



Human Rights Council (29th Session)

Item 3 - WG on discrimination against women

Defence for Children International (DCI), would like to thank the Human Rights Council and the UN experts for their work and consideration for the human rights of children. In particular, we would like to thank the Working Group on Discrimination against Women for undertaking research on structural disadvantage and discrimination throughout women's life cycle, especially concerning access to education for girls, through its annual thematic report to the Human Rights Council in 2014.

According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its General Comment n°18, the completion of primary and secondary education provides girls with short- and long-term benefits by contributing to the prevention of child marriage and adolescent pregnancies, lowering rates of infant and maternal mortality and morbidity, and preparing women and girls to better claim their human rights.

Mr. President, Defence for Children International welcomes the progressive policies that have been developed at the national level to improve girls' school enrolment rates. However, more needs to be done worldwide to translate member States' international obligations into action on the ground. Girls continue to be discriminated against in accessing education and within education systems. Of the 58 million children who are out of school¹, the majority are girls.

To provide equal opportunity for girls and young women as their male counterparts, DCI-Africa is implementing The *Girl Power Programme* at the regional level. Initiated in 2011, this programme promotes child rights, renouncing gender-based violence, advocacy, and strengthening of justice professionals such as police, magistrates, court clerks, and local community based structures. The project provides life skills training for girls and young women, ensures that they are in school or involved in skills training programmes, supports them in organizing awareness raising and advocacy programmes, thereby also participating in decision making and local governance at the community level. The project also ensures that these women & girls are protected by providing them with legal assistance enhancing their access to justice when their human rights are violated.

Investing in girls now will make sure they grow up as active citizens in their communities, and create better prospects for their families and their future. Defence for Children International kindly request Member States to:

- ✓ Ensure girls' full and equal access to quality education, by establishing and implementing laws and policies that guarantee the basic human right to a quality education, by supporting them politically and financially;
- ✓ Protect girls and women from violence and abuse, by raising awareness and addressing underlining causes of such violence;
- ✓ Finally, DCI encourages civil society to continue their grass-root engagement work especially with parents and local communities, particularly in rural areas, to raise awareness of the importance of girls' right to education.

¹ 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO