



# CSW 69 Beijing +30 Shadow Report

## The Girl Child

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The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognized the importance of improving the lives of young girls. Gender bias and discrimination against girls can lead to low self-esteem and a lack of equal opportunities for girls, which can impact their well-being and the trajectory of their lives. As part of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, nine strategic objectives were set forth in order to create a better future for girls. These objectives included:

- L.1. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child
- L.2. Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls
- L.3. Promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential
- L.4. Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training
- L.5. Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition
- L.6. Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protection of young girls at work
- L.7. Eradicate violence against the girl child
- L.8. Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life
- L.9. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child.<sup>1</sup>

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, progress has been made in addressing the rights and needs of the girl child in the United States. Key areas of improvement include increased access to education and healthcare and a greater societal awareness of the challenges faced by young girls. However, significant issues remain, such as child poverty, violence against girls, and unequal access to opportunities. Currently, the girl child in the U.S. faces a mixed reality. While many benefit from improved legislation and advocacy efforts, others continue to struggle against systemic barriers and inequities.

### Education

Education is a fundamental right, yet disparities persist in the United States. The Beijing Platform's strategic objective calls for eliminating discrimination in education and improving access for all girls. While the US has achieved near-universal primary school enrollment for girls, significant gaps remain in STEM participation and higher education for girls of color and those from low-income households.

- Women and girls from marginalized groups have less access to college-level STEM classes in high school and a lower level of attainment of STEM degrees than men.<sup>2</sup>
- Graduation rates for girls in underserved communities have improved, with high school graduation rates rising to 86% in 2020, but disparities persist for Native American girls at 74%.<sup>3</sup>

### Child Poverty

Poverty disproportionately impacts girls, especially in single-parent households. The Beijing Platform emphasizes eradicating child poverty as a core strategy for advancing the rights of the girl child.

- In 2021, the poverty rate for the overall population increased, with women and girls experiencing a more significant increase.<sup>4</sup>

- Single-mother households face higher poverty rates at 34%, compared to 6% for married-couple households.<sup>5</sup>
- 1 in 3 households led by single moms experienced food insecurity in 2023, compared to 1 in 4 households led by single dads.<sup>6</sup>

Despite federal programs like the expanded Child Tax Credit temporarily reducing child poverty to a historic low in 2021, the expansion was temporary and left out marginalized groups, with poverty rates rising again in 2022.<sup>7</sup>

## Protection Against Violence

The Beijing Platform advocates for the elimination of violence against girls, including trafficking, sexual exploitation, and domestic abuse. While some progress has been made, violence remains a significant concern.

- According to the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network, girls from age 16-19 are four times more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault, compared to the general population, and 82% of all victims under 18 are women.<sup>8</sup>
- For every 10 victims of human trafficking identified globally, five are adult women and two are young girls.<sup>9</sup>

Efforts such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization in 2022 have increased funding for protective services but lack sufficient implementation metrics.<sup>10</sup>

## Recommendations for Better Gender Data

While some progress has been made in tracking issues affecting the girl child, gaps in data collection hinder comprehensive analysis and targeted action. Key recommendations include:

1. Establish gender-disaggregated data collection across education, health and violence metrics.
2. Increase funding for longitudinal studies on the impacts of federal programs, such as the Child Tax Credit and VAWA.
3. Prioritize intersectional analysis to address disparities by race, ethnicity, income and geography.

Improved data collection and reporting will enable policymakers to design more effective interventions, ensuring the US advances the Beijing Platform's objectives for the girl child.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women (2020). *Beijing Platform for Action*.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Trust (2024). *Why STEM Equity Must Address the Experiences of Women of Color*.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2020). *High school graduation rates for girls*.

<sup>4</sup> National Women's Law Center (2022). *National Snapshot: Poverty Among Women & Families in 2022*.

<sup>5</sup> The Hill (2022). *America's single-parent families*.

<sup>6</sup> Feeding America (2023). *Facts about child hunger*.

<sup>7</sup> Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy (2022). *Children Left Behind by the Child Tax Credit in 2022*.

<sup>8</sup> Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (2023). *RAINN Children and Teens: Statistics*.

<sup>9</sup> UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2021). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

<sup>10</sup> US Department of Justice (2023). *The 2022 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization*.