

## **5.1 Human Rights of Disadvantaged People :**

- Women
- Children
- Displaced persons
- Disabled persons,
- Including Aged and
- HIV Infected People

### **Women**

Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights and United Nations values. A fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter adopted by world leaders in 1945 is "equal rights of men and women", and protecting and promoting women's human rights is the responsibility of all States.

Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to be free from sexual violence; to vote; to hold public office; to enter into legal contracts; to have equal rights in family law; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to have reproductive rights; to own property; to education.

Although the issue of women's rights has attracted international recognition and support, women still face many inequalities and barriers. Gender-based violence and economic discrimination are problems in many parts of the world.

### **In The United States**

Many feminists in the United States believe that gender-based discrimination and inequality exist in schools, in homes, and in workplaces. Studies in the late 1900s showed that teachers from kindergarten to college level often treated boys and girls differently, steering boys toward mathematics and science and girls toward the humanities and social sciences. However, another study conducted in Denmark suggests that female students are less inclined to pursue the sciences, even when they are encouraged to do so.

However, critics charge that the problem is often dismissed as a “private matter” in which law enforcement officials and others are reluctant to interfere.

Workplace challenges take many forms. The rise of feminism in the late 1900s brought considerable public attention—and a number of lawsuits—to the problems of sexual discrimination and harassment at work. Since that time there has been a movement toward stricter enforcement of laws and company policies against such practices. But the problem has not disappeared. Some people believe that limits on behavior in the workplace are often overly strict and violate the right to free speech.

Other lingering issues concern pay and job opportunities. In 1975, women earned 62 percent of what men earned; by 2008 that figure had risen to 77 percent. The wage gap between women and men exists at all levels of education. One reason for the gap is that women generally tend to be concentrated in lower-paying occupations and are not well represented in high-level managerial positions. As of 2008 women accounted for 46.5 percent of the country’s workforce, and 39 percent worked in management, professional, or related occupations. Many feminists see these statistics as proof of discrimination against women in the business world.

Another possible explanation for the wage gap is that many women may not view earning a high salary as a top priority. Other aspects of their work may be more important, such as a flexible schedule that allows them to spend more time with their families. Some surveys suggest that salary differences are small for men and women who have similar qualifications and work the same number of hours each week.

## In Other Countries

In 1995, the Beijing Conference on Women’s Rights seemed to establish women’s rights as basic human rights. However, a United Nations review of the issue five years later revealed that recognition of this idea around the world was uneven at best. According to a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), many national governments have taken half measures, such as stating a policy or passing a law against some kinds of gender violence while allowing other kinds to continue. HRW mentions governments in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa that have failed to challenge the traditional idea that men can discipline their wives as they see fit. The report cites as an example the “honor killings” of women in Pakistan by male relatives who consider their behavior immoral or disgraceful. Violence against women remains a serious issue. According to a 2006 United Nations report, one in three women worldwide is attacked

often by a family member. Women in war-torn areas and refugee women are at special risk, as they are vulnerable to attacks from enemy forces and lack the support of community and social institutions. Another form of violence is the trafficking of women and girls for forced labor or sexual servitude. Trafficking is a worldwide problem, and the practice is widespread in Africa and Asia.

Another major threat to women is ritual genital mutilation (RGM), which is routinely practiced in some cultures of Africa and the Middle East. It involves the removal of all or part of a woman's external reproductive organs. The procedure is usually performed by people with no medical training, using unsterilized instruments and no anesthesia. The goal of RGM is usually to keep women sexually pure by reducing or eliminating the pleasure of sex.

Women around the world face a variety of other challenges, such as laws that prevent them from owning property, obtaining a divorce, or even driving a car. They must also deal with policies and practices that limit their reproductive rights. Helping women around the world achieve basic human rights is an acknowledged goal of the modern women's movement. However, feminists differ on many other issues, such as whether it is important to increase the number of women in science, government, and other traditionally male areas. Women and men around the world will continue to debate the steps that should be taken in the future to protect the rights of all women.

### **Child Rights:**

They are abandoned. They do not get a chance to step in a school. They are left to fend for themselves on the streets. They suffer from many forms of violence. They do not have access to even primary healthcare. They are subjected to cruel and inhumane treatments every day. They are children – innocent, young and beautiful – who are deprived of their rights.

In the history of human rights, the rights of children are the most ratified. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (**UNCRC**) defines Child Rights as the minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be afforded to every citizen below the age of 18 regardless of race, national origin, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origin, wealth, birth status, disability, or other characteristics.

These rights encompass freedom of children and their civil rights, family environment, necessary healthcare and welfare, education, leisure and cultural

activities and special protection measures. The UNCRC outlines the fundamental human rights that should be afforded to children in four broad classifications that suitably cover all civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of every child:

**Right to Survival:**

Right to be born

Right to minimum standards of food, shelter and clothing

Right to live with dignity

Right to health care, to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy

**Right to Protection:**

Right to be protected from all sorts of violence

Right to be protected from neglect

Right to be protected from physical and sexual abuse

Right to be protected from dangerous drugs

**Right to Participation:**

Right to freedom of opinion

Right to freedom of expression

Right to freedom of association

Right to information

Right to participate in any decision making that involves him/her directly or indirectly.