



2019

THE CONDITION OF THE GIRL CHILD WORLDWIDE

8th Edition - 2019
by **Terre des Hommes**

indifes 

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Proteggiamo i bambini insieme



On the occasion of the **International Day of the Girl Child**, introduced by the **UN** in 2012 and celebrated yearly on October 11th, **Terre des Hommes** launches again the “**Indifesa**” **Campaign**. This initiative aims at safeguarding education, health, protection from violence, discrimination and abuse for girls worldwide.

With this important **campaign to raise awareness**, Terre des Hommes places the protection of girls' rights worldwide at the core of its interventions. It commits itself to defend their right to life, freedom, education, equality, and protection. It will achieve this starting from concrete field interventions, leading to tangible results in breaking the poverty cycle and offering better opportunities to thousands of girls and young women globally.

For further information: www.indifesa.org

The Condition of the Girl Child worldwide

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Since 1960, Terre des Hommes is on the front line to protect children worldwide worldwide from violence, abuse and exploitation and to ensure every child with schooling, informal education, medical assistance and food.

Terre des Hommes is currently present in 67 countries with more than 800 projects in favour of children. Terre des Hommes Foundation Italy is a member of the Terre des Hommes International Federation; it works in partnership with EU DG ECHO and is accredited by the European Union, the UN, USAID and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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INTRODUCTION

Saying that this Dossier is a valuable contribution, is somewhat belittling. Since 2012 I face this serious, professional, and extensive work to which it is very hard to remain indifferent: as people, as members of a society that calls itself civilised and as politicians.

Indifesa frames with no emphasis nor rhetoric the situation of little girls and young women in the world, underlying the deep-rooted discriminations that they are still subject to. And if you think that this phenomenon only involves countries with tribal cultures, high poverty rates, or that are bent under the burden of religious fundamentalism, well you are wrong. This is confirmed by the graph on *Children who are victims of crimes in Italy*, which shows some alarming data (e.g. the increase in sexual abuses against girls under 18), or as it is shown by the dossier's chapters on selective abortions, or on early marriages, for instance, still allowed in several American States.

In July, with the approval of the so called *Codice rosso* (Red Code) by the Chambers, with the anti-violence centres mapping and the *Piano operativo sulla violenza maschile contro le donne* (Operating plan on male violence against women) by the Equal Opportunity Department, a set of norms, supporting activities, pathways and campaigns have been put in place to raise awareness, prevent and offer support in regards to any form of discrimination and violence against women. The change in the approach towards little girls, young women and women starts from culture, school, civil education, fighting against gender stereotypes and portraying a good example. And last but not least, change is brought by the working opportunities offered to the female world, in Italy as well as in deep Africa or Brazil. As underlined by **Indifesa**, economic independence is still the main priority for young women: a dream for 980 million women around the world.

You cannot think of living in a bubble or build physical and mental walls, to “protect” your wellbeing. The world is connected not only through networks, but also through primary needs, human rights, economies, interests, migrant flows, and the right to work and be happy or simply to have a decent life. **Indifesa**, with its dossier and its actions over the years, reminds us of that with unique clarity. For this reason, I am grateful to all people working at this valuable project, as I said in the beginning.

Vincenzo Spadafora

State Secretary at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers with responsibility for Equal Opportunities and Youth Policies



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INTRODUCTION

Which kind of world is the 8th edition of the Dossier “**indifesa**” showing us, regarding the condition of the little girls and young women in the world? Is it the world we had dreamed of a few years ago, the one of equal rights and of the dramatic reduction of violence and exploitation? Is it the one we imagined at the time we set out target 5 of the Agenda for 2030: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”?

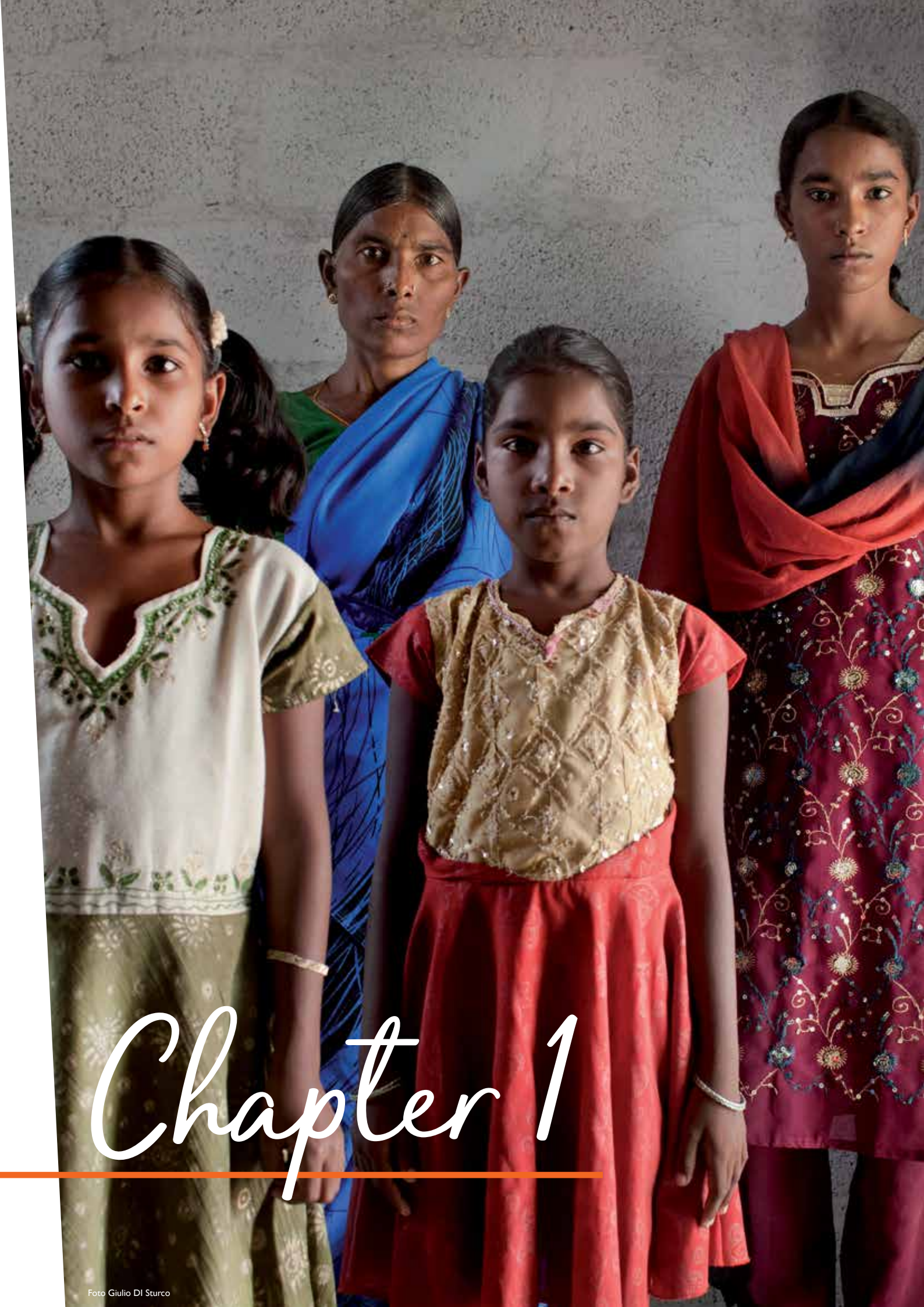
Scrolling the report, it is not easy to give a unique interpretation. The joint work of governments, international institutions and NGOs has led to important results in the last few years in different areas: from the increased number of countries that have banned female genital mutilation, to the increasingly compact amount of countries that are saying a firm NO to early marriages (among them there is also Italy, that in the so called “Codice rosso” has focused its attention on that topic, involving young women and their relatives, and focusing on fathers, schools and religious communities). The fight against gender discriminations and violence has entered the political agendas of many countries and it is becoming the goal of good practises, which are able to radically change behaviours and undermine cultural conditionings that sometimes are centuries old.

The downside is represented by the over 2 million young women under 15 that are to become mothers still this year, above all in the poorest countries in the world, as well as by the 9 million of young women, who, last year alone, were victims of sexual abuse, a violence that sadly confirms itself as one of the main forms of crime against minors in Italy, where 89% of the 656 victims were young women. But perhaps the inequality between sexes, between girls and boys, is shown by a datum that is less dramatic than other data, but absolutely decisive in determining the future: despite the progress made and an undoubted greater awareness of the absolute need for education, over 130 million little girls and young women around the world are excluded from the school cycle. And even where young women manage to reach higher levels, education does not necessarily represent for them the key to access the job market: in the 15-29 age group, the probability of a girl being excluded from the job market, and not being engaged in education, is three times higher than that of boys of the same age. This gender gap, in terms of work and unfortunately also salary, also concerns our country and must be acted on by developing a new culture centred around the engagement of boys and girls: and this is what we as a Foundation are doing through the creation of the **indifesa** Network.

I hope you find this an interesting read: it should be read not just with the eyes, but also with the mind and the heart.

Donatella Vergari

President of Terre des Hommes Italy



Chapter 1

SELECTIVE ABORTION

AND FEMALE INFANTICIDE

Around the world, even today millions of girls are demographically 'missing'. United Nations projections for the year 2018 (valid until 2020) count 101,783 males per 100,000 females worldwide, but a more in-depth analysis shows a marked imbalance in favour of the male gender in some regions of the world. According to the World Health Organisation, the natural ratio between the gender at birth (Sex Ratio at Birth, SRB) is around 105 males per 100 females. The higher number of males is necessary due to women living longer on average. In 113 countries around the world, the ratio is that considered natural, but in some countries such as India, Azerbaijan, Armenia and China it is heavily skewed¹, due to practices such as selective abortion and the neglect of female children at birth. China, Taiwan, Pakistan, and India have a history dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century in this respect. But in recent times the phenomenon has spread to other countries. It has been reported in Albania since the seventies. In the South Caucasus in the nineties, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Vietnam and Nepal in the late nineties and 2000s (according to a 2017 United Nations report). In Korea, there has been a decided change in the trend since the mid-nineties, thanks to national policies for the protection of girls.

A study² has highlighted how between 1970 and 2017 the total number of 'missing' girls for the 12 countries with clear evidence of selective abortions (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, China,

Korea, Georgia, Hong Kong, India, Montenegro, Tunisia, Taiwan, Vietnam) and an SRB imbalance, resulting in a lower number of female births, was equivalent to 45 million. Most of these missing female births were concentrated in China (where 23.1 million girls were not born between 1970 and 2017) and in India (20.7 million).

In the 12 countries studied, except for Vietnam, the percentages seem to be returning within the norm, including China. Indeed, while in 2005 the number of males born was 118 for every 100 females, in 2017 the number of males was 114: still not a big enough decrease, however, to reach the natural ratio. The situation is also still difficult in India, mainly for the large number of "missing girls", a gap that will take a long time to be bridged.

The value of girls and the value of gold

The preference for male children is an expression of the low value traditionally placed on females in many communities. Still today, in some countries only the males inherit, maintain their elderly parents, conduct funeral rites, and carry on the family name. Daughters, on the other hand, are considered a burden, especially in those countries where it is still a tradition to pay a substantial dowry upon marriage. In her study *'The Price of Gold: Dowry and Death in India'*³ Sonia Bhalotra, professor of Economics at the University of Essex,

1 "The Global Gender Gap Report 2018", http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

2 "Systematic assessment of the sex ratio at birth for all countries and estimation of national imbalances and regional reference levels", Fengqing Chao, Patrick Gerland, Alex R. Cook, and Leontine Alkema, <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/116/27/13700.full.pdf>

3 Sonia Bhalotra University of Essex and IZA, Abhishek Chakravarty, University of Essex, Selim Gulesci, Bocconi University, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp9679.pdf>



monitored the relationship between fluctuations in the price of gold and the decrease in the number of girls in India. Gold is often part of the marriage dowry that the bride's family offers to that of the groom. The study analysed the price of gold between 1972 and 2005, in an attempt to understand what role it might have played in the Sex Ratio at Birth and in the survival of one-month-old girls. Analysing over 100,000 births, the research found that when the price of gold increased, the likelihood of survival for girls was much lower than that for males. Between 1972 and 1985, the study showed a 6.3% monthly increase in the price of gold, accompanied by an increase in female infant mortality of 6.4%. No corresponding increase in male infant mortality was recorded. Girls born in those months were also physically weaker in adulthood. Some areas of India and China have a long tradition of postnatal sex selection, such as infanticide and abandonment. Selection can occur in more passive forms, with a discriminatory attitude towards the infants, such as denying breastfeeding, vaccinations, and access to basic healthcare, reduced quantity and quality of food and clothing, and lower investment in education.⁴

Economic stress is certainly one of the causes of the increase in infanticide and selective abortions. In China, for example, female infant mortality rose to extremely high levels during the war in the thirties and the famine of the fifties. In the Caucasus the same phenomenon was also observed after the collapse of the USSR⁵; Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia had also entered ethnic conflicts, requiring more male children that would be able to fight.

Male and female imbalance and violence

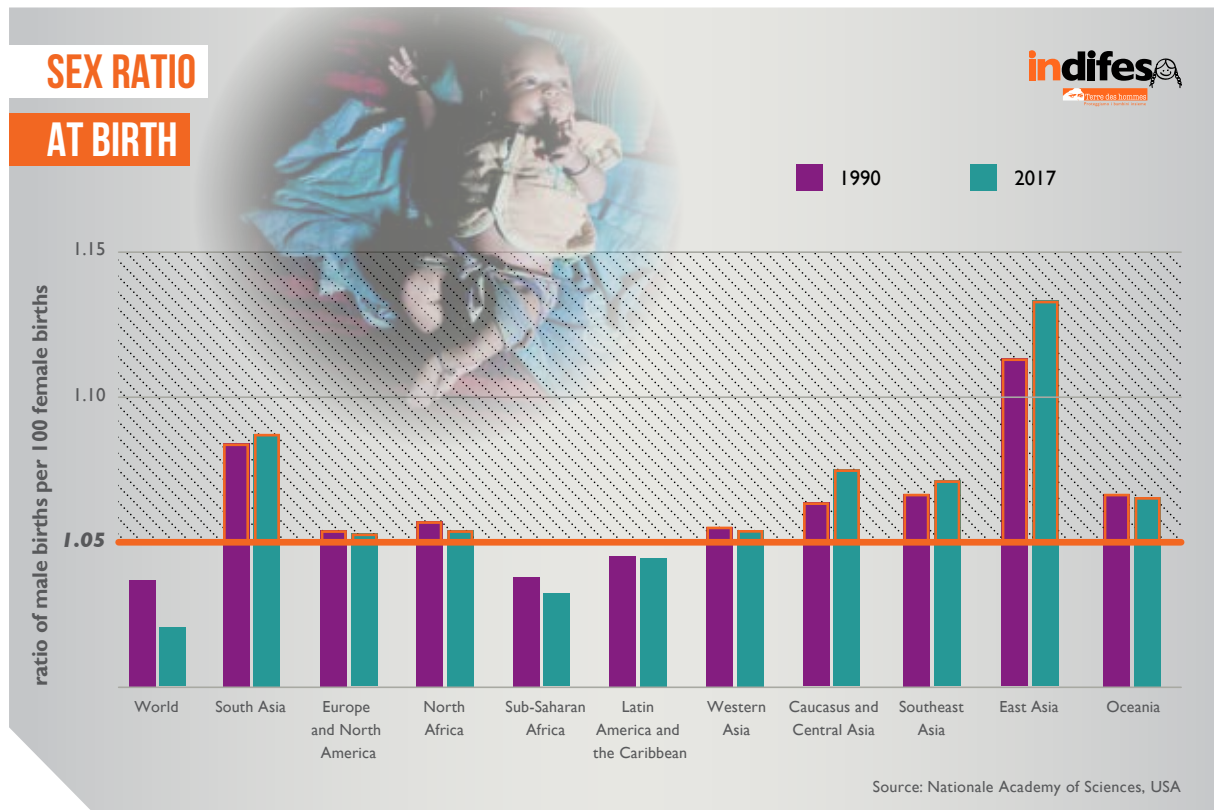
The worldwide imbalance between the sexes in the birth ratio has extremely serious consequences, including an increase in violence against women. In countries where the number of female births decreases, cases of 'marriage squeeze' increase: that is, the imbalance leads to a trend of forced importation of girls to countries in which they are scarce, for marriage.

The relationship between violence against women and the imbalance of the Sex Ratio at Birth is the topic of a recent study by Nadia Diamond Smith and Kara Rudolph⁶. The authors claim that between 2020 and 2080 there will be 40 million single men in India and 32 million in China. The richer ones will get married, probably to younger women. The poorer ones, on the other hand, will find no women to marry. This could lead to intense competition, leading in turn to social instability, violence between men and, above all, against women. In fact, the authors state that when there are not enough partners, there is an increase in sexual violence and in the use of prostitution. In the six countries that were selected as part of the study (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka), a direct link was established between a higher male-to-female sex ratio and an increase in sexual violence and in the use of weapons.

4 Kumar, Sneha; Sinha, Nistha. 2018. "Preventing More "Missing Girls": A Review of Policies to Tackle Son Preference <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/648421541077646986/pdf/WPS8635.pdf>

5 "Missing Women" in the South Caucasus: Local perceptions and proposed solutions, Nora Dudwick <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Highlights%20&%20Features/eca/armenia/missing-girls-report-english.pdf>

6 "The Association between uneven sex ratios and violence: Evidence from 6 asian countries", Nadia Diamond Smith e Kara Rudolph, 2018 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5983495/>



Campaign for gender equality

But what is the best way to address this issue? With the advent of the most recent prenatal diagnosis technologies (in particular, fetal DNA tests, which are done through simple blood sampling as of the tenth week of pregnancy), the rate of postnatal abandonment and negligence has gone down. However, these technologies shed a troubling light on how finding out the sex of an unborn child at an early stage can be used within the context of selective abortion. Prohibiting access to early testing is certainly not the solution, for obvious ethical reasons having to do with mothers' health. Such a ban would also open the door to an increase in backstreet abortions.

The best approach is to seriously reflect on the state of sexual education, to broaden the policies that also allow daughters to inherit, and to eliminate dowries. In March 2017, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) used funding from the European Union to launch the *Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and Gender-Biased Sex Selection*, which works with local governments to gather data in Asia and the Caucasus regarding imbalances caused by selective abortion. In March 2019, the UNFPA and Kapital Bank signed a *memorandum* in Baku to join forces and carry out campaigns with a view to combatting gender-biased sex selection and to promoting gender equality in Azerbaijan, where the SRB is still far from ideal. The first campaign is appropriately called 'Missing girls'⁷.

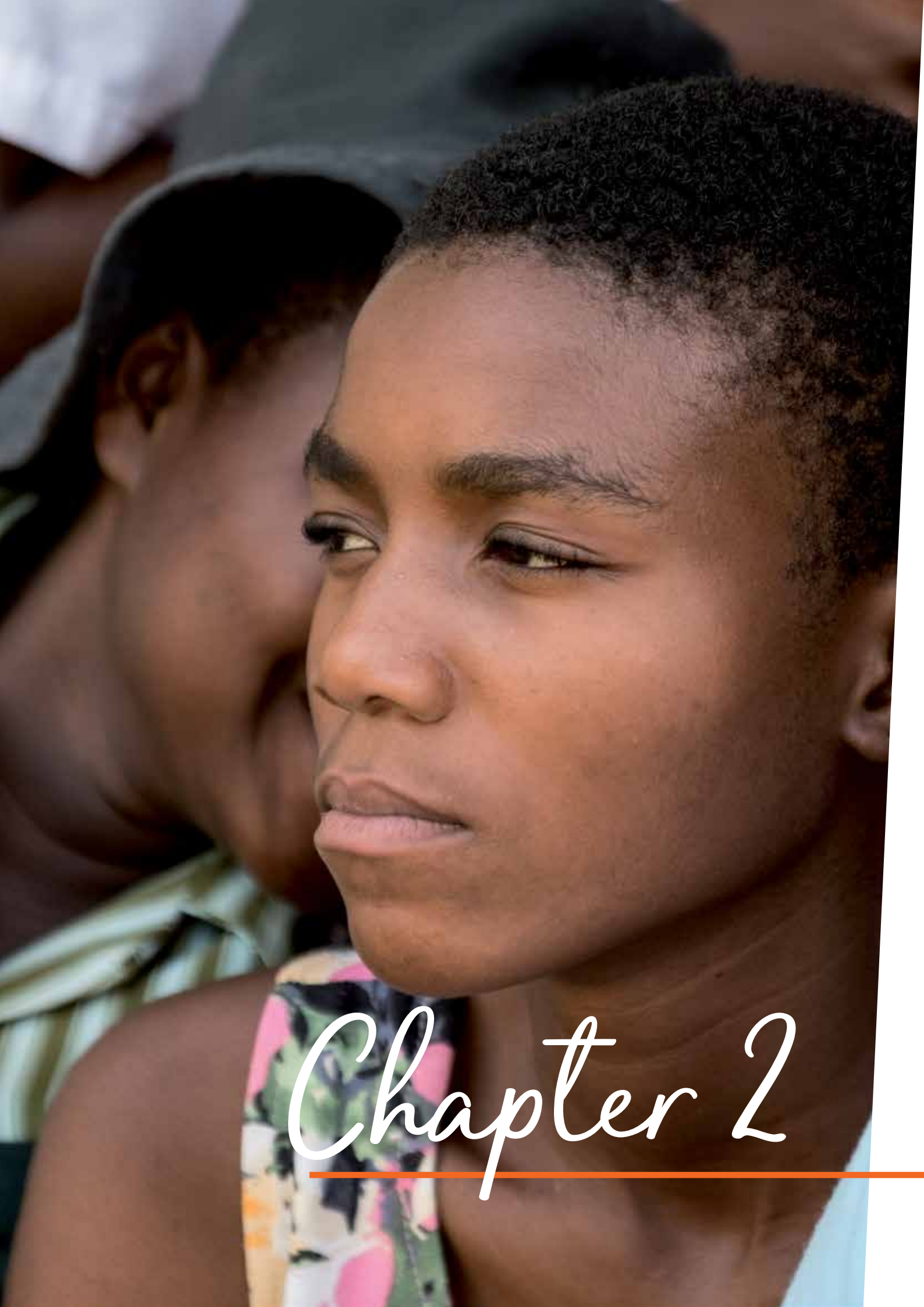
7 <https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/en/news/unfpa-and-kapital-bank-promote-gender-equality> <https://vimeo.com/332699515>. https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/kapital_bank_unfpa_azerbaijan_missing_girls

THE ISSUE IN THE UNITED STATES

In an interview with *Meet the Press* that took place last May, a response provided by 2020 USA Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders caused some controversy. When asked whether he thought it would be necessary to amend national laws so as to put restrictions on sex-selective abortions, Sanders stated that this was a concern that had to be dealt with¹. There was a wide range of reactions. As an in-depth study conducted by the Guttmacher Institute² explains, the issue of sex-selective abortion has been used by conservatives in recent years to undermine abortion laws and is based on an unfounded prejudice against Asian communities in the USA. This study maintains that the only way to tackle this problem is to implement policies that promote gender identity, and that limiting women's freedom is certainly not the solution. After all, 92% of abortions in the United States take place during the first trimester, before the sex of the unborn child can be definitively established. Nevertheless, eight states in the USA already have laws that impose restrictions regarding sex-selective abortions, even though the ratio of men to women in the United States is not skewed toward men.

1 <https://www.thecut.com/2019/05/why-did-bernie-sanders-repeat-an-anti-choice-talking-point.html>, <https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/sanders-i-don-t-know-how-i-would-deal-with-sex-selective-abortion-laws-59934277938>

2 <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/abortion-bans-cases-sex-or-race-selection-or-genetic-anomaly>.



Chapter 2

FEMALE GENITAL

MUTILATION

The origins of female genital mutilation, one of the most brutal traditional practices today considered a very serious violation of human rights, are uncertain.

According to some researchers, it dates back to Ancient Egypt¹ (which corresponds to today's Sudan and Egypt). Others theorize that the practice developed through the slave trade, extending from the west coast of the Red Sea into Africa, or from the Middle East into Africa through Arab slave-drivers. Traces of the practice have also been noted among the slaves of Ancient Rome².

Cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) have been reported throughout the centuries in Europe as well. Interest regarding this practice grew in 1860 when Isaac Baker Brown, the founder of the London Surgical Home for Women, noted that patients with epilepsy tended to masturbate. Through these observations, he concluded that masturbation in women led to hysteria, epilepsy and death. Brown believed that the only way to cure these issues was to perform a clitoridectomy³.

Today, at least 200 million women and girls around the world have been subjected to genital mutilation. UNICEF estimates that without an increased commitment to ending this practice, another 68 million women and girls will suffer

the same fate by 2030⁴. Good news can be gleaned from national legislation: in recent years, 13 countries with a high rate of FGM (Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda) have implemented laws prohibiting this practice. Similar national standards will soon be put in place in three more states⁵.

A controversial aspect

In only eight countries (Egypt, Sudan, Guinea, Djibouti, Kenya, Iraq, Yemen and Nigeria), a good 20 million women⁶ have undergone medicalized FGM, a process in which a healthcare worker performs the mutilation operation. However, this is certainly not a way to make it safer. The immediate and future health risks for very young girls are still extremely high. FGM involves removing healthy tissue and forever altering the physiology and sexuality of young women. It violates their right to live free from violence and discrimination and to maintain their physical and moral integrity; it also subjects them to a cruel and degrading practice.

FGM has many consequences, both in the short and long term. Short-term consequences include shooting pain (anesthesia is rarely used), bleeding, shock, inflammation, infections, contracting HIV

1 Knight, Mary. "Curing Cut or Ritual Mutilation?: Some Remarks on the Practice of Female and Male Circumcision in Graeco-Roman Egypt." *Isis*, vol. 92, no. 2, 2001, pp. 317–338. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3080631

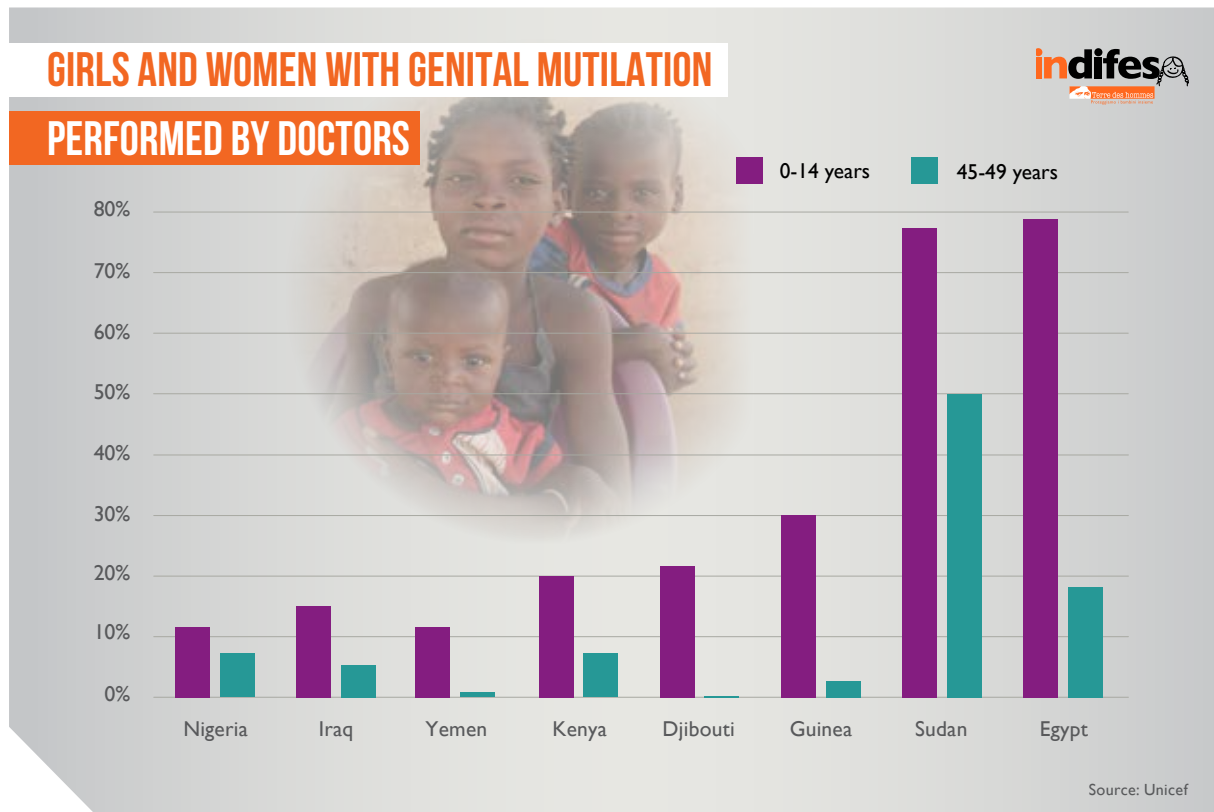
2 Andro Armelle, Lesclingand Marie, «Les mutilations génitales féminines. État des lieux et des connaissances», *Population*, 2016/2 (Vol. 71), p. 217-296

3 Female Circumcision: The History, the Current Prevalence and the Approach to a Patient Jewel Llamas April 2017 <https://med.virginia.edu/family-medicine/wp-content/uploads/sites/285/2017/01/Llamas-Paper.pdf>

4 <https://www.unicef.it/doc/8854/cosi-possiamo-debellare-le-mutilazioni-genitali-femminili.html>

5 Ibid

6 https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/FGM_Policy_Brief_On_Medicalization_Brochure_-_PDF_June_18.pdf



from unsterilized surgical equipment, urinary problems, and death as a result of sepsis.

Long-term consequences include chronic genital and urinary infections, chronic pelvic and back pain, renal insufficiency, dysmenorrhea and irregular menstruation, an increased risk of HIV transmission due to a risk of excessive bleeding during sexual intercourse, reduced or suppressed libido, reduced lubrication, pain during sexual intercourse, and an inability to have an orgasm. Long-term complications also involve a woman's reproductive functions, and include postpartum bleeding, difficulties during labour, and lacerations, with associated risks to the unborn child. Psychological effects are obviously devastating, ranging from posttraumatic stress to depression⁷.

Alternative rites

A controversial question in this field is that of an alternative rite of passage, an idea that was conceived by some organizations as part of a strategy to eradicate FGM. In practice, these are non-bloody rituals in which the community celebrates the girls' entrance into adulthood. In some very rare cases, it was the same communities or religious leaders who proposed this⁸. In 1996, Kenyan organisation Maendeleo ya Wanawake (MYWO) organised the first of these rites of passage in Kenya in collaboration with PATH (Program for Alternative Technology in Health) in the Tharaka area of Meru⁹. Other such forms have developed, for example the Reach Project in Uganda and the Foundation of Research

⁷ https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/health_consequences_fgm/en/

⁸ Alternative Rites of Passage in FGM/C Abandonment Campaigns in Africa: A research opportunity DROY, Laurence et al. Alternative Rites of Passage in FGM/C Abandonment Campaigns in Africa: A research opportunity. LIAS Working Paper Series, [S.l.], v. 1, aug. 2018

⁹ e.g. Muteshi and Sass, 2005; Chege, Askew and Liku, 2001; World Bank/UNFPA, 2004



on Women's Health, Productivity and Environment (BAFROW) in Gambia.

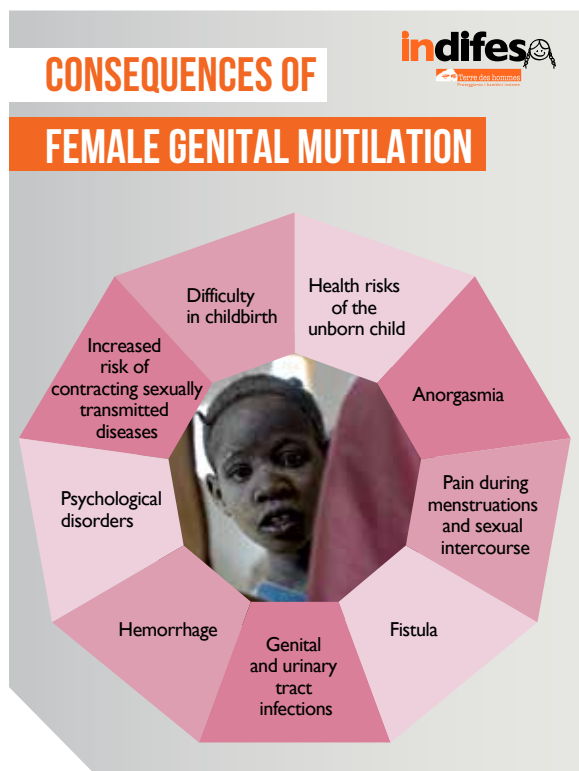
The problem with alternative rituals is that their success is claimed without solid evidence of their effectiveness¹⁰: there is no adequate comparison data, as there are no *follow ups* for girls who have gone through alternative rituals. The ritual itself is often taken as proof of its own success in overcoming these harmful practices. This is not to deny the fact that alternative rites of passage can have a positive impact. In some of the 30 countries that practice female genital mutilation, alternative

rites of passage have certainly protected many girls, symbolically marking the transition to adult life without having to resort to mutilation.

But alone, they are not enough. At times these rituals are viewed by local communities (such as the Maasai and Samburu in Kenya) as interfering with tradition. A study recently published in the *Pan African Medical Journal* explains how alternative rites of passage could be a solution, but only if they are combined with other actions: first of all, education, then the involvement of men in the community who would otherwise feel excluded



¹⁰ Alternative Rites of Passage in FGM/C Abandonment Campaigns in Africa: A research opportunity DROY, Laurence et al. Alternative Rites of Passage in FGM/C Abandonment Campaigns in Africa: A research opportunity. LIAS Working Paper Series, [S.l.], v. 1, aug. 2018



(with consequences for girls), collaboration with local religious institutions, an emphasis on filial love among parents, who often feel compelled to make their daughters face the painful practice without true conviction, and the continuous monitoring of girls after the alternative rituals, to ensure that they do not suffer any form of discrimination for not having been subjected to mutilation¹¹.

Marriage is still an economic issue for families in many countries, and if uncut girls are refused by potential husbands there is little hope that alternative rites of passage can really take over.

FGM in Italy

It is estimated that in Italy, of girls aged under 18 from families that come from countries where it is practised¹², between 15% and 24% are at risk of female genital mutilation. Most are of Egyptian origin. Smaller groups of at-risk girls come from Senegal, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Guinea. Among girls seeking asylum in Italy, it is estimated that 9% are at risk of genital mutilation¹³. According to a study by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the population of migrant girls from countries in which FGM is practised grew by 27% between 2011 and 2016, with the percentage of girls aged between 10 and 18 years old doubling to reach 60%.

In Italy, Law No. 7 from January 9th 2006¹⁴ made specific provisions to tackle the problem, applying the principle of extraterritoriality: FGM is criminalised even when practised abroad. It carries a maximum penalty of 12 years' imprisonment. The provisions for the protection of minors also apply in the case of FGM and parents can be considered responsible for genital mutilation suffered by their daughters.

Women and girls who have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, female genital mutilation are granted asylum, as their protection is among the objectives of the national strategic plan for violence against women 2017-2020¹⁵.

11 Lessons learned from implementing alternative rites in the fight against female genital mutilation/cutting Ernst Patrick Graamans et al. The Pan African Medical Journal, 2019

12 The estimated total is 76,040 girls aged between 0-18

13 European Institute for Gender Equality, Estimate of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union — Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy and Malta, 2018
https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/.../20182881_mh0218658itn_pdf.pdf

14 <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/060071.html>

15 <http://www.camera.it/temi/ap/2017/11/23/OCD177-3207.pdf>



Chapter 3

GIRLS AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The efforts put in place over the last 20 years by supranational organisations and states have made it possible to achieve important results in the field of education. Firstly, the number of out-of-school children has decreased from 374.1 million in 2000 to 264.3 million in 2015. This figure is still very high but constantly falling.

At the same time, there are positive results in the efforts to reduce the gender gap between males and females: "School dropouts in secondary schools (middle schools and high schools) are now almost identical between males and females. In addition, the gender gap in primary education has fallen from over 5 per cent in 2000 to less than 2 per cent in 2015" found in the report *"Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education"*¹ by Unesco.

But there is still a long way to go in order to reach the specific targets set by the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): 'To guarantee quality education for all children by 2030.' This begins with the 130 million girls who do not go to school and 50% of girls who, despite regularly attending school, fail to reach the minimum level of mathematics and reading skills².

12 years to change a life

Globally, on average girls attend school for fewer years than their male peers. A recent survey

carried out by the University of Cambridge³ makes clear the situation regarding female access to education where, despite the progress made over the last 20 years (gender equality in primary school achieved in 31 of the 44 countries taken into consideration), the 12 years of school required by the fourth SDG remains a much more distant objective for the poorest girls and those living in disadvantaged areas. 'In 15 of the countries for which data is available, poor girls living in rural areas remain in school for less than five years. As a result, they have little possibility of progressing to secondary school', states the report. In the world's poorest countries, the 'distance' - in terms of years of schooling - that separates poor rural girls from rich urban boys is clear: 10 years in Pakistan and India, 11 years in Nigeria, eight in Sierra Leone and Mozambique.

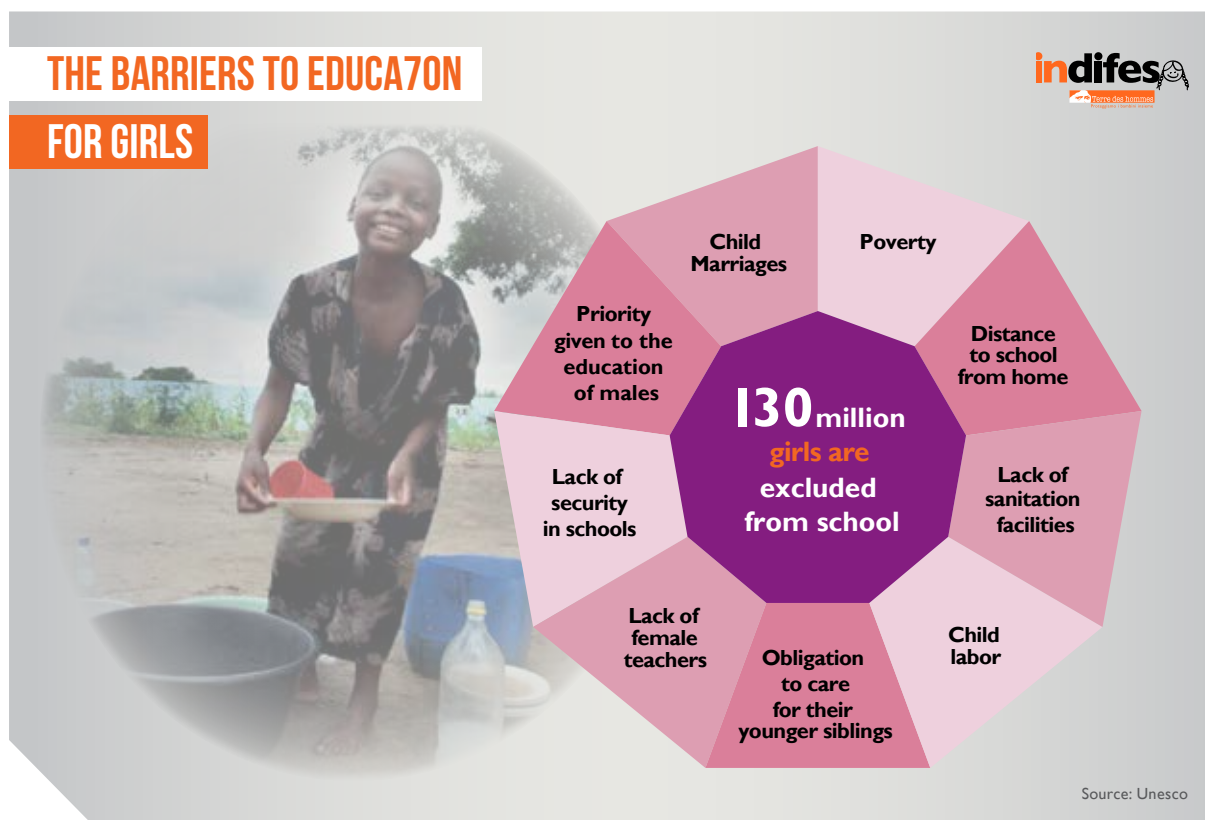
The shortcomings in the education and training systems are one of the main reasons for which, Unicef warns, "despite the important investments in female education made by the global community, girls are not entering the world of work in high enough numbers"⁴. Therefore, an entire generation of girls is at risk of being excluded from the job market or of being forced into low-skilled labour. This situation is caused by the lack of suitable experience, of skilled labour, and by the traditional expectations of society as regards the role of women (often considered to be that solely of taking care of the house and the children), and by the gender gap in accessing the job market.

1 "Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education", 2017, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000250392>

2 <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/all-girls-need-12-years-quality-education>

3 "12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective", 2019 <http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/publications/REAL%2012%20Years%20of%20Quality%20Education%20for%20All%20Girls%20A%2016pp.pdf>

4 <https://data.unicef.org/resources/girlforce-brochure/>



Many girls in the NEET category

In the 15 to 29 year age group, the probability of a girl being excluded from the job market, and not engaged in education, is three times higher than that of a boy of the same age. According to data findings by the International Labour Organisation⁵ 31% of girls between 15 and 29 years of age fall within the category of NEET (*Neither in employment nor in education or training*). This means they neither study nor work as compared to 16% of boys of the same age group. The numbers reach a peak of 41% for girls that live in the Middle East and North Africa. Nonetheless, these girls would like to find employment: 70% of the girls that are “inactive” have expressed the wish to find a job in the future.

Unlike boys, girls are more likely to pass directly from school to become “unemployed”. 33% of “inactive” women had no previous experience behind them. But the fact of having a job is not a guarantee in itself: “More than a third of the girls (35% of them) had to leave their jobs due to family reasons, compared to 7% of boys of the same age”. Most of these girls have never returned to the job market.

The causes of this situation are varied. The main cause is related to the quality of the education system offered (which is often too low in comparison to the required standards); and to the lack of training programs offered by private companies. In addition to this, educational pathways are often not consistent, and there is no safe school environment (that is, an environment

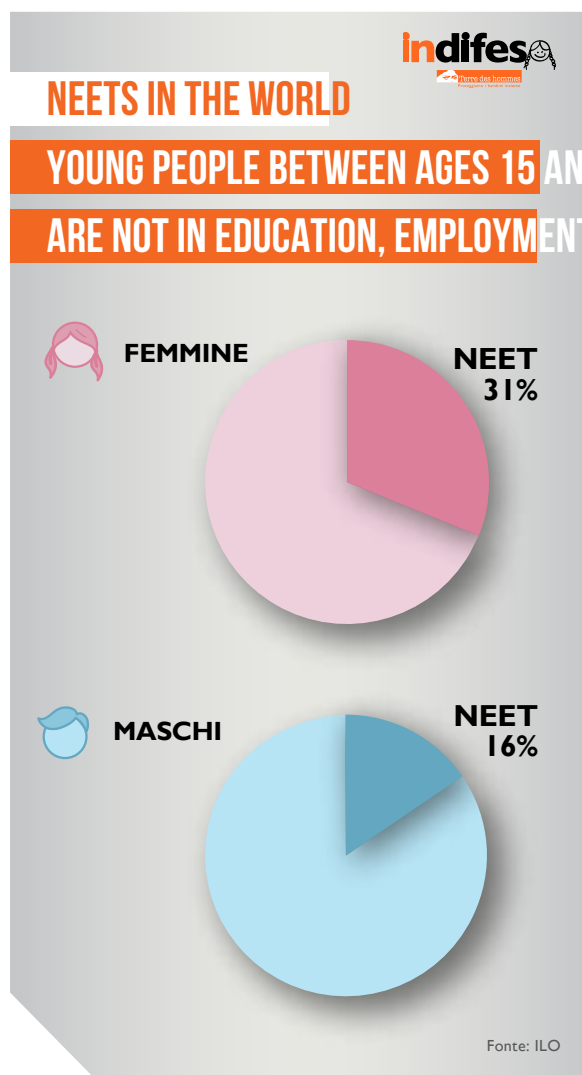
⁵ The ILO “School-to-work transition survey” was implemented between 2012 and 2016 among boys and girls aged between 15 and 29 in 34 countries (Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, FYR Macedonia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, Peru, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Russia, Samoa, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Palestinian Occupied Territories, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam and Zambia).



where girls and women can be free from any form of violence and abuse).

Italy: girls study more but earn less

In Italy, females study more compared to their male peers. They also have (on average) higher grades and have a more regular learning pathway. However, after they completed their secondary or university studies, girls and young women continue to be penalised when they enter the labour market.



Malala Yousafzai

“Education is one of life’s blessings and it’s also a necessity. This is my experience in my 17 years of my life. In my home, in the beautiful Swat valley, in Pakistan. I have always loved learning new things. When my friends and I decorated our hands with henna for special occasions, instead of drawing flowers, we painted our hands with mathematical formulas and equations”. With these words, Malala Yousafzai at the age of only 17, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. This was granted by the Nobel Committee (along with the Indian activist Kailash Satyarthi) “for her struggle against the oppression of children and young people, and for the right of all children to have an education”.

Her story is well known, but it is worth remembering. Malala was born in Pakistan in 1997. Her father, Ziauddin, is a poet and an activist for the right to education and he has played a fundamental role in his daughter’s life. In 2009, between the ages of 11 and 12 years, Malala started writing a blog for the BBC under a pseudonym. It recounted the daily life of a young girl who was forced to live in a country in which the Taliban had banned television, music and the right to education for all female children and girls. Malala’s activism, however, did not go unnoticed: on November 9th, 2012 the girl was severely injured in an attack by the Taliban on the bus she was traveling in. Despite her severe head injury, Malala survived and continued her fight for the right to an education: “A child, a teacher, a book and a pen can change the world”.



Foto Abir Abdullah

Together we can do it

Nasrin* was only 16 when a group of men, armed with sticks, broke into her house to kidnap her and probably rape her. This was in retaliation for a violent argument that had occurred a few hours earlier, caused by a very trivial issue: Nasrin's chicken had escaped onto her neighbour's roof and caused a racket, waking up the neighbour's young son. This was a commonplace argument between neighbours that could have had tragic consequences. Nasrin, seeing the men arrive, was able to escape, but her mother and two sisters were violently beaten up. Their house had been destroyed.

"After this episode, my parents were very worried about my safety," Nasrin says. She is now 20 and has been one of the women leading the project "*Jukta Hoe Mukta*", supported by Terre des Hommes Italy, in collaboration with the NGO Arban in the slum of Baunia Badh in Dacca. Faced with the risk that Nasrin could have been a victim of violence or any other form of retaliation, there was only one solution proposed by her parents: marriage. "I did not want to get married, I wanted to continue my studies", Nasrin says. During this same period, she met the young man who was to become her husband: "He asked me to marry him and I accepted, but on one condition: that he allowed me to finish my studies".

The "extraordinary" choice made by Nasrin and her husband did not go unnoticed in the Baunia Badh slum. The young man was criticised by his relatives and friends as he allowed his wife to continue her studies. When Nasrin decided to go to university to fulfil her dream to become a teacher, even her in-laws were against her decision: they feared that the job would be a chance for her to meet other men and cheat on her husband.

For many families living in the slum, the education of their girls (at least until *Secondary school certificate* equivalent to a middle school certificate) is merely functional for a good wedding. But if the girl wants to continue her path of education, problems start to arise, and they are not only money problems. It gets



hard for families to find the right match to a man with a sufficient level of education: a woman with a higher level of education than a man could represent a threat for a husband or potential husband.

“My husband is not an educated man, but he is good-hearted and has an open mind” Nasrin continues. When I expressed my wish to be a teacher, I also told him that I would be respected by the inhabitants of the slum with this job. And that this, as a consequence, would have given prestige to him too”. Nasrin won also this battle: she has just one year left to obtain her qualification.

Nasrin and the other girls in the project “*Jukta Hoe Mukta*” are sure that a change is possible and that it is just a matter of time. All of them would like to study and to find a job before thinking about marriage: “We are the first generation trying to change things”, they explain. However, achieving this is not easy, not even when you have the support of your family. The slum is a crowded place where everyone knows everything, and the rumours run fast. When a girl has the possibility to continue with her studies or when she starts working, she gets a lot of remarks which are often unflattering. “People go to a girl’s parents or her husband to tell them that they are wrong, and they try to convince them to change their mind to withdraw the girl from her studies or to make her give up her job”, Nasrin explains.

What clearly emerges from Nasrin and the other young women’s words is their negotiation ability: they do not directly confront their family (unless it is absolutely necessary), but they try to carve out room for flexibility: they ask to postpone their wedding, they ask to bind their marriage with the promise that they can continue with their studies. They constantly exercise the art of compromise to follow their dreams, even when they are in a clearly disadvantageous position as they are daughters coming from poor families. The negotiation ability, although is a great asset, requires outstanding maturity and great caution. They cannot make any false move: from their first mistake, they risk losing the hard-earned freedom (to study or to work).

“I do not like this situation, as I do not appreciate the bad comments that I hear; but we are in a position in which we have to negotiate - Nasrin concluded-. I know what is right and what is not. I do what I have to: I compromise, I negotiate and I avoid fighting to stay away from other problems. Maybe for younger girls, things will be different and there will be a real change. But it will take time”.





In general, females outperform males in educational attainment: 63.8% of females over the age of 25 obtain at least a secondary education qualification compared to 59.7% of their male peers and 22.1% of females obtain an education after secondary school (versus 16.5% of their male peers⁶). Between 30 and 34 years of age, over 1 in 3 young women graduate, compared to 1 in 5 males. Moreover, Istat highlights that, between 2008 and 2017, the increase in the number of graduated women was clearly more sustained compared to their male peers⁷.

“The qualification counts a lot for women - highlights Marcella Corsi, professor of Economical studies at la Sapienza Università di Roma - the data tells us that women without a qualification or with a lower level of education struggle much more than their male peers to find a job. Completing their studies has unquestionable advantages for women. On the other hand, for males, there is a certain level of “neutrality” around educational attainment: it may change the quality of their job, but not their employment rate.

Therefore, educational attainment - whether secondary or post-secondary studies - has a significant impact on employment levels. In particular, in the Mezzogiorno region and amongst women. In Italy, the “reward” of education (in other words, employment rates increase as educational attainment increases) increases by 18.4 points from having a primary education qualification to having a secondary education qualification. And it increases by 10.2 points from the latter to a post-secondary education qualification (university degree). Women with a secondary education qualification have an employment rate that is 25 points higher

compared to their female peers with lower education attainment (an advantage that is double compared to their male peers); and the difference in employment rates between having a post-secondary and a secondary education qualification is 16.7 points (a difference that is three times higher compared to their male peers)⁸.

Between the age of 25 and 34, only 30% of women without a qualification have a job, compared to 65% of their male peers. For women, as educational attainment increases, their employment rate also increases: 50% of women with a secondary qualification and 65% of women with a post-secondary qualification have a job. This is similar to their male peers, however with a smaller gap (73% of men with a secondary qualification and 69% of men with a post-secondary qualification have a job)⁹.

In any case, the number of young women with a degree is higher compared to their male peers. The report from AlmaLaurea “Profilo dei laureati”¹⁰ highlights that women make up over half of the graduates in Italy: 58.7% in 2018, a number that has remained stable for the last 10 years. For Bachelor’s degrees, females outnumber males in disciplines such as education (93.3%), languages (83.3%), psychology (80.4%) and healthcare (70.3%). On the other hand, females are the minority in disciplines such as engineering (26.6%), sciences (26.9%) and physical activities (32.7%). A similar segmentation is observed in master’s degrees. While in single cycle degrees, women clearly outnumber males in all disciplines: from 96% in Education to 53.3% in medicine and dentistry.

6 Istat, livelli di istruzione e ritorni occupazionali, anno 2018

7 <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2018/07/Indicatori-dellistruzione.pdf>

8 Istat, “Livelli di istruzione e ritorni occupazionali, anno 2018”

9 https://www.infodata.ilssole24ore.com/2018/09/23/40-delle-ragazze-25-29enni-non-studia-non-lavora-non-lo-cerca/?fbclid=IwAR0vcL7FBEnRipGU5qf36EG-Z6_-8KhViddVvesOCosSGBSw6GlcQ0uA2lbZg&refresh_ce=1

10 https://www.almalaurea.it/sites/almalaurea.it/files/docs/universita/profilo/profilo2019/almalaurea_profilo_rapporto2019.pdf



The importance of STEM

The so-called “horizontal segregation” represents one of the elements that disadvantage young women when they access the labour market after they completed their studies; young women are less likely to study STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) which excludes them from those labour sectors where the demand is higher. Again, Almalaurea’s data tells us that 5 years after graduation, the unemployment rate among STEM graduates is 89.3% (+ 4.1% compared to non-STEM graduates). The employment rate for men is 92.5% versus 85% for women. The net monthly salary for STEM graduates is also higher than the average (€1,571 euros compared to €1,350 euros), but there is once again a gap between men and women, where the former earn 23.6% more per month than the latter. “This is partly due to the fact that a significant proportion of graduates are employed part-time – a situation that applies to 16% of women but 4.7% of men”¹¹.

“Young male and female graduates believe they are essentially equal and that they possess the same skills. However, girls often have a more regular study pathway and better grades. But as soon as they enter the labour market, they realise the reality is very different,” Marcella Corsi explains. “Even one year after graduation, female graduates earn less than their male counterparts. And this situation does not improve going forward. Women suffer discrimination in the labour market, with regard to their skills and potential earnings (in terms of salary and career prospects)”.

Gender-related pay differences

The snapshot provided by the annual report Almalaurea 2019 (“Employment status of graduates”¹²) confirms the traditional gender differences: men have a 16.1% higher probability of being employed than women, and one year after graduation are earning an average of €84 net more per month. As an example, let us examine the figures related to bachelor degree graduates. One year after graduation, the employment rate is 75.2% for men and 70.2% for women; the former receives a salary 17.6% higher than the latter (€1,288 vs. €1,095 respectively). Five years after graduation, the gap between the two gradually closes but does not disappear.

The employment and salary gaps widen further if we take into account the data relating to those who continued their studies and completed a two-year master’s degree: there is a 10% gap in employment between graduates of 2017, one year after graduation (79.4% for men and 69.3% for women), while the pay gap is 23% (men earn an average of €1,360 per month compared to €1,106 for women).

The graduates of 2013 offer further insights into the analysis. “Between one and five years after graduation, gender differences are reduced with difficulty: one year after gaining a master’s degree in 2013, male graduates received 30% more than female graduates in real terms (€1,241 compared to €955); similarly, five years after graduation, despite higher salaries overall, men still receive 24.8% more than women (€1,651 compared to €1,322 euro),” states the Almalaurea report.

¹¹ <https://www.almalaurea.it/informa/news/2019/02/15/lauree-stem-bene-ma-donne-penalizzate>

¹² The survey involved more than 630,000 graduates from 75 Italian universities who were contacted one, three and five years after graduation. https://www.almalaurea.it/sites/almalaurea.it/files/docs/universita/occupazione/occupazione17/almalaurea_occupazione_rapporto2019.pdf

A woman is shown in profile, looking down. She is wearing a blue dress with a white floral pattern and a white shawl draped over her shoulders. She has a gold necklace and a colorful bracelet on her right wrist. The background is a simple, slightly blurred indoor setting with a blue wall and some hanging items.

Chapter 4

CHILD

MARRIAGE

In November 2018, the United Nations General Assembly called upon all member states to accelerate the process of action against child marriages and forced unions, as a sustainable development goal for 2030.

The Assembly Resolution¹ emphasises that child marriage is a practice that violates human rights and that one of its roots is gender disparity. Combined with precarious economic conditions and lack of access to education, this becomes an obstacle to the *empowerment* of women and girls.

For the first time, this document lists the rights of girls who are married, as well as those of their children, underlining the importance of breaking down barriers that prevent them from accessing services (health, school, etc.) that meet their specific needs. It then emphasises the importance of the role that families, communities and religious leaders play in changing social rules and combating gender inequality. It also calls for reflection not only on weddings but also informal unions (of which there are many) involving minors.

650 million girls still married before reaching 18 years old

While child marriages are diminishing in most countries in the world, the numbers are still too high. Over the past decade, the number of women married as girls has decreased by 15% – from 1

in 4 (25%) to 1 in 5 (21%). This means 25 million child marriages have been avoided, but even today, 650 million girls and women were married before the age of 18. Progress has been made, but there is still a long way to go.

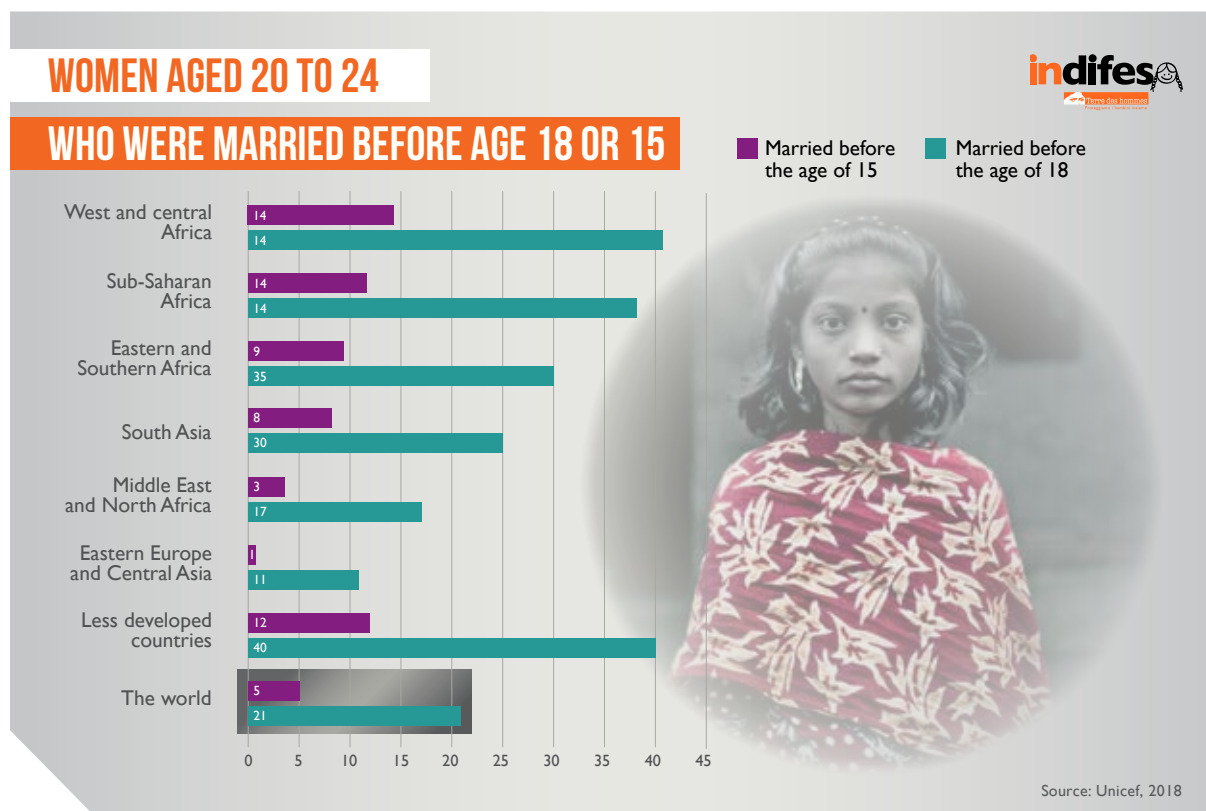
In South Asia, between 2009 and now, the probability of a girl being forced to marry as a child has decreased by more than a third: from 50% to 30%.

The greatest incidence of the phenomenon, in fact, has shifted to sub-Saharan Africa, due to slower socioeconomic progress and also population growth. Today, one in three girl brides live in Africa, whereas 25 years ago this figure was one in seven. The percentages in different African countries vary, of course: for example, 76% of girls between 20 and 24 years of age in Niger were married before the age of 18, 68% in the Central African Republic, 67% in Chad, 52% in South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, and 48% in Mozambique². However, in Mozambique we have some good news: on 15 July 2019, a law was passed making child marriage illegal. A prison sentence applies not only to anyone who marries a girl under 18 years old, but also to anyone who organises such an event (including parents) or performs the ceremony.

Latin America and the Caribbean have made no progress. The incidence of child marriage is the same as 25 years ago, and Brazil remains fourth in terms of the absolute number of girls married

¹ <http://undocs.org/A/C.3/73/L.22/Rev.1>

² <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/>



before the age of 18³. A recent study⁴ on Brazil pointed out that girls in the country often end up in informal marriages or unions when they are very young to escape their family of origin, considering it an opportunity to rid themselves of restrictive rules that limit their movements and their sexuality.

The social rules in Latin America are based on extreme male chauvinism; in the indigenous culture, 12 or 13 year-old girls are already considered to be women in every way. When unions occur with older men, especially in the poorer and more rural areas, they are almost never legalized but only represent an informal agreement, which offers no guarantees to the girls, especially in the case of pregnancy. Furthermore,

unions with more mature men can cause an illusory sense of safety and protection: this kind of union is thought of as a way to avoid the path to prostitution, escape a family where sexual abuse is the order of the day, find a protective shield in countries where youth gangs are particularly widespread, and reach economic stability thanks to a male partner⁵.

In the USA, it's possible

However, premature marriages are not only widespread in low-income countries. In the United States, this phenomenon is worrying: in most of the 50 states, legal exceptions exist which allow for marriage before 18 years of age. A study by the organisation Unchained At Last estimated

³ ibid

⁴ Taylor AY, Murphy-Graham E, Van Horn J, Vaitla B, Del Valle Á, Cislighi B. Child Marriages and Unions in Latin America: Understanding the Roles of Agency and Social Norms. *J Adolesc Health*. 2019;64(4S):S45–S51. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.12.017

⁵ ibid



that between 2000 and 2010, at least 25,000 marriages with minors took place in the USA. A news report by the Thomson Reuters Foundation⁶ explains how New Jersey and Delaware placed limits on the legal age for marriage as late as 2018. Pennsylvania might put a law into effect which raises the limit to 18 years⁷: for now, all that's needed for a 16 and 17 year-old is consent from their parents, while a judge's consent is needed for minors under 16 years of age. The states where premature marriages are more widespread are those with a high prevalence of poverty and ultraconservative religious groups. The report⁸ also gathered the testimony of Sonora Fairbanks, who was born into a family of extreme Evangelicals and was forced to marry a 26-year old man when she was 16. Sonora gave birth to eight children, and she talks about the major difficulties she encountered after escaping from her husband without any money, and without the possibility to obtain a divorce or rent a house on her own since she was a minor.

Another testimony comes from Dawn Tyree, who was 11 years old when a friend of the family started to molest her. A little over a year later, she became pregnant. Her parents, who were extremely religious and against abortion, were more worried about a scandal than the mental and physical health of their daughter, and so they decided that the only solution was marriage. She married her rapist, who at the time was 32 years old. The following years were a nightmare: Tyree had another daughter, and her fear that her husband might hurt the children pushed her to divorce him. At sixteen, Tyree became a single mom⁹. Today, Sonora and Tyree are battling to change the law in California, which allows marriage at any age with one's parents' or judge's consent.

In July 2019, the so-called "Red Code" became law in Italy. The law is against violence towards women, and also contains regulations against forced marriages: now, anyone who tries to force someone else to marry him/her with violence, threats, taking advantage of a psycho-physical 'inferiority' or for religious teachings, will be punished with up to 6 years in jail if a minor is involved and the sentence is aggravated by half if a child under the age of 14 is harmed.

Eliminating gender disparity

Which factors increase the number of premature marriages in certain countries throughout the world?

There are many different reasons, with different origins, which support the survival of this practice. Religious, social, economic. The deepest roots can be found in gender disparity, in the idea that daughters are worth less and are often considered as a burden for their nuclear families. The lack of opportunities (linked especially to education: the lack of educational facilities or the fact that these facilities are too far away are associated with an increase in premature marriages) prevents girls from finding alternatives, and the belief that virginity is essential for a bride continues to prevail. Some studies also highlight other important characteristics and needs of the nuclear family: having your daughters married - even if they are minors - can mean less mouths to feed at home, transferring 'human capital' and making agreements with the husband's family, social prestige, and even the false perception of greater safety for the bride¹⁰.

Furthermore, in some Asian countries the dowry that families with daughters have to pay increases

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-childmarriage-reform/child-brides-call-on-u-s-states-to-end-legal-rape-idUSKCN1M2024>

⁷ <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/ending-child-marriage-one-state-time-pennsylvania/35868>

⁸ news.trust.org

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/01/opinion/sunday/child-marriage-delaware.html>

¹⁰ Karim, N., Greene, M. and Picard, M. (2016). The Cultural Context of Child Marriage in Nepal and Bangladesh. CARE Research Report



in proportion to the bride's age, but also according to the husband's family's status, which might guarantee a better economic quality of life and access to higher education.

There is also another kind of premature marriage in Asia, in which very young girls are given as brides to widowers who have children: in this case, not only does the bride's family not have to pay a dowry, but they actually receive money. The need to 'import' women in families and make them do the housework is very clear in the Pakistani practice called 'watta satta'¹¹, in which two families exchange their daughters, and make them marry

the male members of their respective families, so that neither of the two nuclear families lose their labour power¹².

Other risk factors from the point of view of family composition are: the parents' level of education, the age difference between them¹³, the family composition (girls with older sisters face a greater likelihood of being wed very young), and belonging to a caste that is more or less disadvantaged.

The spread of social media has definitely caused greater awareness, a new level of modernisation, and more widespread information within more traditional families, yet this spread has also

¹¹ Jacoby, Hanan & Mansuri, Ghazala. (2007). Watta Satta: Bride Exchange and Women's Welfare in Rural Pakistan. American Economic Review

¹² <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2018-08/KEY%20DRIVERS%20changing%20prevalance%20of%20child%20marriage.pdf>

¹³ Child Marriage and Its Associations With Controlling Behaviors and Spousal Violence Against Adolescent and Young Women in Pakistan Nasrullah, Muazzam et al Journal of Adolescent Health, Volume 55, Issue 6, 804 - 809



contributed to marriages based on love -especially in urban areas- between the very young, who meet on social platforms and dream of being free of their families¹⁴. Another important factor is having a close relative who migrates to another country for work. The families become exposed to the outside world, have more possibilities to avoid dangerous activities for their daughters, are more financially stable thanks to the money that comes from abroad, and can afford to pay for higher dowries and thus wait for their daughters to become full age.

A study¹⁵ on the regional variations regarding premature marriages in Bangladesh has highlighted how Sylhet, an area which has a high immigration rate, has a particularly low percentage of premature marriages. But this trend does not apply in all cases: in Kerala, where child marriages are less prevalent, an uprising took place on the prohibition of marriages between migrant minors returning from the Middle East, exposed to Islamic radicalism¹⁶. Migration could even be the primary cause for child marriages, especially in the rural areas: girls are married before they leave to look for work elsewhere, to guarantee an economic return and prevent promiscuity. Marriage may also be considered necessary to protect girls in the family when the primary male figure, father or older brother has emigrated for economic reasons. This also happens during humanitarian crises, as a way to provide girls with a more stable environment and protect them from sexual abuse¹⁷.

Risks for the girls' mental and physical health

The fact that child marriages can protect girls is clearly a false myth. In fact, it's the contrary. Marrying at a very young age increases the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted infections, especially HIV and the Papilloma virus¹⁸. Healthy carriers of the virus are husbands who are often much older, with a low socio-economic status, a long history of unprotected sexual experiences, and limited access to health services.

Younger brides are exposed to a very high risk of both physical and sexual violence: according to a 2010 study, the probability that these girls will suffer abuse within the marriage almost doubles when compared to older women¹⁹. This imbalance in the couple's dynamic, where the woman is generally much younger than the husband, results in a loss of freedom and decision-making power, with the in-laws often becoming the 'bosses' of the bride, who is under immense pressure to immediately bear children. Furthermore, polygamy is legal in many countries. This combined with the fact that in many cases, the woman moves to the husband's home means that she loses her points of reference, resulting in isolation, loneliness and depression.

14 <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2018-08/KEY%20DRIVERS%20changing%20prevalance%20of%20child%20marriage.pdf>

15 Islam, M. K., Haque, M. R. and Hossain, M. B. (2016). Regional Variation in Child Marriage in Bangladesh. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 48, 694-708

16 Sharma, J., et al. (2015). Early and Child Marriage in India: A landscape analysis. Nirantar Trust

17 Women's Refugee Convention, 2016

18 JMRH Irani, M., Latifnejad Roudsari, R. Reproductive and Sexual Health Consequences of Child Marriage: A Review of literature. *Journal of Midwifery and Reproductive Health*, 2019; 7(1): 1584-1590

19 Raj A, Saggurthi N, Lawrence D, Balaiah D, Silverman JG. Association between adolescent marriage and marital violence among young adult women in India. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*. 2010

ISIS CHILD BRIDES ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME

Between 2011 and 2016, over 42 thousand people - men, women and children - originating from more than 120 countries came to Syria and Iraq to join the self-styled “Islamic State”. Of these, around 5 thousand are citizens from different European countries¹. After the fall of the ISIS occupied territories, thousands of refugees poured into the refugee camps in northern Syria, including 12 thousand foreign women with their children. Added to this, were around one thousand foreign fighters held in the “Syrian democratic forces” prisons².

What should be done with these men - but especially the women and children - was the subject of much debate, even in the international media. The Kurdish and Syrian Authorities that have neither the resources, nor the medical, health or social services needed to look after these people, have asked their countries of origin to take responsibility for them. In most cases however, the response was negative. Only Germany³, Belgium⁴ and Australia⁵ accepted that a few dozen minors could be repatriated, many of them orphans. The story of Shamima Begum, who had left London in 2015 when she was just fifteen years old to join the self-styled Islamic State is emblematic of these incidents. In February 2019, the girl who was pregnant with her third child at the time, was interviewed by the UK “Times” newspaper while she was at the Al-Hawl refugee camp. She asked to return to England in order to ensure better health conditions for her child. The baby died a few weeks after birth, as had Shamima’s other two children. The British government refused to repatriate the girl, and the Home Secretary ordered that her British citizenship be revoked. The exception to this scenario is the decision by the Kazakhstan government, which authorised the repatriation of 231 citizens evacuated from Syria in May 2019. These included women and 156 children (mostly pre-school age), of which 18 were orphans. Together with Russia and Tunisia, Kazakhstan is one of the few countries to have authorised the return of its citizens from Syria and Iraq.

“While mindful of the many challenges posed by the return of fighters from conflict zones, including those that may have committed terrorist acts or other crimes in terms of International Law, the imperative to bring home women and children must be considered a humanitarian challenge and complex responsibility, a challenge that countries are more than capable of managing”, wrote Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, a few weeks after her return from Kazakhstan⁶.

“Some of these young women were minors when they left their country to join IS - explains Ní Aoláin-. They were coerced into doing this and were married off and became pregnant soon after arriving in Syria or Iraq. According to legislation in many European countries, this condition would qualify as rape given their status as minors. If these girls had gone to any other country, we would be discussing them using completely different terminology and vocabulary”.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf

2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/29/world/middleeast/isis-syria-women-children.html>

3 <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-brings-home-islamic-state-children-from-iraq/a-48219367>

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/15/belgium-takes-back-six-children-of-isis-fighters-from-syrian-camps>

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jun/24/children-isis-terrorist-khaled-sharrouf-return-australia-removed-syria>

6 <https://www.justsecurity.org/64402/time-to-bring-women-and-children-home-from-iraq-and-syria/>



Chapter 5

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

AND EARLY PREGNANCIES

Every year, some 21 million girls aged between 15 and 19 years become pregnant. Of these, at least 18.5 million are baby mothers, with 2 and a half million of these under 16 years old. 90% of these pregnancies occur in middle-low income countries. Most pregnancies and teen births were spread across Africa, Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The birth rate among adolescent mothers goes from 115 per 1,000 women in West Africa, to 64 out of 1,000 in Latin American and the Caribbean, to 45 out of 1,000 in South East Asia, and 7 out of 1,000 in Eastern Asia¹.

Looking at Central America and the Caribbean², percentages are very high in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Guyana. In South America, Bolivia and Venezuela are the leading countries. Even though general fertility rates in these regions (the average number of children per woman at a fertile age (15-49 years old) have fallen considerably (from 3.5 children per woman in 1980-85 to 2.15 between 2010 and 2015), the adolescent fertility rate has come down negligibly to currently stand at a maximum of 100.6 per thousand adolescents. For comparison purposes, the adolescent fertility rate in the United States reached an all-time low in 2015, with 22.3 per 1,000 adolescents.

Less positive data also comes from the wealthier Latin American countries, where the reproductive health conditions of women and girls is far from ideal. For example, Mauro Morbello, Head of the Terre des Hommes Italy projects in Peru, tells

us that early pregnancies in Peru do not follow the downward trend worldwide, especially in the rural areas. Abortion in Peru is only allowed in exceptional circumstances and a very high percentage of doctors are conscientious objectors, with estimates of 670,000 back-street abortions every year, representing one of the most frequent causes of death among young women. This is also probably related to the frequency with which the male partner abandons the relationship. This generally refers to relationships without formal commitments, which once ended, leave the girls, some being extremely young, alone with small children or still pregnant, without economic resources to maintain the children.

Natalia Guerrero Fernández, a psychologist, sexologist and lecturer at the Universidad de la Serena explains that “in 2017, the law on abortion was amended in Chile, where previously it had been forbidden under any circumstances. It is now permitted only in three specific cases: if there is a risk to the mother’s life, in the case of congenital defects in the fetus that result in death and in the case of rape”.

“This legislation reflects several social differences, with women that can afford it, going to abort in other countries, and others, many of them very young, forced to resort to back-street practices”. A strong movement has formed in the country to defend women’s rights: there are women’s groups called ‘Con Las Amigas Y En La Casa’³ that help other women to abort

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>

² Accelerating progress toward the reduction of adolescent pregnancy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Report of a technical consultation. PAHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, 2017 <https://lac.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Accelerating%20progress%20toward%20the%20reduction%20of%20adolescent%20pregnancy%20in%20LAC%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

³ <https://www.instagram.com/conlasamigasyenlacasa>

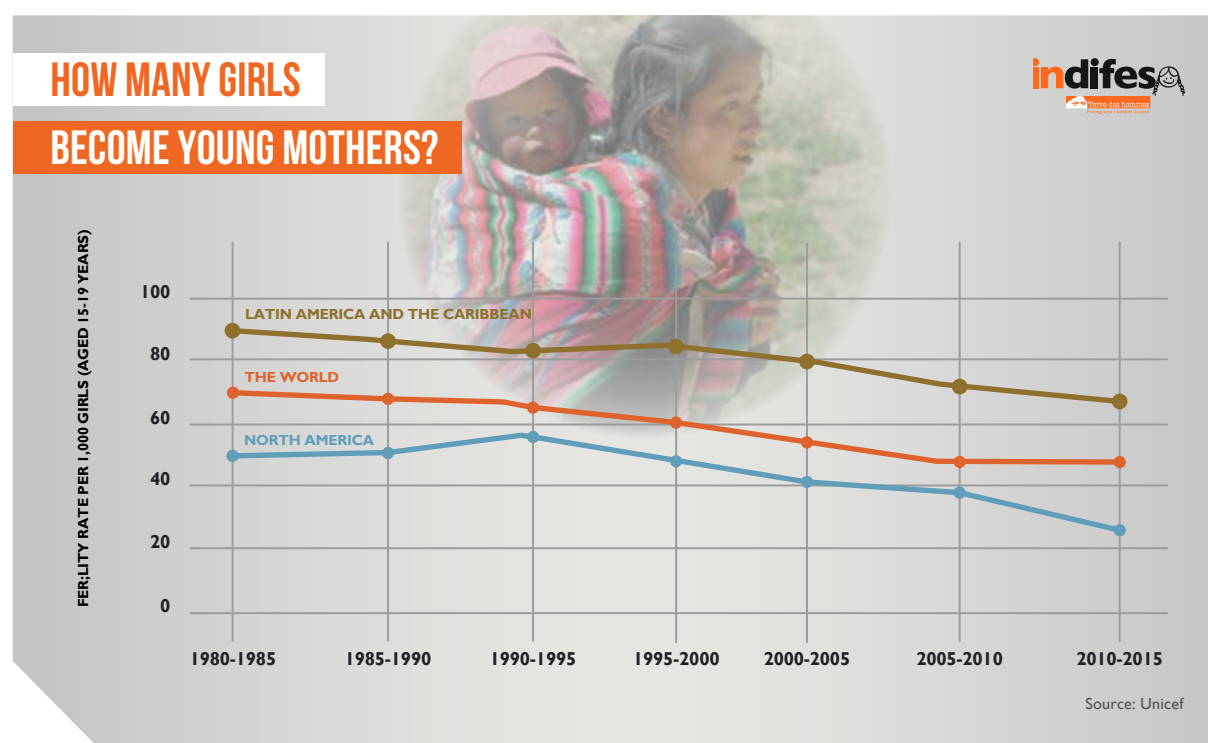


by taking misoprostol, a drug that treats gastric ulcers and causes uterine contractions and miscarriages⁴. Demonstrations in the street to defend the right to abortion have been widespread, and the one held on March 8th in Santiago was the most well-attended since the dictatorship, with a significant proportion of younger participants. “The rate of early pregnancies in the country is coming down, explains Guerrero, but many mothers in the poorer regions fearing that their daughters may become pregnant, are having the sub-cutaneous contraceptive implanon⁵. This is administered freely at health clinics to girls that are barely adolescents (even 12-13 years old). This method is often imposed on the young girls, who are unaware of the side effects, and who also may not want to begin contraception at that age. In

addition, this method does not protect against HIV infection, which has seen a 34% increase in the country from 2010 to 2017⁶.

Inadequate access to contraception

Access to contraception is a crucial issue for the health of adolescents. Approximately 38 million of the 252 million young girls aged 15 to 19 living in developing countries, are sexually active. Fifteen million of these adolescents have access to modern contraceptive methods, whereas the remaining 23 million are at risk of unwanted pregnancies. If contraception was adequate in all countries, 2.1 million unwanted births, 3.9 million abortions and 5,600 new mothers’ deaths could have been avoided⁷.



⁴ von Hertzen H, Piaggio G, Huong NT, Arustamyan K, Cabezas E, Gomez M, Khomassuridze A, Shah R, Mittal S, Nair R, Erdenetungalag R, Huong TM, Vy ND, Phuong NT, Tuyet HT, Peregoudov A. Efficacy of two intervals and two routes of administration of misoprostol for termination of early pregnancy: a randomised controlled equivalence trial. Lancet, 2007

⁵ <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/medicines/human/referrals/implanon>

⁶ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/Global_AIDS_update_2017_en.pdf

⁷ https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14163:latin-america-and-the-caribbean-have-the-second-highest-adolescent-pregnancy-rates-in-the-world&Itemid=1926&lang=fr



Amika George

“When was the last time you talked about your menstrual cycle? I do it all the time, even when nobody really wants to listen”. British Amika George, born in 2000, actually does not only talk about menstruation, but more specifically about “*menstrual poverty*”; i.e. girls that cannot afford to buy pads and other sanitary products, and are forced to skip school. Amika launched the #FreePeriods campaign (freeperiods.org), to eradicate “period poverty”: “We are asking the British government to guarantee that menstrual hygiene products are freely available in schools and universities”. The petition launched by Amika George has collected almost 200 thousand signatures, and the government has undertaken to provide 1.5 million pounds to charities to fight “period poverty”. “FreePeriods” continues its commitment to collect funds that will be distributed to schools and universities, to ensure the free distribution of pads to whoever needs them, but for Amika this is not enough. The model that she is aspiring to is the one in Scotland, where in August 2018, the government guaranteed that pads will be provided for free in all schools, colleges and universities and has allocated 1 million pounds to fight “period poverty”.



The option of accessing family planning services is often hindered by restrictive legislation, and is left entirely to the woman. Often, adolescents are not able to protect themselves adequately because they are not educated, fear approaching counsellors or are being pressured to have children. A recent study⁸ collected data on the risks of early pregnancies and the results are staggering. Preeclampsia, sepsis and haemorrhaging are five times more frequent in young girls than in new mothers that are older than 20. Adolescents are three times more at risk of dying in childbirth.

But it is not only the mother that is at risk: girls under 18 are 35 to 55% more at risk of giving birth prematurely compared to more adult women. They also have a higher neonatal mortality rate (60%). Even if the newborn was to survive, the mortality risk before 5 years is over 28%. Very young mothers are physically and psychologically immature, often have a bad diet and do not access basic healthcare services. Furthermore, they have little decision-making ability regarding their health and that of the child, and even if they do, cannot make decisions without the husband or his or her parents. Early pregnancies also have significant socio-economic consequences for the girls, their families and communities: they can be rejected by the family if they are unmarried and are at risk of abuse. Obviously, an early pregnancy often means giving up on school: from 5 to 33% of girls between 15 to 24 years old that abandon their studies, do so due to an unwanted pregnancy⁹.

The number of minor mothers on the decrease in Italy

According to the National Centre of adolescence documentation and analysis, based on the Institute

of the Innocents processing of Istat data, in 2017, 1,390 children were born in Italy to minor mothers (down from the 1,539 in 2016), out of a total of 458,151 births.

Most underage mothers in our country are Italian (1,100 compared to 290 of foreign origin). The region with the highest number of births to underage mothers is Sicily: 328. This is followed by Campania with 247, Lombardy with 145, Lazio with 85 and Calabria with 73. Istat data show that¹⁰ the provinces with the highest adolescent fertility rates (number of births per 1,000 mothers) are Siracuse (20.94), Catania (17.75), Crotone (16.58) and Foggia (14.17).

While the number of teen pregnancies in our country is low compared to other European countries (for example, England, where the conception rate in 2017 was 17.9 per thousand girls aged between 15 and 17, a 57% decline since 2007¹¹) it is a fact that should not be underestimated. “Teen mothers present a number of problems”, explains Valeria Dubini, a gynaecologist at the USL Centro Toscana (Tuscany Local Health Department Centre) and consultant supervisor. “They often arrive late to their appointments and in many cases under the influence of alcohol and tobacco. In general, they pay little attention to their pregnant state. Furthermore, many of these girls choose to continue with their pregnancy without their partner: only 60% of underage mothers have someone with them in the delivery room, compared to the 90% national average and it's often their mother or a friend”.

8 Irani, M., Latifnejad Roudsari, R. (2019). 'Reproductive and Sexual Health Consequences of Child Marriage: A Review of literature', *Journal of Midwifery and Reproductive Health*, 7(1), pp. 1584-1590 http://jmrh.mums.ac.ir/article_11709.html

9 World Bank. Economic impacts of child marriage: Global synthesis report. Washington, DC: World Bank; 2017

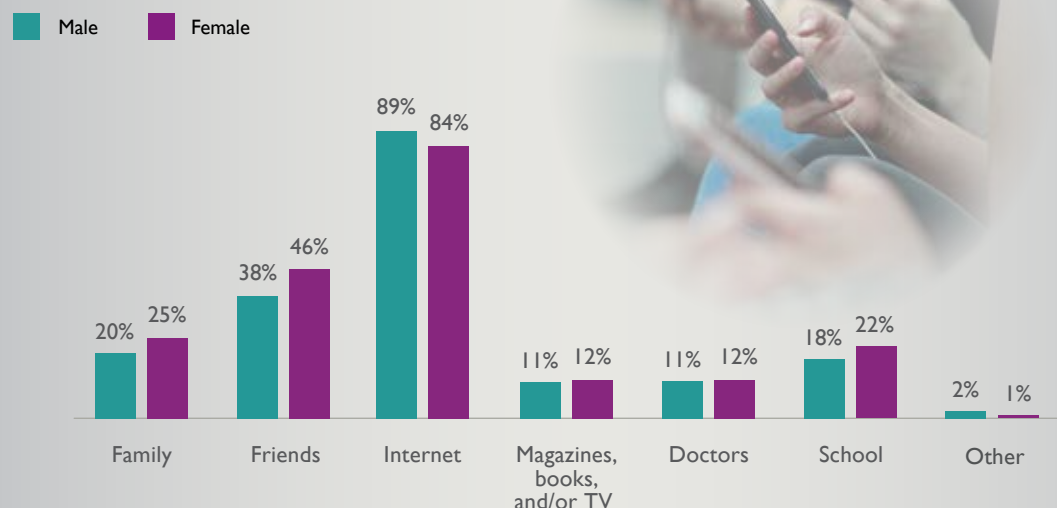
10 <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?>

11 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/bulletins/conceptionstatistics/2017#under-18-conception-rate-has-decreased-for-10-years-running>



WHERE DO ITALIAN TEENAGERS LOOK FOR

INFORMATION ON SEXUALITY?



Source: National Fertility Study, Ministry of Health, 2019

A decreasing use of abortion

National statistics recorded a decrease in the abortion rate in 2017. For minors, this was 2.7 per 1,000, lower than the 2016 figure of 3.1, confirming a downward trend from 2004 (when it was 5.0). The 12,288 voluntary terminations of pregnancy requested by minors sum up to 2.8% of the total number of voluntary terminations of pregnancy in Italy.

As in preceding years, there are fewer abortions amongst young Italian women as compared with in other Western European countries¹². For example, in France the abortion rate among women aged under 20 is 10 in every 1,000; in England and Wales the corresponding statistics are 14.2 per 1,000; in Sweden the rate is 11.7 per 1,000; and in Spain it is 9 per 1,000.

However, the lower abortion rate among minors

does not correspond to an equal decline among newly-turned adults. “In the last 10-15 years, voluntary termination of pregnancies in Italy has decreased in every age group except women under 21. Evidently, not enough has been done in recent years to prevent unplanned pregnancies among young women,” says Valeria Dubini. “It’s above all young Italian women who resort to voluntary terminations, while foreign women tend to continue the pregnancy until birth.”

In order to prevent underage or early pregnancies, in November 2018 the Region of Tuscany approved a resolution – proposed by the regional health councillor – to provide access to free contraception for certain categories of users (young people aged between 14 and 25, and women aged 26-45 with specific exemption codes or low incomes), better health consultant work, as well as school interventions and information campaigns. “One of our objectives is to revamp

¹² http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_2807_allegato.pdf



the so-called ‘Youth Counselling Centres’ (open to young people aged between 14 and 24, Ed) which have been active in Tuscany since the ‘80s. They are important points of reference that are free and offer complete care, even in complicated or embarrassing situations,” Valeria Dubini explains. “Unfortunately, young people know little about these places. And they are uninformed on the risks of sexually transmitted diseases”.

Uninformed girls

In fact, only 7% of girls who participated in the “National Fertility Study”¹³ promoted by the Ministry of Health had talked to a health adviser.

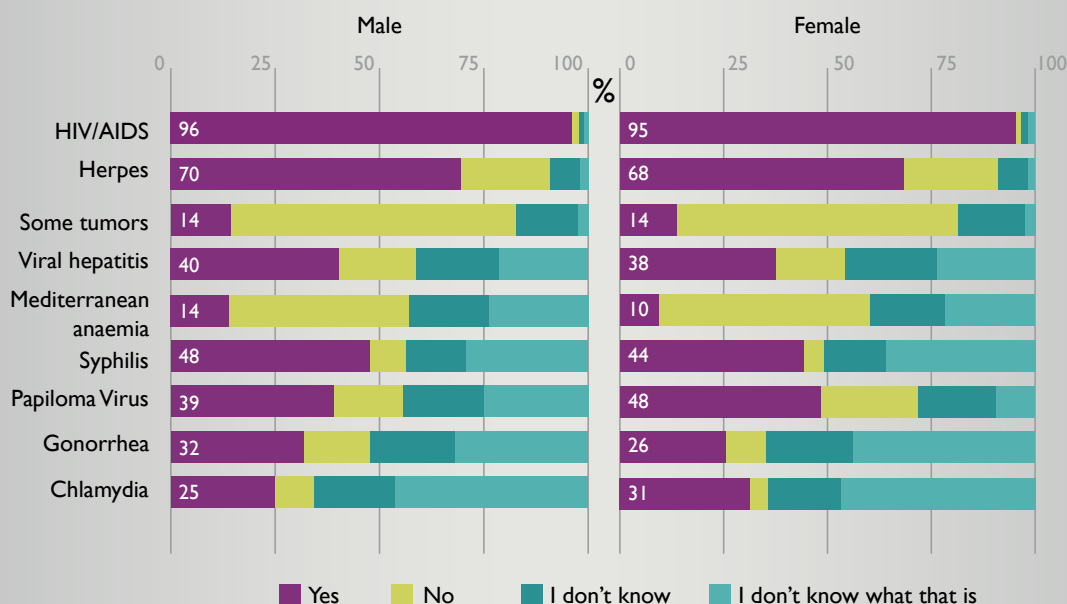
“The results show a misconception (generally an overestimation) by boys and girls regarding the adequacy of the information they have on the subject of sexual health and reproduction, which in the majority of cases (89% for males and 84% for females) they look up online,” the report states. Only 12% of girls referred to a doctor for reliable information. The lack of information regarding sexually transmitted diseases is a cause for concern. Just 44% of girls are aware that syphilis can be transmitted during unprotected sex; 48% know this about human papillomavirus; 31% know this regarding chlamydia; and 26% for gonorrhoea. The level of awareness regarding HIV (95%) and herpes (68%) was better.

HOW MUCH DO ITALIAN ADOLESCENTS



KNOW ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES?

The numbers indicate the % of Yes to the question:
“Do you think these infections can be transmitted through sexual intercourse?”



Source: Studio Nazionale Fertilità, Ministero della Salute, 2019

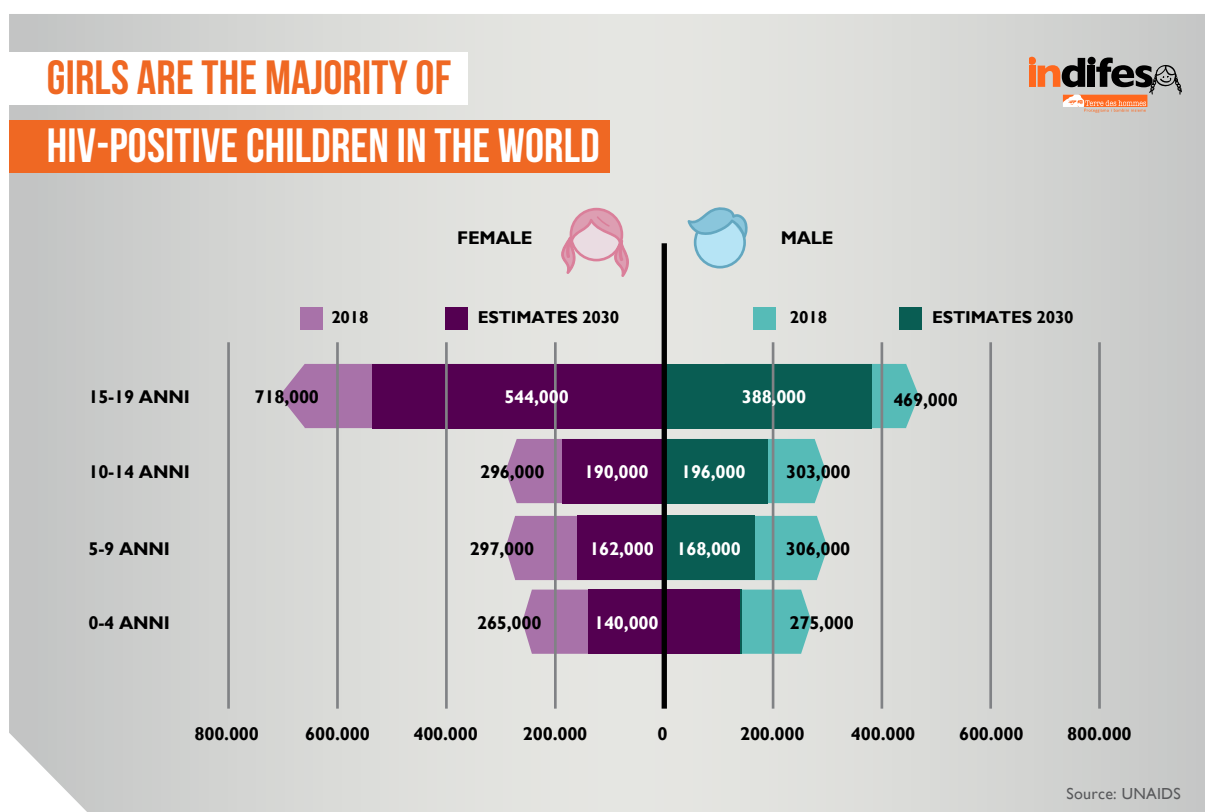
13 “Studio Nazionale Fertilità” (National Study on Fertility), 2019. Survey of sexual and reproductive knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of adolescents, university students, adults of childbearing age and health professionals. More than 16,000 young people aged between 16 and 17 were interviewed for the survey. http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_2823_allegato.pdf



28% of the interviewed girls aged between 16 and 17 reported having had full sexual relations (compared to 35% of the boys). “Adolescents rarely use condoms and are more worried about pregnancy than the diseases they could contract from unprotected sex. They would like to have more information, possibly at school but from a qualified, external professional,” says Valeria Dubini. “94% of young people believe schools should provide information about sexuality and reproductive health,” the study claims. As many as 61% believe this should begin in lower secondary school. However, just 22% of adolescents would like to get this information from their own teachers. 62% would prefer an expert who is external to the school”.

HIV and sexually transmitted diseases

The latest study on AIDS and minors by Unicef¹⁴ reported 3 million children and teenagers who are currently HIV positive. 430,000 were infected in 2017 and 130,000 died in the same year due to complications from AIDS. It is estimated that the number of HIV-positive people aged 0-19 years old will rise by 5% between 2018 and 2030. The increase will be mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV is most widespread. The incidence is forecast to grow by 23% in East and South Africa and 30% in Central and West Africa. The number of teenagers (10-19 years old) affected is expected to increase by 24% in the Middle East and North Africa, 17% in East Europe and Central Asia and 4% in Asia-Pacific¹⁵.



¹⁴ <https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-hiv-and-aids-2030/>

¹⁵ <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/HIV-2030-Brochure-UNICEF-2018.pdf>



There are 1.2 million HIV-positive teenagers aged 15-19 years old, the majority of whom are female (3 in 5). It is estimated that worldwide every 3 minutes a teenage girl is infected with HIV.

If the aims to eradicate AIDS by 2030 have a positive trend, that would mean by 2030, 2 million HIV infections would be avoided, including 1.5 million cases in teenagers.

HIV is not the only danger to mothers and children, however. A recent article published in the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation¹⁶ states that in 2016 among men and women aged 15-49, there were 127 million new cases of chlamydia, 87 million cases of gonorrhoea, 6.3 million cases of syphilis and 156 million cases of trichomoniasis. In 2016, syphilis alone caused approximately 200,000 neonatal deaths, being one of the main causes of baby loss worldwide¹⁷. According to the WHO, every day 1 million people aged between 15 and 49 are infected with treatable sexually transmitted infections, especially chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomoniasis and syphilis. If left untreated, these infections can have serious consequences: neurological and cardiovascular diseases, extra-uterine pregnancies, neonatal mortality and an increased risk of HIV infection.

L'UNICEF has drawn up a programme to prevent new infections¹⁸ among children and teenagers: for example, by enhancing the role of media and digital platforms to raise awareness of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, spreading the prevention and protection message¹⁹ among teenagers at risk; carefully monitoring households where even just one member is infected; extending the reach of Point-of-Care Tests (POCT) which can be

carried out close to the patient or at their local healthcare point (results are ready in a short time and can be used immediately²⁰) and creating a network of counselling centres and services for young people.



¹⁶ https://www.who.int/bulletin/online_first/en/

¹⁷ https://www.aogoi.it/notiziario/malattie-sessualmente-trasmesse-un-milione-di-nuovi-casi-al-giorno-nel-mondo-il-dossier-oms/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=NLA2019061113253

¹⁸ <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/HIV-2030-Brochure-UNICEF-2018.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.who.int/hiv/topics/prep/en/>

²⁰ Manoto, S. L., Lugongolo, M., Govender, U., & Mthunzi-Kufa, P. (2018). Point of Care Diagnostics for HIV in Resource Limited Settings: An Overview. *Medicina (Kaunas, Lithuania)*, 54(1), 3. doi:10.3390/medicina54010003



Chapter 6

SECOND GENERATIONS:

THE ROLE OF GIRLS

When Natasha returned to Pakistan in 2019 for the first time in eight years, one of the first questions her family members asked was, “When are you getting married?” When she went to visit her cousins in the UK, her aunts and relatives asked her the same question.

Natasha, 24, is of Pakistani origin and has been living in Italy (in the province of Bergamo) for the last ten years. Like the parents of many of her peers living in Italy, Natasha’s parents also tried to arrange a marriage for her. “When I was 16 my mum already started asking me questions and talking to me about it so I could prepare myself for the idea of getting married. Then, when I reached what they considered ‘the right age’ for marriage, they tried to organise the wedding, but I rebelled”. Today Natasha is free, but the price she had to pay is very high: “I have very little contact with my relatives. I fought a lot with my parents. My father and my siblings didn’t speak to me for months. I still have quite a good relationship with my mother... but only up to a point. There’s a lot of pressure on me at home, but this is the price I have to pay for my freedom”.

From an early age, young Pakistani women are raised with the idea that marriage is their destiny. “From early childhood, we are subjected to very strong conditioning in this regard. Only a few girls manage to avoid it,” says Natasha. I have some friends aged 21, 22, who are not married yet and they feel old.” The preparations for arranging a marriage start when the future bride is 16-18 years old, explains Natasha, when parents start “looking around”. They begin to spread the word among friends and relatives, and when the first candidates start to emerge, the aspiring bridegroom and his parents visit the girl’s house. “The girl is expected to show off her beauty, put

on makeup and prepare something to eat, to show that she is also a good cook,” Natasha describes. “If the two families find an agreement, they go on with the wedding arrangements”.

Natasha defines herself (proudly) as a feminist. She volunteers at an international NGO and at a local association that organises conversation and discussion among different cultures. Besides her local activities, Natasha has a strong presence on social networks through a Facebook page devoted to feminism in Pakistan (“*Feminism Pakistan*”, with over 30K likes) and a more recent page devoted to Pakistani women in Italy. “I would like other Pakistani girls to start believing in the possibility of a different future, too,” she concludes. “Many girls also suffer from loneliness and isolation. They live in and see only their community – an invisible barrier separates them from their Italian peers. But if we don’t engage in a dialogue, they’ll never realise there’s an alternative”.

Natasha’s story is an example of the process of inclusion and participation of the new generations of immigrant origins in Italy. In April 2019, the Guarantor Authority for Children and Adolescence presented a study on this issue, focusing on the condition of females. We asked some questions to the Guarantor **Filomena Albano** to find out more about the role and the critical issues faced by second-generation girls.



As part of the continuous re-negotiation process of the so-called second generations (or new generations), considering their family backgrounds, what are these girls' specific needs?

Girls, especially teenage girls, are the weak link in the renegotiation process between families of foreign origins and the young people of the new generations who live and grow up in Italy. These girls are at the crossroads between two worlds – the world of the family and the world of the Italian society – where the main tension and conflicts occur, largely due to family expectations to maintain traditional roles. The study on the female condition, conducted by the working group of the Council of Associations and Organisations of the Guarantor Authority for Children and Adolescence regarding the inclusion and participation of new generations, revealed different relational needs concerning girls and their parents. The main need, and the one most often reported by the young women, is to be treated equally with their brothers when it comes to friendships, their first romantic relationships, their independence and the freedom they feel is appropriate for their age, managing their time outside school hours and adopting Italian values, behaviours and customs. Lastly, the girls complain they are not listened to in general. Discussion within the family, in fact, often ends early. This could be because young people find that it increases conflict rather than solving problems, or because they simply don't try, sceptical of the possibility of being understood by parents.

What role do schools and education play in empowerment and awareness-raising among girls of their rights and possibilities?

Listening to minors is one of the principles sanctioned by the New York Convention on the rights of children and adolescents. The difficulties girls have complained about are sometimes accompanied by two conditions. Either young people grow up in isolation and social exclusion and therefore have no role models, or they live in a type of 'ethnic' enclave and so perceive adults as being much closer to the ideas and mentalities of parents. In these cases, the figure of the teacher or schoolmate often becomes important for young people to talk to about themselves and their problems. School can promote activities and projects, including outside school hours, for the integration of a new generation of children with their peers, in order to develop friendships and relationships from an early age. But schools need to be 'prepared'. For this reason, the Guarantor Authority has recommended to the Ministry of Education,



University and Research (MIUR) that school staff are sensitised to respect the specific cultural characteristics of this new generation. This is intended to encourage, from infancy, projects and initiatives for integration, facilitate social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, and in the same vein evaluate the revision of educational and study programs.

Arranged or forced marriages and the choosing of a partner represent one of the most critical issues for second generation girls. How can we act to protect girls? What are the Guarantor's recommendations in this regard?

It was very much the children that told us what the best course of action would be. To avoid such acrimonious situations, according to young people of the new generation, it would be necessary to prepare families, thoroughly explaining what integration is from this point of view. For example, explaining how an interracial couple does not necessarily mean a loss of cultural values. Girls can also prove to be courageous, like, for example, a sixteen-year-old Serbian who denounced her parents' decision to get married. She joined a community and she finished her studies. Her father renounced any claim to her future and her mother retold her story of suffering as a young girl who had also entered a forced marriage, thus establishing a new relationship with her daughter. As far as child marriages are concerned, the state has the duty to put prevention measures into action. There is also a need for comprehensive data and information. The dissemination of information and awareness-raising should be promoted, particularly in schools. Finally, it is necessary to activate and maintain aid networks in order to give support and offer a way out to girls, also through intercultural mediation. Schools play a central role, with the ability to identify risky situations: on several occasions, reports of 'promised marriages' and requests for help arise in the classroom thanks to confidential discussions with teachers or friends who later speak out. Faced with frequent and prolonged absences, sudden dropouts, engagements in students' countries of origin or sudden returns, a protection system must be immediately put into action, involving social services, educational institutions, women's refuges and shelters, police forces and the judiciary.

What are these girls' strengths? What potential is there to be realised?

The intercultural double existence of these new-generation girls, and indeed their male peers, can be an advantage. But it can also lead to a doubled sense of foreignness. One positive result is that these young people, in order to affirm their identity, feel compelled to fight prejudices both in their adoptive countries and countries of origin. The decision to wear the veil or not, for



example, is an important commitment for girls, who need to feel capable of supporting their own choices, facing criticism and fighting stigma. At the same time, these girls have stressed that western culture imposes a number of expectations and gender norms on women, who are faced with a set of standards relating to physical appearance, personal and professional fulfilment, and motherhood. There is great potential to be realised here: additional cultural heritage, the ability to mediate between different cultures to become bearers of integration themselves, and a better understanding of different languages and traditions.

What clearly emerged from focus groups carried out during the course of the study was a need for integration and redemption among these girls, as well as the need to openly discuss their problems, an opportunity they are often denied by parents. The young people of the new generation have shown that they consider it important to be ambitious, especially in education and work. The document's representation of these young people is one of boys and girls who wish to redeem themselves, commit themselves, feel they have their 'papers in order', speak several languages but also local dialects, to indicate their Italianness and belonging. Young people who have the desire to get out here: they want to overcome barriers, prejudices and distances. According to them, society should be willing to no longer recognise them as immigrants.





Chapter 7

GIRLS AND FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Financial independence is still a distant dream for 980 million of the world's women. This situation doesn't appear to be improving. The 2017 Global Findex database by the World Bank shows that while an increasing number of women are opening bank accounts, there still is a gender gap of 7% (that is, 7% more men have bank accounts), and this has not changed since 2011.

In some countries, the situation is much better than this. In Bolivia, Cambodia, Russia and South Africa, the percentages of men and women with bank accounts are the same. In fact, in Argentina, Indonesia and the Philippines, women have overtaken men¹. The situation is less positive for women in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Morocco, Mozambique, Peru, Rwanda and Zambia, where the difference is around 30% in favour of men². Why are women less active in financial matters? Primarily, women earn less than men, often having no salary at all. But that's not all. There are also cultural aspects underlying this gap, such as laws on inheritance and the division of marital assets, which often favour men. One study³ which took as examples Ecuador, Ghana and the Indian state of Karnataka, revealed that in Ecuador, married women possessed 44% of the couple's wealth, in Ghana 19% and in Karnataka just 9%. This is because Ecuador has a joint property regime, which does not exist in the other two countries. In other countries, such as Chad, Guinea-Bissau

and Niger, a woman cannot open a bank account without her husband's permission⁴.

Key skills for young people

"Now more than ever, it is important to talk about *financial literacy*: the world of work has changed compared to the past, just as the pension system has and will continue to change. For this reason, it is essential that young people have adequate financial skills to make correct decisions. Starting with the decision whether or not to continue studying." For **Annamaria Lusardi**, professor of Economics and director of both the *Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center* at George Washington University School of Business and director of Italy's Committee for Financial Education, **basic financial skills should form part of the basic skills taught to all adolescents at school**. "We have included in educational programs the study of foreign languages and computer science to respond to changes in society and the world of work," she underlines. "Today we all carry out a series of financial tasks without even realising it."

First, we need to address a common misconception: when we discuss financial skills (that is, *financial literacy*⁵) we are not referring to large investment transactions. On the contrary, it covers more ordinary choices: whether or

1 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/gender-gap-financial-inclusion-three-ways-shrink-it>

2 *ibidem*

3 Deere, Carmen & Oduro, Abena & Swaminathan, Hema & Doss, Cheryl. (2013). Property Rights and the Gender Distribution of Wealth in Ecuador, Ghana and India. *The Journal of Economic Inequality*. 11

4 <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/610311522241094348/Financial-Inclusion.pdf>

5 Financial literacy is defined as the knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and risks, as well as the skills, motivation and confidence to apply such knowledge and understanding in order to make effective decisions in a range of financial contexts, improve the financial well-being of individuals and society and enable participation in economic life.



not to continue studying, managing and planning expenditure, decisions regarding debt, and planning savings.

As regards to financial skills, Italy is a peculiar case. Firstly, *millennials* have better financial skills than older adults: 47% of young people aged 15 to 34 can be considered *financially literate*, while this drops to 39% among 35-54-year-olds and 35% of over '55s⁶.

However, PISA 2015 data shows that Italian 15-year-olds have slightly lower-than-average rates of financial literacy among the 10 OSCE countries that participated in the survey. Furthermore, “about 20% of students in Italy do not reach the baseline level of proficiency (Level 2) in financial literacy, compared to 22% across the participating OECD countries and economies”⁷. Meanwhile, only 2.3% of Italian students reach advanced proficiency (Level 5), compared with the OSCE average of 10%⁸.

6 <https://gflec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Millennials-and-Financial-Literacy-Research-Paper.pdf?x87657>

7 <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-2105-Financial-Literacy-Italy.pdf>

8 “Stereotypes in Financial Literacy: Evidence from PISA”, Laura Bottazzi and Annamaria Lusardi, 6 March 2019



Italian girls lag behind boys

That is not all: 'Only in Italy do boys perform better in *financial literacy* than girls, by 11 points,' states the PISA report. In contrast, girls perform better than boys in Australia, Poland and Spain. In Slovakia and Lithuania, girls outperform their male peers by more than 20 points⁹.

Gender differences in Italy remain both in regions where results are higher than average (such as Trentino-Alto Adige) and those where results are lower (Molise and Calabria). 'We analysed financial literacy scores aggregated in four macro-economic areas (North-East, North-West, Centre, South and Islands),' write Bottazzi and Lusardi. 'The major difference between males and females can be found in the South and Islands region. In this macro-region, the average score of boys and girls is similar to that of Colombia, which has the lowest score of any country. Therefore, gender differences tend to be greater where financial literacy is lower.'¹⁰ 'If we want this deficit between males and females to reduce, we must intervene with targeted measures: this gap is too significant and persistent. If we do not intervene, it will not reduce on its own,' states Lusardi.

as the gender pay gap, the fact that increasingly often women must reduce their working hours (or stop working altogether) when they have children, and divorce or separation, all expose women to financial peril.

In order to cope with all these variables (in addition to changes in the world of work, options regarding types of pension and supplementary insurance) **it is necessary to act as soon as possible to reduce the deficit that separates girls from boys.** According to Annamaria Lusardi, in order to achieve this goal, there is a need for targeted measures that begin at school and offer answers to the specific needs of women: 'All the research at a global level tells us that there is a gap, regarding financial skills, between men and women,' she comments. 'Starting with schools would allow us, first of all, to reach all young people, especially those who, for reasons of gender or social inequality, are particularly punished. It would allow us to close this gap as soon as possible'.

The cost of financial ignorance

The consequences of this situation are - potentially - serious and worrying. 'People with few financial skills run a high risk of making poor decisions, even at 15 years old' explains Lusardi. 'Choosing whether or not to continue studying, for example, represents a key decision that affects a person's financial wellbeing for the rest of their life. **Financial ignorance has a cost for everyone, in particular women:** it leaves them trailing behind men and damages them. Issues such

⁹ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264270282-en.pdf?expires=1561212209&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E055FB499ED1D955C86DF-087303B5C6C>

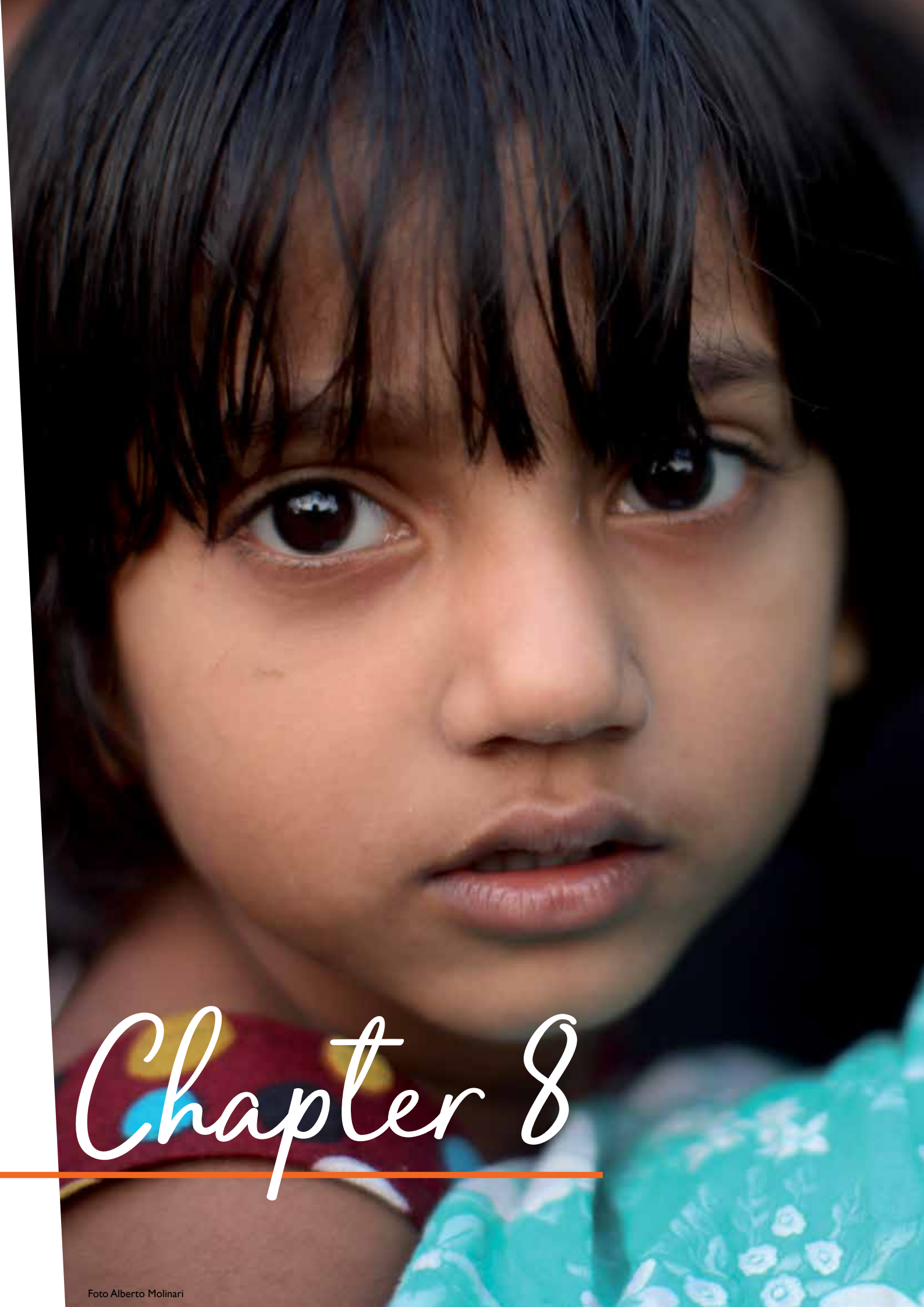
¹⁰ "Stereotypes in Financial Literacy: Evidence from PISA", Laura Bottazzi and Annamaria Lusardi, 6 March 2019



A PARTICULAR PERSPECTIVE

One piece of research that has offered some interesting insights is that done by the Girl Scouts of America some years ago. The research looked to establish the level of knowledge about managing finances among 1,000 girls aged 8-10 years old¹. The results? Most of those interviewed (94%) want to earn a living independently and avoid depending on family or marrying someone who will support them (80%). The girls don't see gender differences regarding earnings, and 73% think that men and women should be equally responsible for money in the family. Only 13% believe that men are better than women at managing money, and 77% believe that men and women have the same potential for becoming successful entrepreneurs. 86% of those interviewed think that financial decisions for the family should be made by both spouses, and that they should both support the children in an equal manner. On the one hand, girls are very optimistic because almost all of them think they will have a job they love, be able to provide for their families, own a home, and save a lot of money. However, only 51% feel confident making financial decisions (12% feel very confident). They have good knowledge about how to save (90%) and how to buy things at a good price (85%), but they don't know much about technical issues like how interests and taxes work (37%). Only 36% say they know how to invest money and manage retirement funds (24%). They have little trust in bank consultants. They learn how to manage money primarily from their mothers (85%), their fathers (61%), from teachers and counsellors (20%), and from school seminars (14%). However, only a third of those interviewed are interested in understanding how to establish a budget, and only 20% are interested in managing a business.

¹ Having it All, 2013 https://www.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsusa/forms-and-documents/about-girl-scouts/research/GSRI_Having_It_All_report.pdf



Chapter 8

VIOLENCE AGAINST

GIRLS

Even now in this day and age, a teenager is killed every 10 minutes¹. Globally, about 15 million girls aged between 15 and 19 have had non-consensual sexual relations or been victims of other kinds of sexual violence during their lifetime. Of these, 9 million were victims in the past year, but only 1% seek professional help².

A recent study by the Istituto degli Innocenti - Unicef³ compared the situations of four countries that are very different from one another (Italy, Vietnam, Peru, and Zimbabwe) in order to understand the complex and often interrelated causes which spark violence against children. The study shows how violence is an extremely fluid and widespread phenomenon, at times blaring, and at times as subtle as it is dangerous; it accompanies children as they move between the places where they live, play, sleep, and learn. The study shows how violent behaviour is passed from one generation to the next, thus suggesting that tolerance is learned during childhood. Data from the different countries in the study also demonstrates how violence is deeply linked to the web of relationships, and power dynamics within families and the community. Both males and females are equally at risk for violence: males are slightly more at risk in terms of physical punishment, but with sexual violence there is extreme gender disparity, to the detriment of females.

Risk factors

What are the risk factors for children? The following is similar in every country and for all types of violence: the quality of relationships between children and adults, gender disparity (deeply embedded in some cultures), family hierarchies, and external stress for adults (financial difficulties, past experiences of violence on the part of parents when they were children). What is certain is that violence begins at home, and sparks a mechanism which puts children at risk at school, in their community, and online. Children who live in families where physical punishment is the norm are more at risk of being subjected to it at school.

Furthermore, the close relationship between domestic violence experienced by women and violence against children has been highlighted by many experts. For example, a recent study⁴ of the ICRW (International Centre for Research on Women) about Uganda highlights how gender norms that contribute to violence against women and to child maltreatment originate from a stereotypical concept of masculinity, which associates masculinity with dominance and violent discipline in the family. As has been noted many times, male children who witness their mothers being maltreated are more likely to become violent against their own female partners as adults.

1 <https://www.unicef.it/doc/8908/posso-essere-quello-che-voglio-8-marzo-delle-bambine.htm>

2 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures#notes>

3 *Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children*, Istituto degli Innocenti, Unicef, University of Edinburgh, 2018
https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Drivers-of-Violence_Study.pdf

4 *Intersections of Intimate Partner Violence and Violence against Children*, ICRW, 2019
<https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Promundo-ICRW-Report-FINAL.pdf>



Emma González

“All politicians who take money from the National Rifle Association, shame on you. To all politicians who say that guns are just objects like knives, and are as dangerous as a car we say: bullshit! In February 2018 Emma González was 18 and she survived the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre in Parkland (Florida). 17 people including students and teachers were shot dead. Emma, however, did not just cry over her dead friends. Together with a group of students and young activists, she created the “March for Our Lives”, which in March 2018 brought more than two million people to the streets across the country to demand stricter laws on the purchase and possession of weapons in the United States. Immediately after the march, the young survivors of the massacre organized a nationwide tour to encourage teenagers to register for the upcoming elections (in the U.S., registration on the electoral roll is not automatic, ed.) and make them understand that they have the opportunity to act, vote and change their country. Starting from the Gun Control Act.



Gender disparity and patriarchal rules are definitely a very high-risk factor because they permeate every area of a girl's childhood, home, family, and community. For example, in Zimbabwe there is a traditional practice called *chiramu*, in which the husband of a teenager's older sister or aunt can grope her or even force her to have non-consensual sex, and this is accepted as a custom in that community.

Being exposed to violence at a young age has serious consequences for a teenager's physical and psychological well-being. Adolescence is in fact a period of life in which the young person explores romantic feelings, has relationships, and approaches sexuality. This process, when distorted by violence experienced as a young girl, exposes young women to a greater risk of sexual violence, non-consensual first sexual experiences, and violence within their relationships. Being a victim of one type of violence exposes people to other types of violence, and being the victim of many types of violence can lead girls and teenagers to having a series of mental problems such as depression, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), anxiety, eating disorders like anorexia, suicidal tendencies, self-harm behavior, and the use of narcotics⁵.

Besides creating enormous personal suffering, all of this has serious consequences for society, which is deprived of the powerful energy and precious contributions of millions of young girls, who are able to offer something new to the world, along with their male peers. In the fight against violence towards girls, UNICEF has stated that involving men and boys is fundamental to changing the social norms that lie at the foundation of gender discrimination.

Violence and disability

According to UN estimates, 15% of the human population lives with a disability. Two hundred million of these people are under 25. According to a worldwide study by the UNFPA⁶ young girls and teenagers who have mental and psychological disabilities are ten times more likely to be victims of gender violence than those without disabilities. In the United States, a girl with a disability is 40% more likely to be abused. According to the UNFPA, discrimination starts at birth: in some countries, female babies born with disabilities are more likely to be killed, or to not be legally registered, making it impossible for them to access health services, education, and social services. Worldwide, women with disabilities have an employment rate of 19.6%, while the rate for men with disabilities is 52.8% (women without disabilities are at 29.9%). Children with disabilities are four times more at risk of falling victim to different forms of violence than other children. And three times more at risk of being a victim of sexual assault, with girls at the top of the risk range.

In a study by the African Child Policy Forum of Violence against Children with Disabilities, almost every interviewee declared to have been abused more than once. Another Australian study determined that 62% of women with disabilities under the age of 50 had been victims of violence since the age of 15. Violence against disabled children takes many forms, including bullying at school, corporal punishment in the family, forced sterilisation. Young girls are at high risk of forced labour and sexual abuse. They often do not have access to information about their sexual and reproductive health, therefore they are subject to sexually transmitted diseases. For example, in Ethiopia, only 35% of very young disabled people used contraceptives, resulting in 63% of

5 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330443371_Mental_health_empowerment_and_violence_against_young_women_in_lower-income_countries_A_review_of_reviews

6 <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/young-persons-disabilities>



unwanted pregnancies. In India, only 22% of young women with disabilities have access to regular gynaecological examinations.

In Africa the belief that sexual infections can be cured by having sex with a virgin exposes especially disabled girls and young women to violence, because they are thought not to be sexually active and therefore certainly virgins. The UNFPA, in collaboration with local and national authorities, is working to create guidelines and activities to promote the rights of very young disabled people, with a particular focus on gender-based violence.

An example of collaboration is with WEI, Women Enabled International, with which it is creating

a series of guidelines to fight discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. There are some examples of positive national policies, such as in Kenya⁷, Nepal⁸ and South Africa⁹ and interesting local projects such as those in Brazil¹⁰ and Rwanda¹¹, that produce information material on reproductive health in sign language or simplified language. In India, two websites help disseminate sex education information for people with disabilities: *Love Matters* (lovematters.in) and *Sexuality and Disability* (sexualityanddisability.org), also enabling visitors to ask anonymous questions and participate in chat discussions, while feeling protected and receiving answers to questions about sexuality and reproductive health.



7 Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Health (2015). National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy 2015

8 The collaboration between the government and Marie Stopes Nepal www.mariestopes.org.np for the training of experienced staff on disability issues in counselling centres for very young people

9 Republic of South Africa, Ministry of Social Development (2015). National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Framework Strategy 2014–2019

10 <http://cedaps.org.br/projetos/caminhos-da-inclusao/>

11 <http://www.uphls.org/>

**CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN IN ITALY****SOURCE: INTERFORZE**

	2017		2018		
	victims <18	% 	victims <18	% 	Δ%
Voluntary manslaughter*	22	50%	16	44%	-27%
Negligence of family duties	1.005	51%	914	48%	-9%
Misuse of force during discipline	324	37%	374	38%	+7%
Mistreatment within family	1.723	50%	1.965	52%	+14%
Child abduction	236	49%	325	47%	+38%
Abandonment of minors, including disabled children	467	38%	501	40%	+7%
Child prostitution	71	73%	69	64%	-3%
Possession of pornographic material	91	86%	79	87%	-13%
Child pornography	194	84%	199	80%	+3%
Sexual violence	699	85%	656	89%	-6%
Sexual acts with a minor	415	79%	420	77%	+1%
Corruption of minors	154	80%	132	73%	-14%
Aggravated sexual assault	387	82%	383	84%	-1%
Total	5.788	60%	5.990	59%	+3%

Source: SDI-SSD, dati consolidati. * Operational Data- source: D.C.P.C.

Underage victims of crime in Italy: when the family is not a safe place

Beginning with the regrettable story of Bibbiano, the past few months have been marked by often exploitative controversies about the real spread of violence against minors in Italy. The data tell us with worrying continuity that we must neither underestimate the situation nor lower our guard when we talk about such phenomena. The cold hard facts on underage victims of crime, provided

to us by the Joint National Police Force, bring to light distressing new records: in 2018, there were 5,990 victims of crime under the age of 18 in Italy, 3% more than in 2017, which had already been a record year in the series recorded by Terre des Hommes, covering data from 2004 to the present. 59.38% of the victims were girls.

Examining the figures in detail, the dominating factor was once again mistreatment by family members. It increased by 14% from 1,723 to 1,965 victims (52.47% of whom were female). In

other words, a third of the crimes committed against the youngest members of our population occur within the home or in situations of proximity, or are linked to relationships of care or trust. If we add corrective or disciplinary punishment to this figure, which concerns 347 victims (up 7%), we are forced to confront the fact that family and the educational institutions that revolve around it – which are normally places of love, protection and caring relationships, and where a child's personality, self-confidence and culture are formed – sometimes (and it must be stressed, only sometimes) end up turning into places where children experience violent or oppressive relationships that can leave indelible physical and psychological wounds and permanently scar a child's development towards adulthood.

It should be noted that the data should be read for what they represent: not a map of every type of mistreatment or abuse that children are subjected to, but a mere snapshot of real crimes committed to the detriment of our most vulnerable. It likely reveals only the most visible and dramatic side of far more widespread, silent forms of violence that we do not have the techniques to perceive nor to intervene.

The light and shadow of sex-related violence

In recent years we have seen an unrelenting growth in the number of sex offences. By contrast, it seems in 2018 the upward trend of crimes against girls was on pause. The figures fortunately fell in most cases: child prostitution was -3% (of which 63.77% female); possession of pornographic material was -13% (87.34% female); sexual violence was -6% (89.48% female); corruption of minors -14% (73.48% female victims) and aggravated sexual violence -1% (83.81% female). Only "sexual acts with minors" crimes (+1% with 77.14% female victims) and child pornography (+3% with 79.90% female victims) increased.

Numbers and stories

Numbers are essential for providing concrete facts and delineating the areas of analysis. But numbers cannot and should not represent the only horizon upon which to formulate an effective response to violence. Figures often focus on a certain reality, and sometimes (as probably happens with the numbers on violence) they end up hiding other, less evident yet widespread phenomena – with a high risk of making us lose sight of the fact that behind each number, there is a story: the story of a frustrated girl or boy who is in pain after being beaten by a violent parent; a girl or boy's experience of being humiliated on camera while their father forced them to have sex to make a video to be sold online; a girl feeling alone and isolated after being gang-raped, until the day she finally finds the courage to denounce her aggressors; the squalor of a small room in which a minor was forced to sell himself for the umpteenth time.

Beyond the cold, hard data, we should commit to taking care of that silent solitude where abused children and young people are confined, so that each story is individually addressed through a pathway of personalised assistance. It is a job that must begin based on trust – which today seems to be a weak link between citizens, institutions and social people. Listening, dialogue, continuous training and the ability to work together should form the central pillars of the work. But without the participation of the child victims, and without their full awareness of their rights and the realisation they are not alone, it is unlikely we will be able to deal effectively with violence against minors and their deepest wounds.



Indifesa NETWORK

The radio is a very powerful medium. It brings out one's voice, and our children need to talk. They need to be free from the 'slavery' of images: you cannot keep silent in front of a microphone, you need to express a thought and discuss it, defend it. Grazia Valente, teacher at the middle school Borsi in Milan, is the coordinator of the school web radio "Radio U.S.B. - Unica Speciale by Borsi", one of the 12 web radios that are part of the Indefesa Network, the first Italian network of web radios and young ambassadors promoted by "Terre des Hommes Italia" and "Associazione Kreattiva"..

The project - funded by the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - has created a network of school web radios that devote an important part of their schedule to fight violence, gender discrimination and stereotypes, addressing in a participatory manner issues such as bullying, cyberbullying, sexting and hate speech.

The absolute protagonists of this initiative are boys and girls who - equipped with recorders, mixers and microphones - broadcast services thought out and narrated independently. A group of 11 and 13 year old students broadcasts on the Milanese radio. "The girls are particularly active: they feel the theme of inequality on their skin," explains Professor Valente. They feel they have to conquer their own position and space in the world by discussing stereotypes that are difficult to eradicate".

These stereotypes are widespread even among the youngest. "During a meeting with students, some guys argued that a soccer ball is an exclusively 'male' object. A group of girls and myself replied not to forget women's football: the boys couldn't believe us" - says Asia, 13 years old, one of the editors of "USB Radio" -. When the Italian national team qualified for the World Cup, I wrote a piece for the radio. In these months we have continued the discussion and since then, my classmates are a little more open-minded".

“Instinctively, males are more inclined to limit their view to those stereotypes that, in some way, protect them - Professor Valente intervenes. In recent years, the situation has improved. There are more and more attentive male adolescents sensitive to these issues. We try to encourage them to participate in these debates”.

“I really like to have the opportunity to narrate: interests, passions or even our selection of the news from the world,” says Asia who in addition to her work as an editor, is also an Ambassador of the project “Network **indifesa**”: “Being ambassadors means having the duty to explain to our classmates for a start, that there must be no prejudice or discrimination, that we are all equal, and that freedom of thought is a valuable asset to defend,” she explains enthusiastically. The ambassadors are boys and girls from all over Italy who get personally involved in the

project’s activities, whether through training or peer education, presentations, flash mobs or local outreach.

The Network **indifesa** project also aims to stimulate the sharing of best practices for projects carried out in Italy against gender violence and discrimination, bullying, cyberbullying and sexting. Since 2014, together with ScuolaZoo, we have been collecting Generation Z’s opinions on these same issues with the **Indifesa** Observatory, a permanent observatory unique to Italy that is able to reach more than 5,000 young and very young people every year. We also have a dedicated crowdfunding platform that allows small web radios to develop, consolidate over time and thus spread their message to an increasing number of listeners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.NETWORKINDIFESA.ORG





From 2012 to today: Terre des Hommes celebrates its first 8 years in the commitment of the **indifesa Campaign** to defend young girls and female teenagers

Child brides, teenage mothers, domestic slaves, mutilated girls, girls trafficked for sexual purposes, teenagers forced to leave school and suffer abuses with frustrating frequency. Faced with these terrible examples of abuse and inequality in 2012, Terre des Hommes launched the **indifesa Campaign** on the occasion of the First International Day of the Girl Child to say NEVER AGAIN to violence and every form of discrimination based even today on gender.

A commitment that has employed our finest resources, involved dozens of partners, institutions, *influencers*, public figures and millions of Italians, and that has received important awards, notably the Medal of the Presidency of the Republic. All this has been done to change, we hope once and for all, the way in which gender violence towards female children and girls is reported and experienced.

Research, in-depth discussion, conferences, events, promotions to raise awareness and engage Italian public opinion have been actively mirrored by concrete actions to help young girls and female teenagers in Italy, Peru, Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Ivory Coast and Nicaragua.

Putting all this into a few pages is not easy, but let's think back to just some of our milestones.

indifesa dossier

Since 2012, the continuously updated dossier on the “**Condition of young girls and female teenagers in Italy and the world**” has constituted the point of reference for institutions, the media and associations dealing with the issue of gender. A unique document of its kind that considers both Italian and the international dimensions.



indifesa blog

The news you won't find on any other Italian information space; stories of hope and change from the girls who are survivors and the communities which are attempting original ways of responding to abuse and gender discriminations. Launched in 2015 and edited by the journalist **Ilaria Sesana**, the **indifesa blog** is the place where the Terre des Hommes campaign becomes daily news.

terredeshommes.it/blog-indifesa/

Young Girl News: Terre des Hommes – Ansa

News reports, all too often “grim reading” about murders, abuse, violence and offenses involving young girls and female teenagers, collected by Terre des Hommes in collaboration with ANSA (the National Associated Press Agency) which has made available to us its immense electronic document archive (DEA).



This was the dossier “**Young Girl Chronicles**”, submitted in 2012. A report as shocking as the main data it yielded: 6 news reports every day about incidents of crimes and abuse against female minors!

The Girl Declaration and a petition in support of Maud Chifamba



A preview of the **Girl Declaration** was presented at the 2014 **indifesa** conference. This **online petition**, hosted on **Change.org**, aimed to bring young Zimbabwean Maud Chifamba (one of Forbes’ five most influential women of the African continent in 2013 and a Terre des Hommes delegate) to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2015. The aim there was to set the new objectives for the **2030 Agenda**, requesting more attention and resources be assigned to girls’ education. **The petition collected more than 94,000 signatures.**

First comparative research on the legislation tackling the abuse of girls and women

Terre des Hommes presented at the November 2012 European Council International Conference, entitled “**The Role of International Cooperation in tackling Sexual Violence against Children**”. It was held at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The presentation was of the **first comparative study on legislation tackling violence against girls and women**, carried out with law firm **Paul Hastings’** pro bono support. That study was released to the public at the 57th session of the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women), at the UN’s New York Headquarters in March. .



Di Pari Passo: meetings to prevent and raise awareness of gender discrimination in lower secondary education in Italy

For two years, Terre des Hommes **ran a programme in collaboration with Soccorso Rosa (which offers psychological and legal assistance to female victims of sexual abuse) and the San Carlo Hospital. The purpose of the Di Pari Passo programme was to hold meetings to prevent and raise awareness of gender discrimination in lower secondary schools (ages 11 to 14), in order to combat preconceptions and discriminatory behaviour in preadolescents and to provide teachers and parents with effective tools for identifying difficult and potentially dangerous situations. This led to the first manual aimed at lower secondary schools, with the same title as the programme, “Di Pari Passo”. It was produced with the support of the Italian Government’s Equal Opportunities Department and published by Settenove.**

The **indifesa** Watchdog

Since 2014, Terre des Hommes has been collaborating with **ScuolaZoo**, to continue the **indifesa** watchdog. The watchdog aims to listen to Italian boys and girls' voices when it comes to gender violence, discrimination, bullying, cyberbullying and sexting. Since it began, more than 15,000 boys and girls from across Italy have been involved in what is, today, the only permanent watchdog for such issues. This tool is vital in guiding policies made by Italian institutions and the education sector.

Mistreatment of children and training for doctors and paediatricians

Violence against children is most often violence against girls. It was our awareness of this, which we owe to **indifesa**, that pushed us to explore the matter of children being mistreated and abused. In Milan in 2013, we presented our study "*Maltreatment of children: how Milan's physicians recognise it*", in partnership with **Milan's Mangiagalli maternity clinic and SBAM (Sportello Bambino Adolescente Maltrattato, a help service for mistreated teenagers)**.

In 2014, a need for more information from doctors and paediatricians led to a collaboration between Terre des Hommes, SVSeD (emergency services for victims of sexual and domestic abuse) and the Milan Medical Association. *Together they created a handbook for doctors and paediatricians on managing instances (or suspected instances) of child mistreatment.* That handbook has been distributed across Milan's healthcare facilities and is available online at <https://bit.ly/2QbCRde>. Various regions have adopted this idea, adapting it to their local situations.

In November 2014, at the University of Milan, the first postgraduate course began on "**Diagnosing Child Abuse and Neglect**". It is aimed at general practitioners, paediatricians and students of these disciplines and promoted by **Terre des**



Foto Eugenio Grosso

Hommes, the Milan Medical Association of Surgeons and Dentists, and the SVSeD (service for victims of sexual and domestic abuse) at the **Mangiagalli clinic of the Ca' Granda Institute for Treatment and Research.**

In the last few years, Terre des Hommes has been committed to promoting the **first ever network of outstanding paediatric hospitals, which have specialist teams dedicated to diagnosing and managing child victims of violence.** The participating centres are: Bambi Service" at the Turin City Health and Science University Hospital; **SVSeD (emergency services for victims of sexual and domestic abuse)** at the Ca' Granda General Hospital's Institute for Treatment and Research in Milan; Milan's "Vittore Buzzi" Children's Hospital; **the Regional Centre for Diagnosing Mistreatment of Children** (a crisis unit for children and families) at Padua Hospital Trust; **GAIA** (a service for abused children and adolescents) at the Meyer University Hospital in Florence; **GIADA psychology service (interdisciplinary group assisting women and abused children)** at Bari University Hospital "Hospital John XXIII". In 2016, Terre des Hommes and this network of hospitals attended a press conference at the Italian Senate's "Giovanni Spadolini" Library, to present the Dossier "**Maltreatment and abuse of children: a matter of public health**".

The Italian version can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/2QcI fva>.

Monitoring child abuse in Italy and investigating the price of insufficient prevention policies

In collaboration with the **CISMAI** (an association of Italian services fighting maltreatment and child abuse) and as part of its **indifesa** campaign, Terre des Hommes has begun some innovative research in Italy:

- **the first national survey examining how widespread child mistreatment is in Italy.** This study was produced in collaboration with ANCI (the association of Italian municipalities) and is titled **“Maltreatment of children: how widespread is this in Italy?”**
The Italian version is available online at bit.ly/1IzfYPs
- the first **study** carried out in Italy (with the assistance of the **Bocconi University** of Milan) **analysing the cost of not preventing the maltreatment and abuse of children in the country.** It is available online at bit.ly/1qyjN6K
- 18 months after a pilot project to monitor mistreatment in Italy, the country’s **authority on children and adolescents** requested that we expand the study to cover 250 Italian municipalities. This led to a national **“Study on the abuse of children and adolescents in Italy”**, which provided a long-awaited image of the true scale of child abuse. It was published in May 2015. This remains today the benchmark study on this issue for all associations and institutions involved in fighting it. It is available online in Italian at <http://bit.ly/1KN8sXM>.
- **In 2020** we will be launching the new National Survey on the abuse of children and adolescents in Italy, commissioned to Terre des Hommes and Cismai by the **Guarantor Authority for Children and Adolescence.**



The #indifesa manifesto for an Italy that works for young girls and female teenagers

In 2017 we asked the Italian Municipalities to work with us to keep improving our cities and to support young girls and female teenagers. More than 100 municipalities, towns and cities - including the largest, such as Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, Genoa, Bari and Palermo - have signed up for the project. Their commitment has proved to be exceptional, including their efforts to raise awareness of the matter. Many municipalities have “dressed up” in orange to speak out against violence and gender discrimination. They have also organised events and discussion sessions and have involved local schools in their initiatives, leading to the participation of thousands of students of all ages. Additionally in 2019, a request was issued to Italy’s municipalities and regions, in an attempt to spread **indifesa**’s message.

The institutions are required to make a range of commitments, including: adopting a Charter promoting girls’ rights, around which they should base all municipal policies, especially those aimed at preventing violence and gender discrimination (taking **FIDAPA BPW’s girls’** Charter as an example); promoting the collection of data, through local schools, on discrimination, gender-based violence, sexting, bullying and cyberbullying; involving teachers, educators, anti-violence centres, local associations and networks of parents in educating children and adolescents and promoting awareness on how to prevent violence, gender discrimination, bullying, cyberbullying and sexting; where there is already a violence prevention plan in place, ensuring that the specific matters addressed in the Charter are included; mapping all the projects the nation offers in relation to these issues.

indifesa: a docu-film about girls abused and exploited in Peru

It is a story of violence and beauty, sadness and joy, told through the eyes of two young actors who are plunged into a world light years away from their own everyday lives. **Brando Pacitto** and **Mirko Trovato** are famous for playing the lead roles in **RAI I** fiction series, "Braccialetti Rossi". Together, they take a trip to Peru to get a better understanding of the Terre des Hommes projects and support the beneficiaries of **indifesa's** programmes, which aim to tackle the abuse and exploitation of Andean girls in the Cusco area. It is an intense and exhausting journey on which the two young actors discover a very complex world full of contradictions.

Directed by: Duccio Giordano.

Produced by: Palomar.

Stand Up for Girls

The new initiative for 2018 was **Stand Up for Girls**: an evening event packed with short talks organised together with **5x15 Italia** at the **Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli** in Milan. This initiative had the same goal of our **#OrangeRevolution**: to change the way we look at gender issues and deconstruct the stereotypes and discrimination that are rooted in our mentality and passed down from generation to generation. The people who helped us with their enlightening talks are: Gianluca Foglia, cartoonist; Veronica Yoko Plebani, athlete; Sara Melotti, photographer; Brando Pacitto, actor; Nina Zilli, songwriter and musician; and Emanuela De Souza, Chiara Piccoli and Gabriel Borbei, the team from the Educapari network at the ATS Metropolitan City of Milan.





Media and social network campaigns

Exclusive content, international partners, dozens of celebrity endorsements: the **indifesa** campaign has always been one step ahead, predicting the themes and issues on which many organisations have begun to spend money in recent years. It has reached millions of Italians, through the national and local TG channels, the press, informative websites, local authority websites and thousands of social network profiles and pages. It's a journey that began in 2012, when for the first time "**IO Donna**" magazine dedicated a memorable cover piece to **indifesa**, featuring actresses Nicoletta Romanoff and Sabrina Impacciatore and Olympic champion Valentina Vezzali. In 2018, the campaign had a massive presence on all **RAI** channels and the creation of the **indifesa** docu-film. In February 2018, the campaign reached more than 10 million Italians and, at certain peak times, as many as 15 million, through these various channels. In October 2018, all the major media channels made broadcasts on the presentation of the Dossier Indifesa and its data. The potential reach of the **indifesa** campaign, with the hashtags **#orangerevolution** and **#indifesa**, reached over 79 million and these two hashtags were trending on Twitter on October 11th.

Testimonial

Every year many VIPs and celebrities line up "**indifesa**" (in defence) of young girls and female teenagers. They become protagonists of Terre des Hommes' **#OrangeRevolution**, which aims to create a world where gender violence has been defeated. Why orange? Various revolutions have selected orange to represent their identity and that is one reason. But **Terre des Hommes** and the **United Nations** also chose orange as a way of saying "**No**" to gender violence and gender stereotypes, to break away from the forced association of pink for little girls.

On October 11th, thousands of social profiles from the worlds of cinema, music, theatre, sports and entertainment will **turn Orange**, using objects, slogans, photos or selfies with an orange filter, and adding the hashtags **#indifesa** e **#OrangeRevolution**.



Nina Zilli

indifes



For further information:

www.terredeshommes.it

www.indifesa.org



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