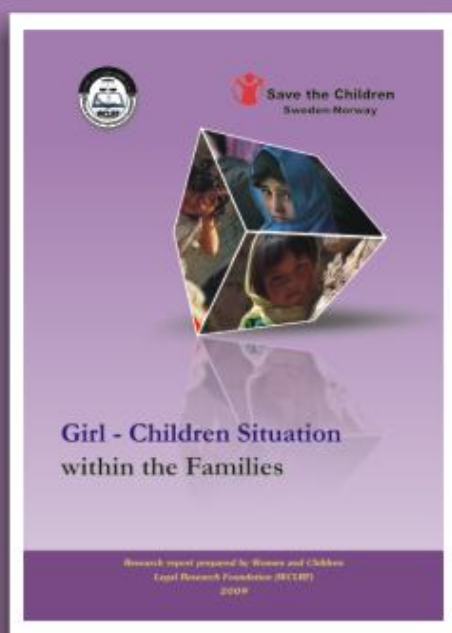
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HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION

Women and Children Legal Research Foundation as a research institution in the field of women and child rights was formed in 2002 in Kabul. The first incentives of the formation of Foundation were discussions taken place inside and out side Afghanistan about women and children. In these discussions, the customs and tradition were considered as the manifestation of infringement background from the women and child rights. In a war torn country mostly relying on tribal traditions of Afghanistan, a small number of people supported the grievance and suffering of women and children under the name of customs and traditions.

This issue impelled the founders of the Foundation to voluntarily undertake collection of some data and information to approve at first the existing of unhappy and catastrophic customs and traditions and then outline the duty and responsibility of different governmental organs and legal institutions which are involved in one way or another into this issue.



Actually, this institution were established to resist against the injustice and obstacles deserves attention and support in short and long terms perspective and closely related to women and children; prepare the means and pave the way for human rights champions to use them as valid documents and references for the identification of negative customs and traditions which can prevent women and children development.

The followings are some of the Foundation publication:

- Bad painful sedative in Afghanistan (Research)
- Women political participation in Afghanistan (Research)
- Impact of traditional practices on women in Afghanistan (Conference)
- A look into the way of children naming in Afghanistan (Research)
- Polygamy in Afghanistan (Research)
- Women economic independence in Afghanistan (Research)
- A glance on cases of running away from house in Afghanistan (Research)
- Access to right to identity and registration of births in Afghanistan (Research)
- Extravagant expenses in weddings (Research)
- Studying impact of proverbs against women in Afghanistan (Research)
- Legal and research magazine "Waqeyat" (reality)
- A Glance on Cases of Running away from House in Afghanistan
- Women's access to Justice (Problems and Challenges)
- Assessment on Human Trafficking and HIV / AIDS status in Afghanistan (Research Report)
- Violence Against Women in Afghanistan (Research Report)
- Early Marriages in Afghanistan (Research Report)
- Waqeyat biweekly newspaper