



CONCERN
WORLDWIDE
USA

Women's Rights

Should all women around the world have the same rights?

FOCUS ON PAKISTAN

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

What are your rights?



WHAT ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

Women's rights are the economic, social and cultural freedoms to which all people are entitled. For women to realize their rights they must have equal access to resources and opportunities and equal treatment in economic and social life. In many parts of the world, women are not treated on an equal basis as men and are denied their basic freedoms because they are women.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is one of the most important legal instruments defining women's rights. CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations and is an international law to ensure equality between women and men. According to this law, women must have **access to and equal opportunities in political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election, as well as education, health and employment.** Countries that have agreed to this convention are legally bound to take action to ensure that all women can enjoy their human rights and freedoms.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENDER AND SEX?

The term gender refers to how women and men are perceived and expected to think and act in a particular cultural, economic and socio-economic context. Gender is a socially defined expectation for roles, attitudes and values which communities and societies think appropriate for one sex or the other. Sex, on the other hand, refers to the biological differences between women and men.

What are examples of gender roles?

? DID YOU KNOW?

Imagine an American 21-year-old woman with a college degree and two years' work experience. Now imagine an American man of the same age, with the same level of education, work experience and skills. Imagine the woman and the man have the exact same job. For every \$100 the man is paid, the woman is paid \$73.

Women are paid less than men, even when they have the same level of education, skills and experience as men.

IN THE UNITED STATES...

If **MARRIED WOMEN** were paid the same as comparable men, their family incomes would rise by nearly 6 percent, and their families' poverty rates would fall from 2.1 percent to 0.8 percent.

If **SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS** earned as much as comparable men, their family incomes would increase by nearly 17 percent, and their poverty rates would be cut in half, from 25.3 percent to 12.6 percent.

If **SINGLE WOMEN** earned as much as comparable men, their incomes would rise by 13.4 percent, and their poverty rates would be reduced from 6.3 percent to 1 percent.

CHECK IT OUT:

A complete list of international instruments related to women's rights: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/un/iinstrum.htm>
Find out about inequality in women's pay in the US: <http://www.aflcio.org>

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD

Who should determine a woman's rights?

The majority of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women.

But gender inequality does not only exist in poor countries, and discrimination against women can be found across a range of cultures and political ideologies.

Millions of women around the world are marginalized, abused, discriminated against and denied access to education, adequate health care, land, and economic opportunities because they are women.

ILLITERACY RATES OF WOMEN AND MEN (1998)



WHAT DO WOMEN'S RIGHTS HAVE TO DO WITH CULTURE?

WHAT IS CULTURE? Culture is a shared set of values, beliefs, customs and traditions passed on from generation to generation. Culture influences gender and how men and women are expected to act in society. In many cultures, the roles assigned to women are based on the belief that men and women are not equal and should not have the same freedoms in life. Even in countries where men and women have the same legal rights, cultural practices might influence whether a woman is able or chooses to realize her rights. Most societies and cultures have practices that are seen as oppressive to women. Consider the practice of honor killings. Yasmeen Hassan says, "in Pakistan women are viewed as the property of their male relatives and

the 'honor' of the family is tied to women. This perception makes violence against women by their own families possible, including 'honor killings' where a woman is killed for her actual or perceived immoral behavior." Many consider this practice horrifying and unjustifiable. But some believe that because this is a cultural practice, it cannot be judged as universally wrong. Do you think some cultural practices are universally wrong? If so, whose responsibility is it to determine which practices are wrong and should be changed? **Should governments be called upon to change cultural practices that are considered a violation of women's rights? In your culture, are there traditions or customs that do not value women's rights?**

CHECK IT OUT:

Read about violence against women around the world: <http://www.hrw.org/women/index.php>

Read a Somali woman's story: <http://www.fgmnetwork.org/articles/Waris.htm>

PAKISTAN

*Some women don't want to have the same rights as men
– should they be persuaded to think differently?*



PAKISTAN COUNTRY INFORMATION

LOCATION: Southern Asia, between India on the east, Iran and Afghanistan on the west and China in the north.

POPULATION: 141,300,000

SIZE: Pakistan is almost twice the size of California

ETHNIC GROUPS: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Muhajir

RELIGIONS: 97% Muslim (77% Sunni, 20% Shi'a)
3% Christian, Hindu and other

LANGUAGES: Urdu (official) Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto (there are over 300 dialects and languages spoken in Pakistan)

POPULATION LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY:
31% live on less than \$1 per day; 85% live on less than \$2 per day

UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY RATE: 110 (for every 1,000 children born, 110 will die before their 5th birthday)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 59 years

ADULT LITERACY RATE: 43%

HISTORY AND POLITICS

Pakistan is a poor, densely populated country burdened by internal political disputes, thousands of Afghan refugees and extremely tense relations with neighboring India. Throughout its history, Pakistan has alternated from civilian to military rule and over the last few decades politics in Pakistan have been tarnished by corruption, inefficiency and conflict. In the past 10 years, military spending has averaged over 30% of the government's budget, leaving very little for roads, education, healthcare and other social services.

General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's current President, seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999. Initially, the international community condemned Musharraf, for his military rule of the country and for his support of the Taliban in Afghanistan. But following September 11th, 2001, when President Bush said, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them," Pakistan promised to cooperate with the US-campaign against terrorism.

In April 2002 Musharraf changed the country's constitution, giving himself another five years as president and the power to dismiss an elected parliament. He arranged for parliamentary elections in October 2002 to mark the handover from military to civilian rule. In November 2002 the National Assembly chose Musharraf loyalist Mir Zafarullah Jamali as the new civilian prime minister.

PAKISTAN AND INDIA

Ever since Pakistan and India gained independence in 1947, the two countries have been bitter rivals. During the last fifty years, the two nations have fought three wars, two of them over the disputed region of Kashmir.

In 1998 Pakistan and India tested their nuclear weapons, and today, an estimated 1 million troops backed by tanks, warplanes and missiles have been mobilized in Kashmir. World leaders have tried to mediate a cease-fire, but neither side shows signs of putting aside its arms.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- 40 of the world's 50 highest mountains are in Pakistan. K-2, or Chogori, is the second highest mountain in the world at 28,251 feet high.
- Pakistan is one of 7 countries with declared nuclear weapons. Pakistan's last test of its weapons was in 1998.

CHECK IT OUT

Listen to the Pakistani national anthem: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1157960.stm

For an interactive map of Kashmir, go to: <http://asia.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2002/kashmir/>

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN?

Should women and men in Pakistan have the same rights?

THE CONSTITUTION OF PAKISTAN SAYS...

All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.

There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone.

Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

The state shall protect the marriage, the family, and the mother...

The state shall ensure that women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their sex...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are you surprised that Pakistan's constitution outlaws sex discrimination? Why do you think many women in Pakistan do not demand that their rights are observed? What is your reaction to the law that says the state should ensure that women do not do jobs unsuited to their sex?

HEALTH

- 30,000 Pakistani women die each year due to pregnancy complications.
- 16,000 women are living with HIV/AIDS
- 16% of female babies born die before their 5th birthday, compared to 10% of male babies

EDUCATION

- 28% of adult Pakistani women are literate and the proportion of illiterate women is increasing.
- 28% of Pakistani females are enrolled in school; in rural areas only 3% of girls stay in school beyond 6th grade.
- 13% of Pakistani girls are enrolled in high school

The status of women in Pakistan varies across classes, regions and the rural/urban divide – male domination is stronger in rural areas, where customs and traditions establish male authority and power over women's lives. On the other hand, women belonging to the upper and middle classes have increasingly greater access to education and employment opportunities and can assume greater control over their lives.

Even though women in Pakistan have legal rights, there are complex reasons why many women don't demand these rights: some don't know they have legal rights; some are afraid to assert their rights; and others believe in their society's gender roles, even if these roles prevent them from realizing their rights. Can you think of other reasons why a woman in Pakistan might not claim her rights? The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reports that 80% of young women aren't aware of their basic legal rights, including those related to marriage and divorce. They also report that violence against women is on the rise. A woman is raped every two hours and hundreds of women are victims of 'honor' killings, domestic violence, burnings and murder.

GENDER AND POVERTY

Women and men living in extreme poverty suffer from great challenges in day-to-day life – they do not have the resources to provide food and clothing for themselves and their children, they are unable to send their children to school, they do not have access to clean drinking water, and they are unable to go to the doctor when they are sick. These challenges are even greater for women. 70% of the Pakistanis living in poverty are women. In poor households where resources are scarce, discrimination against women and girls is more pronounced — chronic malnutrition is higher among female children and women's access to and control over economic resources is very limited.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- On average, Pakistani women earn \$916 per year, compared to Pakistani men, who earn \$2,884 per year.
- Women make up 6% of Pakistan's labor force.
- Most working women are manual laborers; only 8% of working women have administrative or managerial positions. A female teacher in Pakistan makes \$64 a month, compared to a male teacher who makes \$77 a month.

MALE/FEMALE DISPARITIES IN PAKISTAN

	FEMALES	MALES
LIFE EXPECTANCY	59 years	61 years
LITERACY RATE	28%	58%
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATE	28%	51%
EARNED ANNUAL INCOME	\$916	\$2,884
SEATS IN GOVERNMENT	3.4%	96.6%

CHECK IT OUT:

Read about honor killings in Pakistan - <http://users.erols.com/ziqbal/yh.htm> A Muslim-American woman's feelings about wearing a veil: <http://www.postgazette.com/headlines/20011028muslimwomennat3p3.asp>



SHOULD ALL WOMEN AROUND THE

What are women's rights? Is your definition of women's rights different from someone from another country or culture? If something is considered wrong in one culture, but is accepted in another, is one culture right?

Neda, SAUDI FEMALE, 38 YEARS OLD

I was married when I was 17 years old to a man I barely knew. I wear a veil and, without a man's permission I am not allowed to travel outside Saudi Arabia, drive a car or leave the house alone. I am also a practicing doctor, have a PhD in speech pathology and am an active member of several community groups. I wear a headscarf and keep my body covered because it is a symbol of my faith and a form of protection. I think it is liberating because it forces people to judge me by my character and intelligence rather than by my appearance.

Chloe, AMERICAN FEMALE, 13 YEARS OLD

I go to school everyday but I hate it. My teachers only seem interested in what the boys have to say, and every time I speak up in class, all the boys laugh and the teacher makes me feel like what I've said is stupid. They listen to the really smart girls in my class, but no one really wants to be friends with them.

Asma, PAKISTANI FEMALE, 21 YEARS OLD

I work in Afghanistan. Once I was traveling with a group of women and men. It was a long journey so we decided to stop for lunch. We all had to go to the bathroom, but this is almost impossible for women in Afghanistan – there are few proper toilets and women are even ashamed to say that they need a toilet. Finally we found one, and when we came back to the restaurant, there was no room for women. Men and women eat separately, so we were given two options – either to sit in the same room facing the wall with our backs to the men, or to sit in the vehicle to eat. I was amazed to know that the women preferred to eat while facing the wall. It seemed humiliating to me, but they didn't seem to care – to them it did not matter that they were being treated like animals.

Mehmood,

PAKISTANI MALE, 30 YEARS OLD

I married the love of my life two years ago. But my wife's family opposed the marriage, and accused me of abducting her. We were both imprisoned and beaten by the police. The court eventually let us go, but we knew her family would seek vengeance – they consider her their property and they said that she represents their family honor – so we had to leave the country. We consider ourselves lucky – sometimes when a family feels it has been dishonored, women are seriously injured or even killed.

Angula, BOTSWANAN

FEMALE, 34 YEARS OLD

I know about HIV/AIDS – I know how it is contracted and how to prevent myself from getting it. But my husband, sometimes he stays out all night – I don't know what he's doing and I can't control what he does. I can't ask him to wear a condom because he's my husband and that would be insulting.

Carolina,

SPANISH FEMALE, 25 YEARS OLD

In my country, when a woman gets married she doesn't take her husband's last name. In fact, I think the custom in many countries of having a woman take her husband's name is patriarchal and sexist. Until women stop this oppressive tradition, they will never truly be liberated.



WORLD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS?

Read the stories and opinions below. What do you think could be considered a violation of women's rights? Would someone from a different country or culture disagree with you?

**Fatuma, RWANDAN FEMALE,
20 YEARS OLD**

My daughter was sick with a fever for four days. The nearest clinic is a day's walk away, and I didn't have enough money to pay for medicine. My husband has goats he could sell so I could take her to the clinic, but I would never ask him to do that. I finally borrowed some money from a friend, but by the time I reached the clinic my daughter was very, very sick. Luckily, the doctor was able to help her and now she is doing better. If I hadn't borrowed the money, my child would've died.

**Najeeb, AFGHAN MALE,
22 YEARS OLD**

I got married when I was 15 to a 14 year-old girl. We have four children and I am proud of this. I will still be very young when my children are grown up and able to work. People don't realize that a lot is expected of boys here in Afghanistan. We are expected to bring in money at a very early age. Girls are well protected because they are hidden inside the home. Sometimes boys are kicked out of their homes to find their own way in life. The expectations are a lot higher for boys than for girls. Boys are seen as the responsible ones, while girls are the honor or "izzat" of the family.

Waris Dirie, SOMALI FEMALE

One evening when I was about five, my mother said to me, "Your father ran into the gypsy woman. She should be here any day now" I knew the gypsy woman would come to do my circumcision, because in my culture it is believed that a girl is unmarriageable unless her genitals are cut. Paying the gypsy woman for this circumcision is a huge expense, but is considered a good investment. The night before she was to come, I lay awake with excitement. Mama whispered, "Try to be a good girl, baby. Be brave and it'll go fast." The next thing I knew I was lying alone with my legs tied, I could only wonder, why? At that age I didn't understand anything about sex. All I knew was that I had been butchered with my mother's permission.

**Marlene,
VENEZUELAN FEMALE,
19 YEARS OLD**

I got married last year and within a few months my husband had a mistress. This is just a fact of life in my country – all men do it, and women just have to get used to it. It's unrealistic to think that you would ever find a man who wouldn't have a mistress.

**Eileen, IRISH FEMALE,
17 YEARS OLD**

My best friend in school died a year ago today. She got pregnant and when the school found out about it, no one would help her – they even threatened to expel her. When it was time to have her baby, she went to a place where she could be alone, but she must have had problems when she was giving birth because one of the teachers found her lying on the ground unconscious. A few weeks later we found out that her father had raped her and the baby was his.

These accounts are based on true stories. Most names have been changed.



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

UN Division for the Advancement of Women

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

UN Development Fund for Women

<http://www.undp.org/unifem/>

UN Population Fund

<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/>

International Women's Day

<http://www.un.org>

The World Bank – Gender Statistics

<http://genderstats.worldbank.org>

PAKISTAN

Government of Pakistan

<http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/>

CIA World Factbook

<http://www.odci.gov>

Asian Development Bank

<http://www.adb.org>

BBC – Pakistan Country Profile

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1157960.stm

ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS

Human Rights Watch

Women's Human Rights

<http://staging.hrw.org/wr2k2/women.html>

Amnesty International

Pakistan: Insufficient Protection of Women

<http://www.amnesty.org>

Saving Women's Lives

<http://www.savingwomenslives.org/>

Gendercide

Case Study: "Honour" Killings and

Blood Feuds

<http://www.gendercide.org/>

NEWS / ARTICLES

The Fate of Pakistani Women

By Yasmeen Hassan

International Herald Tribune

<http://users.erols.com/ziqbal/yh.htm>

Voices from Behind the Veil

The Christian Science Monitor

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1219/pls3-wogi.html>

DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

Women of Islam

<http://www.womenofislam.com/>

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