



CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) FOR YOUTH



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Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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WHAT IS THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN?

The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, or **CEDAW**, is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas and promotes women's equal rights. **CEDAW is often described as the international bill of rights for women.**



The United Nations adopted CEDAW on 18 December 1979. As of 2016, **189¹ countries have ratified CEDAW**. This means that these countries have agreed to do everything they can to guarantee that women and girls can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with men and boys.

¹ https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=_en

WHY IS CEDAW IMPORTANT?

CEDAW is a convention or treaty, which means that **it is part of international law and is legally binding** for countries that have ratified the convention.

Although other international human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, CEDAW is important because **it comprehensively addresses women's human rights** and is focused on ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and guaranteeing their rights **in all areas of life.**

CEDAW requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women in the public as well as the private sphere, including in the family, and **recognizes that traditional gender roles and stereotypes must be eliminated in order to end all forms of discrimination** against women and girls.

CEDAW seeks to achieve 'substantive equality' or 'equality of results', which stresses that there should be **equal access, equal opportunities, and equal results for women and girls.** It entails that countries are obligated to take all necessary actions that may be required to make sure women and girls actually experience equality in their lives.



“THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GIRL-CHILD ARE AN INALIENABLE, INTEGRAL AND INDIVISIBLE PART OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS.”

— *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993, paragraph 18*

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CEDAW AND YOU(TH)

CEDAW is important for all the above reasons, and it is also important **for youth!** Although CEDAW mainly refers to 'women', the Convention reflects a life cycle approach and countries are obliged to promote the equal rights of women and girls. The different



**CEDAW IS IMPORTANT
BECAUSE IT COMPREHENSIVELY
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forms and areas of discrimination that CEDAW focuses on are **important to women of all ages, including girls and young women.**

As activists and members of civil society organizations, as well as simply members of society, **young women and young men also have an extremely important role to play in holding their governments accountable** to implementing CEDAW.

Young women and young men are the eyes and ears for monitoring whether women's and girls' rights are being respected or if they are being violated. In countries that have not yet ratified CEDAW and/or its Optional Protocol, advocating for ratification is the first step!

For countries that have ratified CEDAW, local and/or national NGOs (including youth groups) can contribute to the country's official initial and periodic reports on the progress that has been made in implementing CEDAW and draw attention to challenges and suggest ways that government can advance women's and girls' rights in line with the Convention. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Committee), which is composed of 23 independent experts from all regions, receives and considers the reports and monitors the implementation of CEDAW.

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YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN CAN CONTRIBUTE TO GENDER EQUALITY BY LEARNING ABOUT WOMEN'S AND GIRL'S RIGHTS.

NGOs can also submit 'alternative reports' to the CEDAW Committee, showing the gaps and challenges in implementing CEDAW that may not be mentioned in their country's official report. **Young women and young men can use the recommendations issued by the CEDAW Committee following the consideration of a country's report, the concluding observations, to lobby the government to take action along the lines of the Committee's recommendations to initiate legal and policy reforms.**

Women and girls (alone or in a group) can also make a complaint to the CEDAW Committee if their rights have been violated, provided their country has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Young women and young men can contribute to gender equality by learning about women's and girl's rights, being aware of stereotypes that contribute to women and girls being treated unequally, and **by addressing discrimination in all of its forms and promoting equality, inclusion and respect.**

CEDAW'S IMPACT

CEDAW has been a key tool for advancing women's rights and gender equality around the world, providing the basis for judicial decisions, and constitutional, legal and policy reforms at the country level.

In many countries, CEDAW has helped strengthen provisions in constitutions guaranteeing equality between women and men, and providing a constitutional basis for the protection of women's human rights. Legislation prohibiting discrimination in general, and in regard to specific areas such as employment, has become a standard component of legal frameworks. Countries have repealed discriminatory provisions in civil,

THE CEDAW PROCESS IS A ROADMAP FOR TRANSFORMING GENDER RELATIONS WITHIN COUNTRIES, COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES SO THAT THERE IS EQUALITY IN REAL LIFE.

penal and family laws to bring them into conformity with CEDAW. Countries have adopted equal opportunity acts aimed at improving women's position, established quotas to increase the number of women in elected office, and enacted new legislation and action plans to prevent and address violence against women. All over the world, courts are increasingly developing case law on gender equality informed and guided by CEDAW.

Because of CEDAW, women and girls around the world have been empowered to claim their human rights.

CEDAW AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

At the United Nations in 2015, world leaders formally adopted a new agenda for sustainable development with goals and targets for the next 15 years with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The standalone goal for gender equality, SDG 5, focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, and includes ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere as its first target.

Gender equality has been recognized as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and is connected to all the other SDGs. **With the SDGs and CEDAW, world leaders have the human rights foundation, the commitments and the mechanisms for implementation and accountability, and the timeline for achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and ending all forms of discrimination.**



**BECAUSE OF CEDAW,
WOMEN AND GIRLS
AROUND THE WORLD
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TO CLAIM THEIR HUMAN
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