



# THE UN & YOU

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## Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Federation members are strongly committed to women's equality and are engaged in empowering women and girls in our society and Church. Our vision/mission statements/directives are testimonies to our focus on women and girls. Frequently we encounter and minister to women who have face violence in the home or at workplaces. Violence against women and girls is a violation of their human rights. Impacts of violence on women are manifold; it not only affects their own physical and mental wellbeing, but also their families.

Women's right to live free from violence is upheld in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979. It is the result of thirty years of work by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, a body established in 1946 to promote women's rights. The treaty is legally binding and guarantees the social, political and cultural rights of girls and women of all ages. It is the most comprehensive women's bill of rights. 189 countries have signed the treaty.

The Conventions states, "...that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields." It also states "that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women."

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "*any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and*

*women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, civil or any other field."*

The treaty calls on each ratifying country to incorporate the Convention in their constitution and national legal systems, to overcome barriers to discrimination in the political, social, economic and cultural fields. The treaty calls to address issues of domestic violence, trafficking, affordable health care and child care, economic security, pay inequities, paid family leave, educational and vocational opportunities. Empowerment of women is central to sustainable development of any society.

Article 6 requires the States to take appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress trafficking in women and the exploitation of prostitution in women. All those who are engaged in Stop Trafficking in Persons/Modern Day Slavery can use this provision for advocacy.

The implementation of the Convention by countries is monitored by a Committee composed of 23 experts "of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention." Parties to the Convention need to submit reports on measures taken to implement the Convention every four years.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states "to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, elaborated in SDG # 5." 193 countries around the world have agreed to implement this goal along with other 16 goals.

How can we hold our countries, cities and local governments accountable, to ensure the provisions of CEDAW and SDG

#5 are implemented? How can we bring the global to the local level to transform the lives of women who are discriminated everywhere? Change does not often happen from the top; real change is a bottom up phenomenon and our participation at the local level can ensure it happens.

Begin by educating ourselves and the people we minister to on these issues to advocate for their implementation. Study the legal measures and practices in one's own countries to see if the principles of the Convention are embodied in the constitution or in other legislative measures or in the form of affirmative actions. Examine the judicial system to see how it secures the rights of women as set out in the Convention. Check the national budgets to see if they are gender-sensitive. National gender-sensitive budgets are key to promote equality between men and women. Use the knowledge gathered to advocate at the local and national level to end discrimination against women and girls.

NGOs can play important role in using the Convention as an instrument for women's empowerment, through advocacy and monitoring their government's implementation strategies. The procedural guide to producing shadow reports to the CEDAW Committee and format guidelines are designed to assist NGOs in producing shadow reports, and for evaluating government reports under the CEDAW Convention. Join the groups who are involved in shadow reporting in your country.

Since the United States is not a signatory to the treaty, there is a campaign – Cities for CEDAW to protect the rights of women and girls by adopting the principles of CEDAW in cities and towns in the United States. A link to a toolkit, 'Cities for CEDAW' is given below. You may find the toolkit helpful for your advocacy.

A concise explanation on the Principle of Non-Discrimination can be found in this video:

<https://youtu.be/OBdDB5PKrmk>

A concise explanation on the principle of state obligation is available in this video:

<https://youtu.be/umETapJ4b8o>

Text of the Convention

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.html>

Toolkit for Cities on CEDAW

<http://www.citiesforcedaw.org>

A Procedural Guide to Producing Shadow Reports to the CEDAW Committee:

<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/iwraw/proceduralguide-08.html>