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**THE CONDITION OF THE  
GIRL CHILD WORLDWIDE**

9th Edition - 2020  
by Terre des Hommes

**indifes** 

 Terre des hommes  
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](http://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 76 countries with 945 projects in favour of children.**

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# PRELIMINARY

# REMARKS



Photo: Alessandro Grassani

This year's **Indifesa** dossier, *The condition of the girl child worldwide*, by Terre des Hommes (whom I thank), once again gives us an important insight into crucial issues concerning the future of our communities, with a very close look at what is happening in our country. There are often rather alarming figures, behind which lie the faces and stories of girls who are asking everyone for a renewed commitment. They confirm that today - even more so than yesterday – is the time to be making brave choices, so that each one of them has the possibility to grow up and build a future that fulfils their dreams.

This year's report is even more significant because the numbers also reflect the effects of the last few months' health crisis on us. Covid-19 has exposed all our weaknesses, intensified inequalities, including gender, and made it very clear that we must urgently invest in education, prevention and awareness. The lockdown signified the temporary closure of social areas which are absolutely vital for the next generations, thereby increasing their exposure to issues such as sexual violence, cyberbullying and pornography.

This is why I relaunched the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence within the Department for Family Policy, giving it a new purpose that it did not have previously. We have specified a way forward by approving the "Family Act" as the first act of the relaunch. This is the first organic reform of family policies in the country, with a strong investment in education, female empowerment and the autonomy of young people. At the heart of this lies the care of young children.

Following the work carried out by our country during lockdown for the protection of young children, Europe has chosen Italy to develop one of the pilot projects to combat inequalities and child poverty. Our country will be the first laboratory in the structuring of Child Guarantee, the European programme with investments targeted at children's policies. This is an opportunity to put into practice the invaluable and tireless work carried out by the voluntary and non-profit sectors towards education, that can be considered as everyone's heritage, to be preserved and valued.

This is the challenge we face: renewing and strengthening our commitment in order to tackle the disparities that appear right from the earliest years of our life. We will only be able to overcome this challenge together.

**Elena Bonetti**

*Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities*



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Photo: Anna Maria Bruni

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# INTRODUCTION

This year's "indifesa" Dossier cannot help but address the global consequences of the pandemic. With almost all countries imposing lockdowns of varying intensities, schools and health centres have closed, workshops, seminars or awareness sessions have been impossible to organise, and millions of girls and young women confined to isolation. Nowadays, there is already a worrying rise in abuse, forced marriages, school dropouts, cyberbullying, online sexual violence and female genital mutilation.

This report offers a significant insight into these realities, not to be alarmist, but to try and trigger a strong, coherent and innovative response from institutions and society (as has consistently been our aim in recent years). We wanted to share the story of 15-year-old Winfrida, a member of the Kuria ethnic group in Tanzania. During lockdown, her aunt, who was given custody of her after the death of her parents, gave her some terrible news: "We are planning to have you cut". Although not the first time her aunt had said this, this time the words were followed by actual arrangements. Fortunately, Winfrida and 500 other girls and young women in the same situation were saved by the Stop Female Genital Mutilation Association team, supported by Terre des Hommes.

Winfrida's story, together with the accounts of Rahaf, Zeina, Nandhini, Noor, Isra, Jamie, Rinal, Yasmine, Federica and Doumouh, and boys such as Sam Mzenda (engaged in a campaign against the stigmatisation of the female menstrual period) enrich the "indifesa" Dossier, which has never been so full of voices, experiences and collaborations. It is a tangible sign of maturity, that during the 9-year campaign it has managed to involve and encourage action from a vast number of institutions, local authorities, associations, foundations, students, ambassadors, companies, media and citizens. This work is also represented by the significantly longer edition this year, to tell such a wealth of testimonies.

As usual, however, the heart of this dossier is the data. The data reveals both positive and negative statistics. On one hand, it shows the great progress made in combating early marriages and pregnancies, female genital mutilation and the improved school participation by girls. On the other hand, it shows the persistent inequality in job opportunities, in political representation and in wages. There has also been an increase, even in unexpected places, of selective abortions (it is estimated that 142 million women are missing from the statistics), gender-based violence and online discrimination or pornography which, in Italy alone, has seen a 333% increase over the past 10 years.

Above all, there is a serious risk that the work done by governments, activists and civil organisations in recent years will be destroyed by the effects of COVID-19. Terre des Hommes will undoubtedly continue to do its part: collecting data, documenting, strengthening networks, building projects and, most importantly, giving a voice to girls and boys to help create a world where, finally, everyone is equal.

**Donatella Vergari**

*President of Terre des Hommes Italy*



# CHAPTER 1

# INFANTICIDE

# AND SELECTIVE ABORTION

Being born a woman is still a disgrace in many countries across the world, and when faced with news that an unborn child will be female, the decision to make can hang heavily. Added to this is the fact that it is difficult to quantify the data relating to female infanticide and selective abortions, except when there is a significant disproportion between the birth rates of boys and girls in societies. In fact, how is it possible to be sure that sex selection practices are present and active in a given country?

Gender-based sex selection can be measured using the birth gender ratio, in other words a comparison between the number of boys and girls born during a given period. Biologically, the average breakdown of gender at birth can vary from 102-106 males for every 100 females. If many more boys than girls are born then this is a sign that sex selection is taking place.

For example, while in 2010 we were short by 126 million women and girls due to excess female mortality and prenatal sex selection, today we are short by more than 142 million females<sup>1</sup>. The phenomenon has grown since the 1990s. Some areas of the world such as India have had up to 25% more male births than female births. The increase in sex selection is alarming as it reflects the persistent state of inferiority of women and girls, even in terms of numbers. The resulting gender imbalance also has a detrimental impact on societies. The increase in sexual violence and trafficking are, in fact, also linked to gender selection practices.

Sex selection - at least that on a wider scale and planned - is relatively recent, even if the practice is not new. For example, census data in India already shows an imbalance in the numbers of male and female children at the beginning of the twentieth century. These disparities almost always reflect a preference for male children.

In the past, the preference for a son would have meant new-born girls were abandoned or killed. However, since the early 1980s, ultrasound and other such technologies have enabled parents to detect the sex of a foetus during prenatal tests. Those who prefer male children could therefore schedule an abortion if they wanted to. This has accelerated the numerical imbalances between the sexes in some parts of the world. Today, gender-based sex selection can therefore take place before a pregnancy is planned, during pregnancy or, as in the past, after birth, with infanticide or by abandoning the baby. Technology has simply added one more tool for sex selection, but it is not the root cause of the problem. The availability of these technologies in places where having a male child is not important does not lead to choosing a child based on their gender.

Rather, the practice reflects discriminatory socio-economic traditions, such as the fact that only sons can inherit property and that only they should take care of elderly parents, celebrate funeral rites, or carry the family surname. Meanwhile, daughters can be considered a burden, particularly if a substantial dowry is needed to get married. Women who give birth exclusively to female daughters can therefore be rejected, divorced, and relegated to the margins of society.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_PUB\\_2020\\_EN\\_State\\_of\\_World\\_Population.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_PUB_2020_EN_State_of_World_Population.pdf)



In China and India, for example, men who would like to get married and who may not be able to do so, resort to “whirlwind marriages” with “cross-border brides”, that is, women and girls who migrate or who are trafficked into areas where there are fewer women than men. These women may not be able to speak the local language and may be under severe pressure from men to give birth only to male children.

According to the data<sup>2</sup> shared by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), based on the world censuses that took place between 2009-2014, the countries with the highest rate of gender disparity at birth (ratio of number of males born per 100 born females) are China, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, India, Singapore and Vietnam<sup>3</sup>.

On this subject, the World Health Organization<sup>4</sup> together with OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women, developed and circulated the first United Nations political declaration in 2011, which was included in the report, “*Preventing Gender-*

*biased Sex Selection*”. This document clarifies how states have “an obligation under human rights laws to respect and protect the rights of girls and women”. The 180 signatory states of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)’s action programme 1994 have agreed to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls, eradicate the causes leading to the preference for male children and counteract harmful and unethical practices around female infanticide and prenatal sex selection. At the same time, the states have an obligation to ensure that these practices are addressed without exposing women to the risk of death or serious injury, and without denying them access to safe abortion, in line with the laws of the individual states.

Now the UNFPA, with its latest report “*Against My Will*”,<sup>5</sup> is back to putting the spotlight on the problem globally and is accelerating efforts to develop programmes and policies that put an end to all forms of discrimination. There are some noteworthy results: in India collaborations with

2 <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

3 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/593158/summary>

4 <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/preventing-gender-biased-sex-selection>

5 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_PUB\\_2020\\_EN\\_State\\_of\\_World\\_Population.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_PUB_2020_EN_State_of_World_Population.pdf)







## THE NUMBER OF “MISSING WOMEN”

### HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS

Estimates, in millions

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Missing females*	61	66.4	72.2	79.3	87.6	96.7	105.9	116.4	125.6	136.2	142.6
Excess female deaths ■		1.79	1.86	1.9	1.97	1.93	1.71	1.78	1.66	1.65	1.71
Missing female births ●				0.37	0.76	1.2	1.36	1.55	1.71	1.69	1.5

\* “Missing females” are females from the population at given dates due to the cumulative effect of postnatal and prenatal sex selection in the past.

■ “Excess female deaths” are female deaths attributable to postnatal sex selection.

● “Missing female births” are female births prevented by gender-biased (prenatal) sex selection.

**Excess female deaths and missing female births refer to the preceding five-year period.**

Fonte: UNPFA “Against my will, State of the World Population”, 2020



the judiciary, the health sector, law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations, the media, researchers and community members - including religious organisations - have led to many good practices worth sharing. This happened for example in Tamil Nadu, where the practice of infanticide was widespread until 20 years ago, but thanks to constant monitoring by the Terre des Hommes Core Trust and assisting the families most at risk, it has been almost completely eradicated. The organisation’s programme has helped save the lives of 1,259 children, of which 1,175 are girls. In Asia and the Caucasus, governments are now much more inclined to collect data on gender inequality at birth.

## Disparities also found in the USA

A disturbing demographic trend has been recorded since 2011 by researcher Nicholas Eberstadt<sup>6</sup>, who observed that the birth gap between males and females in the United States is beginning to widen. According to Eberstadt, this trend, which peaked between 2014-2018, was determined by a difference in the ratio of male to female births - 122.8 males per 100 females (and thus rather different to the “natural” proportions expected), especially among Chinese and Indian mothers who were born abroad and had migrated to the United States. This

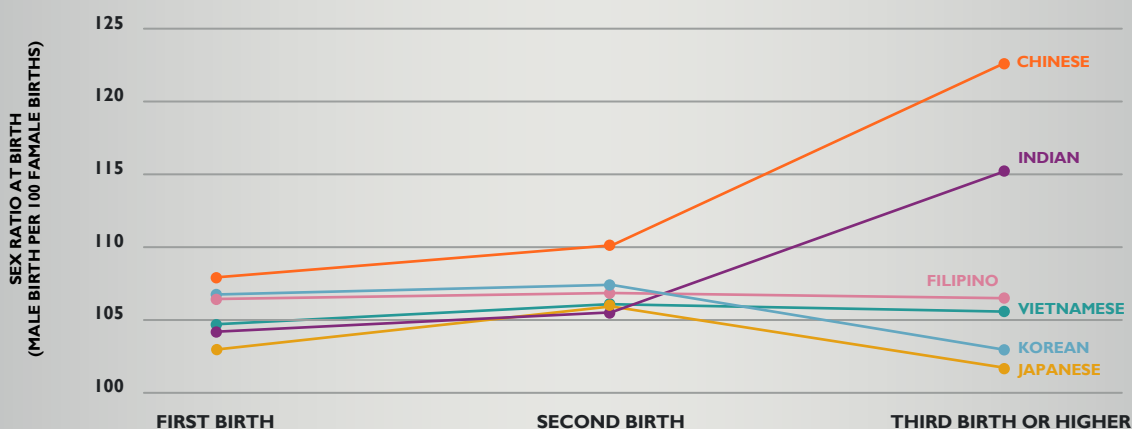
6 <https://ifstudies.org/blog/has-the-global-war-against-baby-girls-come-to-america>



## SEX RATIO AT BIRTH BY FOREIGN-BORN

indifes  
More Girls Born

### MOTHER'S ETHNICITY AND LIVE BIRTH ORDER IN USA



Source: Centers for Disease Control, USA - Natality Public Files 2014-2018

disparity in the number of boys and girls born also applies to the children of Hispanic mothers (from Mexico, Central or South America) and Asian mothers (typically Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean and Japanese), but it drops significantly for women of the same ethnic groups who were born in the United States. Eberstadt came to the conclusion that in some ethnic groups where there are forms of selective abortion or female infanticide, this practice tends to be “exported” to the United States, especially if it is the second or third pregnancy with a female foetus and the mother has already had female children. Part of the reasoning is due to the difficulties of the migration experience, which requires a huge effort and causes significant economic problems, at least at the beginning. According to the *American Institute for Family Studies*, the “global war against girls” has therefore also reached the United States of America. In 2020, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has added more reasons for concern. The latest UNFPA report<sup>7</sup> shows the birth gender divide between males and females has worsened,

especially in India and China, which together account for 95% of missing female births globally (one and a half million) caused by pre-natal selection, while the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Tunisia are approaching the natural balance between male and female populations at birth. Furthermore, the Coronavirus is likely to play a crucial role in family planning<sup>8</sup>: all around the world, it is more difficult for women to visit medical facilities such as clinics or hospitals for fear of contracting the virus, due to movement restrictions and/or economic difficulties. This has consequences for the supply, availability and use of contraceptive methods for women in at least 114 countries with medium to low economic sustainability, equal to 47 million women in total. A figure which, if the quarantine were to be extended by three more months, would increase by another 2 million women. At the same time, the number of unwanted pregnancies would increase with the pandemic and, in the countries affected, there could be a more noticeable number of selective abortions and above all female infanticide.

7 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_PUB\\_2020\\_EN\\_State\\_of\\_World\\_Population.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_PUB_2020_EN_State_of_World_Population.pdf)

8 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/impact-covid-19-pandemic-family-planning-and-ending-gender-based-violence-female>

# CHAPTER 2



# FEMALE GENITAL

# MUTILATION

Years of global actions to combat female genital mutilation (FGM) had a positive outcome at the start of 2020: the practice was declared illegal in Sudan, one of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa with a high percentage of women who have been infibulated at a very young age. In fact, according to the United Nations, 87% of Sudanese women between the ages of 14 and 49 have undergone genital mutilation.

This tribal practice is used in Sudan because it assures families a good reputation for their daughters, and it is an asset in order to contract economically and socially profitable marriages. Therefore, this means that from now on the practice can only be carried out illegally.

However, a great step forward has been made in the meantime, and the end of the Omar Bashir regime, which had rejected the bill countless times in Parliament, was instrumental. Women in Parliament put on a united front after his deposition in April 2019, accusing the previous government of sexist and discriminatory acts, such as prohibiting them from wearing trousers. The law was ratified on 22 April 2020. Anyone who is caught performing any type of female genital mutilation, either in clinic or outside a hospital setting, will be sentenced to three years in prison and will have to pay a fine.<sup>1</sup>

## A declining global trend

The decision made by Sudan follows a global trend which discourages these practices. If we take a

look at the numbers, the exact number of girls and women worldwide who have undergone genital mutilation remains unknown, but we know that at least 200 million girls and women have been mutilated in the 31 countries that provided this data. However, most girls and women living in those countries believe that mutilations should be stopped, and there has been a general decline in this practice over the past three decades<sup>2</sup>.

Obtained from large-scale representative surveys, the data available shows that the practice is concentrated in a group of countries stretching from the Atlantic coast to the Horn of Africa. These are in areas of the Middle East such as Iraq and Oman, and in some Asian countries such as Indonesia and the Maldives, to a varying extent. The practice is fairly common in Somalia, Guinea and Djibouti at around 90%, while it impacts no more than 1% of teenage girls in Cameroon, the Maldives and Uganda.

However, genital mutilation constitutes a violation of human rights that impacts girls and women around the world. It is also carried out in far-flung places such as Gambia, India and Malaysia, with large variations in the methods used and the size of the affected population groups. However, in this contexts the available evidence is derived from small-scale studies or personal accounts, so there is still no representative data. The practice is also present in Europe, Australia and North America, which in the last few decades have received migrants from countries where mutilations still take place.

1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52502489>

2 <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/>



Photo: Stefano Stranges

## The negative impact of the pandemic

One of the most well-known and shocking episodes was recorded in Egypt<sup>3</sup>. During lockdown, three underage sisters were taken to a compliant doctor by their father under the pretence of receiving a fictitious vaccine for COVID-19. After sedating them, the doctor performed surgical genital mutilation on all three. The case ended up in court with the Egyptian state as the plaintiff, since genital mutilation - while still practised widely and popular - has been illegal since 2006 and a crime since 2016.

The lawsuit was made possible thanks to the mother of the three girls, who filed for divorce from their father too. The doctor involved was fast-tracked to trial, with a concurrent guilty plea by the father of the girls who helped the doctor

in the operating room. In light of everything, the associations that fight for women's rights in Egypt consider this sentence as a milestone in Egyptian jurisprudence. Doctors who carry out the procedure can be sentenced to a maximum of seven years in prison, and anyone who encourages it is punishable by up to three years in prison. Despite this, up until this event nobody had ever been prosecuted, nor had the ban on these practices ever been properly enforced.

Regardless of the consequences and possible legal deterrents, this incidence is only the tip of a very large iceberg, especially in Northern and sub-Saharan Africa. Because, as reaffirmed by Natalia Kanem<sup>4</sup>, director of the United Nations Sexual and Reproductive Health Agency (UNFPA), "the Coronavirus pandemic is putting more and more girls at risk" of both early marriages and genital mutilation, and is disrupting global efforts to end

3 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/egyptian-girls-tricked-fgm-covid-19-vaccine-200605051857815.html>

4 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/covid-19-increases-child-marriage-fgm-risk-millions-200630070320006.html>

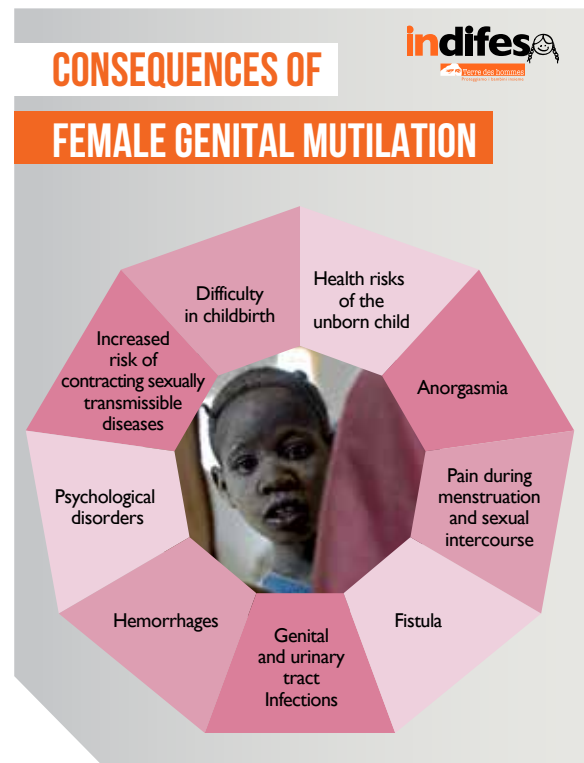


both practices. These estimates are a cause for concern: another 13 million girls could be forced to get married and 2 million may undergo FGM over the next decade. However, all the harmful practices of this kind, 19 in all - from breast straightening and virginity “tests” to force feeding and violent sexual initiation - could increase due to rising poverty and difficulties for women to inherit intangible and tangible assets and have economic autonomy.

Furthermore, in some countries such as Egypt and Sudan, the technology applied to medicine doesn't help. In these countries, genital mutilation is increasingly medicalised, thus undermining the efforts to end this painful practice that is extremely dangerous for the general, sexual and reproductive health of girls.

The warning by the United Nations is already a reality in Somalia. According to Plan International<sup>5</sup>, the shutdown of social and public activities in Somalia has led to a huge rise in female genital mutilation incidences, resulting in an increase in the number of circumcisers (literally working door-to-door) available to mutilate girls stuck at home during the pandemic. The problem was exacerbated by lockdown coinciding with Ramadan (the month of fasting for Muslims), traditionally an occasion for this tribal practice in these areas. The lockdown extension offered the perfect opportunity for girls to recover from the ritual, since it is a painful readjustment that can take many weeks.

Sadia Allin of Plan International attributes the explosion of the phenomenon, which occurred at a very delicate time when the campaign for fighting against the practice was having some success, to the economic recession too: “I have never seen professional circumcisers going from door-to-door, looking for girls. They came to mine too. It's the first time it has happened and I'm shocked”.



Genital mutilation is one of the most extreme manifestations of violence against girls and women, and it impacts their entire life. In fact, women subjected to mutilations suffer from urinary tract infections, cystitis, kidney and uterine infections, reproductive problems and pain during sex. Not to mention the psychological consequences.

UNFPA estimates that, in 2020, about 4.1 million women are at risk of genital mutilation. This would include 290,000 girls in Somalia, which is still the country with the highest rate of FGM in the world with about 98% of the local female population infibulated.

## Genital mutilation in Italy

In Italy, this phenomenon is linked to women coming from countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where the practice is widespread. Despite Italy being one of the first European countries to make female genital mutilation illegal with the 7/2006

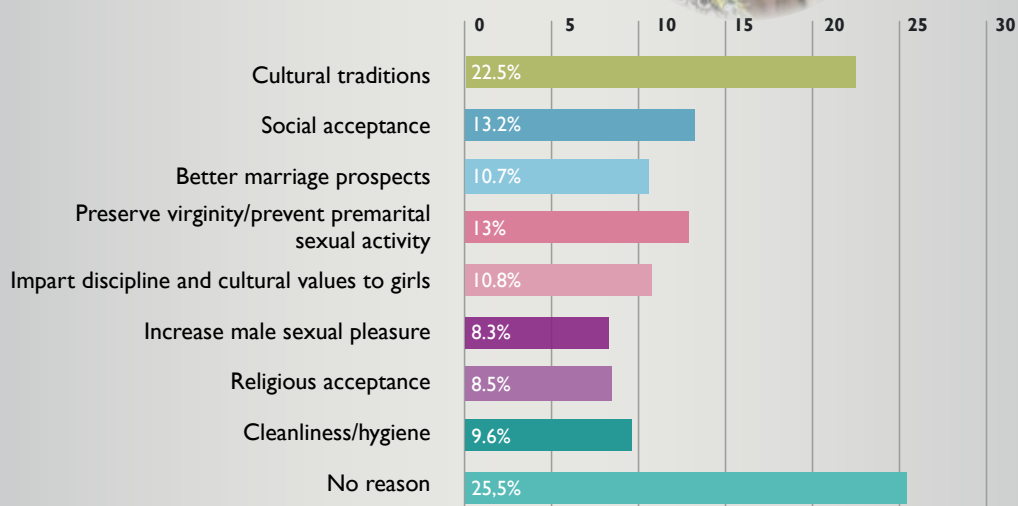
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/fgm-risk-in-somalia-heightened-by-coronavirus-crisis>



## FGM:

### WHY ARE THEY PERFORMED?

The survey involved 2,200 women who migrated to Italy from countries where they are practiced. It was possible to give more than one answer.



Source: FGM survey, University of Milano-Bicocca and Equal Opportunities Department, 2019

law, the practice is sometimes performed on minors born in Italy to migrant parents. This is possible because the girls are sent by relatives to their country of origin during the school holidays, where they undergo mutilation before returning to Italy.

According to the latest survey on the topic, which was carried out in 2019 by the University of Milano-Bicocca, financed by the Department of Equal Opportunities and presented by Patrizia Farina (professor of Demographics at the aforementioned university), in Italy there could be 87,600 victims of female genital mutilation, including 7,600 minors. The proportion of mutilated women exceeds 80% for Malian, Somali, Sudanese and Burkinabé women. No more than

30% of women from other countries are affected. In all cases, it has been observed that in comparing adults and minors there has been a substantial reduction among the latter, corroborating what is happening in their home countries too<sup>6</sup>. In general, the trend over time follows that of their countries of origin, where “younger generations are mutilated less,” says Patrizia Farina<sup>7</sup>.

The study also carried out a survey to find out the opinion of female immigrants from countries with a high prevalence of FGM. In total, only 9% are in favour of mutilations, and of these, 97% have undergone mutilation. A comforting statistic is the proportion of those actively committed to the conflict in Italy and/or their own country. A quarter of the interviewees do not believe in

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.neodemos.info/articoli/le-mutilazioni-genitali-femminili-in-italia-un-aggiornamento/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dire.it/01-07-2020/480037-in-italia-85-90mila-donne-con-mutilazioni-genitali-femminili-di-cui-5-7mila-minori/>



the practice and accordingly do not intend to mutilate their daughters. On the other hand, it is regrettable that quite a few women do not oppose the practice, promoting a principle of free choice that in reality takes resources away from the opposition movement which is very active in Italy and the rest of the world. “Girls are not at zero risk,” warns Farina.

Full support for FGM, while no higher than 13% in the 2019 evaluation, was expressed by women from countries with a high prevalence of the practice: Burkinabé, Egyptian and Nigerian women attest that the identity aspect of the practice

remains important to them. The Somali (more than 55% of the active instances in the fight against the practice) and Ethiopian groups are exceptions, since compared to a relatively high proportion in favour of FGM (12.3%), they also have high levels of activism against the practice (55%).

In this context, a determining factor for female empowerment is the role played by education. “86% of female graduates would not do it, while 60% of the poorly educated would not do it,” says Patrizia Farina.

### Clinics for foreigners in Kenya

Italian scholars and doctors have reported that the phenomenon of seasonal migration to have various forms of genital mutilation carried out on their daughters has actually resulted in established local businesses in the countries of origin of people who have migrated to Europe or the Americas. In Kenya, the Halima Hirsi clinic has become very well known in the area of the city known as “Little Mogadishu”. It is an anonymous place without any signage, but every year hundreds of Somali families go on a “pilgrimage” there to practice “cutting” on their daughters, at a cost of \$150 per procedure. There are those who come from Sweden, some from Colorado and some from England. The clinic can, on average, have a good thirty clients per week<sup>8</sup>.

In Kenya, female genital mutilation has been illegal and prohibited since 2011, punishable with penalties including three or more years in prison and fines of up to two thousand dollars. However, this doesn’t halt illegal performance of the practice, especially by families of emigrants who, through this “cut”, are trying to mend the diminishing relationship with their native community.

8 <https://terredeshommes.it/mutilazioni-genitali-vittime-non-riconosciute/>





## WINFRIDA ESCAPES FROM FGM DURING LOCKDOWN

“When I got home after my school closed due to COVID-19, my aunt said, “We are planning on getting you cut”. I felt like dying. After that, she didn’t mention it again for a few days, so I thought she had postponed the plans. I truly thought there was no further danger to me in my home. I did not suspect that they were secretly continuing with the preparations. Then, on Thursday afternoon, Dora and Ashura suddenly came to my house and took me to the Masanga refuge. It was all so quick”.

Winfrida (15 years old) was taken to the ATFGM (Association for the Termination of Female Genital Mutilation) rescue centre in Tanzania, a partner of Terre des Hommes Netherlands, by Dora and Ashura, the association’s lawyer and social worker respectively. They took action following a tip-off from an informant they collaborate with from the community. The anti-FGM volunteer had heard that Winfrida was to be mutilated at dawn on the morning of Friday 8th May. Dora and Ashura didn’t find Winfrida at home when they arrived on Thursday afternoon. Fortunately, the girl’s brother Stephen was at home and knew where she was. He brought them to the girl and she was saved.

Winfrida had been at home for nearly eight weeks after the Tanzanian government had closed all schools, following the confirmation of the first case of COVID-19 in the country. She normally attended Tabora Girls Secondary School, a public school in central Tanzania about 600 kilometres from her home. It took her a whole day of travelling to return home after the school closed. She has lived with her aunt since her parents died years ago. The girl was born and raised in the Bwirege clan, the largest and most dominant clan of the Kuria community in the Tarime district of northern Tanzania. Winfrida was welcomed into ATFGM’s Masanga centre during the years when this clan practised female genital mutilation.

Winfrida is dealing well with what happened: “I was in Masanga for the first time when I was just 9 years old, during the time of my clan’s cutting season. I have been here a total of four times to be protected from FGM: in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019. I am happy to be at the refuge. I feel comfortable and safe, and I was happy to see the friends I met in previous stays at the centre”. Terre des Hommes and its local partners saved more than 500 Kuria girls from mutilations in 2019. An alternative ritual was celebrated with family members to commemorate the transition from childhood to adulthood, in which family members signed a document committing themselves not to mutilate their daughters anymore.

# CHAPTER 3



# GIRLS AND ACCESS

## TO EDUCATION

The spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of the security measures adopted by governments to contain the infection, such as lockdown, quarantine and the closure of all kinds of activities, have brought access to education to a *complete* halt, particularly in developing countries and among the most disadvantaged groups of industrialised populations and those in the countryside, seriously jeopardising girls' right to education.

UNESCO<sup>1</sup> (United Nations Agency for Education, Science and Culture) estimated that at the end of March 2020 about 743 million girls and boys were unable to go to school due to *lockdowns*, and of these, 111 million live in less developed countries, "where going to school even under normal conditions is already a challenge". In Mali, Niger and South Sudan (three countries with the lowest enrolment rates and completion of basic education among girls), school closures have meant over four million girls will have permanently ended their studies. Over 11 million girls - from pre-primary to tertiary education - may not return to school in 2020 and maybe nevermore.<sup>2</sup>

Even before the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, the situation was by no means encouraging in many vulnerable countries, and 130 million girls (aged 6 to 17) were already

being denied the right to education. A recent Save the Children report<sup>3</sup>, using a vulnerability index, calculates the risk that children in many middle and low income countries face of not returning to school after the closure caused by the pandemic. The index takes into account the pre-pandemic school dropout rate, gender and income inequalities among children leaving school and the number of years of school attendance. The analysis of this index highlights that in 12 countries - Niger, Mali, Chad, Liberia, Afghanistan, Guinea, Mauritania, Yemen, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Ivory Coast - the risk of an increase in leaving school early is extremely high. In a further 28 other countries, the risk is high or moderate. To counter this phenomenon, national governments and international agencies need to increase education funding, especially for girls.

If priority is not given to the needs of teenage girls - finding adequate solutions regarding education - there is a risk of jeopardising the progress achieved in the last 20 years that were spent promoting the education and empowerment of girls. In the Global South, where limited social protection measures are in place, the serious economic crisis caused by the pandemic has already led to a dangerous fallout: families are finding themselves even more impoverished and may consider the education

1 <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest>

2 <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-unesco-and-partners-education-launch-global-campaign-keep-girls-picture>

3 Save the Children, Save our Education, July 2020 <https://www.savethechildren.net/save-our-education-report/>



## THE 12 COUNTRIES “AT EXTREME RISK”

### OF INCREASED SCHOOL DROPOUTS



Country	out-of-school rate	proportion of the poorest children who are out of school	proportion of girl out of school	learning adjusted years of schooling (average per child)
Niger	63%	77%	68%	2.61
Mali	53%	78%	56%	2.74
Chad	49%	57%	55%	2.64
Liberia	42%	62%	43%	2.34
Afghanistan	42%	49%	55%	4.87
Guinea	47%	73%	55%	4.54
Mauritania	45%	63%	44%	3.42
Yemen	28%	49%	35%	4.13
Nigeria	38%	74%	40%	4.25
Pakistan	38%	66%	44%	4.78
Senegal	44%	65%	44%	4.78
Ivory Coast	33%	49%	38%	4.21

Source: Save the Children, 2020

of their daughters as an unnecessary cost that they cannot afford. As such, early marriage, during the period of adolescence and puberty, may be considered more economically viable.

### Distance learning: refugee girls are particularly disadvantaged

In Europe and the United States, educational institutes reacted to school closures by setting up more or less complex online systems to enable them to carry out distance learning. Internet connections, tablets, personal computers, e-mails and virtual classrooms

have replaced desks and chairs. This is a temporary solution that cannot be implemented everywhere, due to the “digital divide”. In fact, in less developed countries, 70% of young people cannot access the internet, while the “gender gap” in internet access -- which penalises the female students - is 17 percentage points<sup>4</sup>. “Girls, women and other marginalised groups have a less chance of accessing these technologies. Now that the Coronavirus epidemic has changed so many aspects of our daily lives, this inability to connect has become even more significant. Without access to education *online*, girls risk a dangerous level of exclusion,” comments Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, executive director of UN Women.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-international-day-of-girls-in-ict>



Photo: Bruno Neri

Even more at risk are girls who live in refugee camps and girls displaced in their own country: school closures would have a more devastating impact on them, because they are already forced to live in disadvantaged conditions imposed by their status. Indeed, it is estimated that refugee girls who attend secondary school have only half the chances of continuing the post-school academic path compared to their male peers, which would guarantee them a better future.

## **Ebola, a precedent to study**

As UNESCO points out<sup>5</sup>, based on an observation of parts of the world where another quite similar pandemic, Ebola, developed, at the peak of the epidemic about 5 million children were affected by school closures in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The closure of schools increased the

vulnerability of girls and boys, exposing them to greater risks of suffering physical and sexual violence from both peers and adults. At the same time, many girls from the poorest social strata have been forced into prostitution to help support their families. “In some communities in Sierra Leone, teenage pregnancies increased by 65% during the Ebola crisis,” says UNESCO. Without the safe environment of schools, girls have become even easier “prey”.

## **The importance of preschool education**

School education is very important and needs to be guaranteed both during and after the pandemic, but the same also applies to preschool education. Attending kindergarten, and even pre-school, should still be guaranteed and encouraged, because attending a nursery supports children’s

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<sup>5</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest>

cognitive and non-cognitive development<sup>6</sup>. Most international studies on *gender gap* have shown that attending nursery school has a particularly beneficial impact on the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children from the most disadvantaged social classes, since they receive higher quality stimuli than they would receive from the family. It would also appear that, on average, the related psychological effects are more positive (and more often statistically significant) for males.

To benefit girls, the offer must be high-quality, for example with more teachers per child, specific curricula and so on. Indeed, psychological literature highlights that at the same age, on a cognitive level, girls have better language skills than boys and, on a non-cognitive level, they have a more mature socio-emotional development (greater self-control and sociability). This allows us to interpret the results of the studies cited: at two years of age, girls, who are generally more mature than boys, benefit more from personal relationships one on one, such as those they may have at home with their parents or with individual *caregivers*, if these people offer quality care. Based on these studies, attending a high-quality kindergarten can have a compensatory effect on gender inequality in favour of the girls, which will become evident in the primary school years. This compensatory effect has consequences over the long term - that is, at a young age and in adulthood - which could help some communities to reduce the socio-economic opportunity gap that still exists between males and females, such as in Italy.

## NEET, the deep gender gap in Italy

One of the most important decisions in each individual's life regards the transition from school or university to the working world. Traditionally, after getting hired, books and desks were



abandoned once and for all, and very few took advantage of their free time to study and develop their skills. In recent decades, however, across our continent this transition has become more blurred, because many are extending their period of studies while working simultaneously.

According to a recent Eurostat survey in 2019<sup>7</sup>, about 11.1% of young people aged between 15 and 19 in the European Union were studying and working at the same time.

This percentage rises to 18.7% among young people aged 20-24 and decreases for older age groups (14.3% for young people aged 25-29 and 10.6% for those aged 30-34 years). The NEET data (*Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training*) - or young people who do not study or work - provided by this study, highlight the gap

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lavoce.info/archives/63996/maschi-al-nido-cosi-si-riducono-le-differenze-di-genera/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_young\\_people\\_neither\\_in\\_employment\\_nor\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_training#NEET:\\_analysis\\_by\\_sex\\_and\\_age](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training#NEET:_analysis_by_sex_and_age) April 2020



Photo: Grazyna Makara

between men and women. Indeed, young women throughout Europe are more likely to be neither in employment nor still actively studying or training.

In 2019, in the European Union, over a fifth (20.8%) of young women aged 20-34 were NEET, while only 12.2% of their male peers fell into this category. In Italy they were 33.2% of young women and 22.5% of men.

There are several factors that explain this gender gap. On the one hand, it is due to forms of cultural heritage or social pressures, which tend to attribute the role of caring for the family and the home to women, allocating the role of “breadwinner” supporting the family only to men. We must also take into account all the hidden problems related to the labour market, where for example many employers prefer to recruit young men rather than young women, particularly in view of potential pregnancies. New mothers can face many difficulties trying to reintegrate when

they return to work after maternity leave. Finally, young women are more likely to get low-paid jobs, temporary jobs or, for the same roles, continue to earn less than men, even in seemingly favourable job markets in large European cities such as Paris, Berlin and London.

An analysis of three age groups of young people (20-24 years; 25-29 years; 30-34 years) highlights that the gender gap for NEET in the European Union increases according to age. Among people aged 20-24, NEET rates for young women were 1.8 percentage points higher than for young men. The gender gap widened to 9.3 percentage points among people aged 25-29 and peaked at 13.5 points for those aged 30-34. This may be at least partly related to the growing number of women who postpone childbirth, the low percentage of men who pause their careers to help raise children, and a series of difficulties encountered by women who wish to combine their professional careers with motherhood.

In Italy, 25.7% of young women aged 20-24 are NEET. This figure rises to 35.7% for young women between aged 25-29 and up to 37.3% for those aged 30-34. On the contrary, the number of NEET males decreases with increasing age: while from 20-24 years old they represent 24.8%, the figure falls to 24% for those 25-29 years old and drops further to 19% in the 30-34 age group.

Italy is one of the nine European countries with the most pronounced gender gap (at least 10 percentage points higher for young NEET women than for males). The other countries are Greece and Bulgaria (where the gender gap is between 10 and 11 percentage points); Estonia, Poland, Romania and Hungary (14-17 points); with the largest gap of 19.1 percentage points in Slovakia and 22.9 percentage points in the Czech Republic. The figure for Turkey is very high at 33.7 percentage points. Despite being outside the EU, it is measured by Eurostat.

The Leone Moressa Foundation (which processed

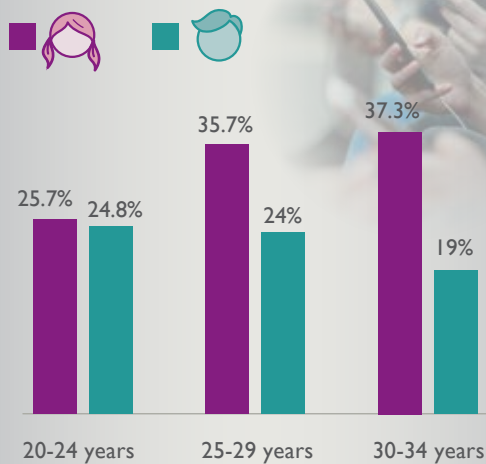


Photo: Stefano Stranges

## NEET\* IN ITALY



\*YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT NOR IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING



Source: Eurostat, 2019 data

the latest Eurostat data) reports<sup>8</sup> how the situation for young Italians appears to be unfavourable compared to that of their peers from other

European Union countries. Indeed, while Italy has made improvements in education, partly thanks to the “Europe 2020 strategy”, we continue to lag far behind, especially in terms of school dropouts and percentage of university graduates. We are 3 points above the European average for school dropouts and a whole 14 points below the average percentage of university graduates.

Young Italian males are the worst off, with graduate rates of 21.6% for males and 33.8% for females, while school dropout rates stand at 11.5% for girls and 15.4% for boys. Basically, girls study more, and more females graduate, but the percentage of those ending up in the NEET category still remains too high, especially for those aged 25+.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.neodemos.info/articoli/giovani-italiani-quanto-lontana-e-leuropa/>



# THE OBSTACLE COURSE TOWARDS EDUCATION

12-year-old girls Rahaf and Zeina are neighbours and classmates, as well as cousins. They belong to the Bedouin community of Zanba, which lies in a hilly area of East Jerusalem. Their community lives under constant threat of eviction by Israel, which would like to annex it to its territory.

The two girls attend the nearest school, the only one in the neighbouring village of Zayyem, which has been supported by Terre des Hommes Italia through quality inclusive education programmes since 2014. Before the school closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a member of their community would take Rahaf, Zeina and other Zanba children to school in a mini-van. If the driver was ill or unable to take them, everyone would miss a day of school, since the journey was too long to be covered on foot.

Asked about the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic in their lives, they both report having experienced a very difficult period and recall moments of fear and tension, as well as the anxiety they felt due to not being able to move around freely. Now (end of July 2020, ed.), in the midst of the second and even more consequential wave of the pandemic, talking about distance learning with the children of a community that is still not

connected to any electricity grid is disheartening. However, the community has a valuable resource: Samah, one of the very few women in the community to have finished compulsory education. She was recruited and trained by Terre des Hommes to offer basic educational support to the children in the community who cannot get to kindergarten school.

Samah now holds a vital role in the Zanba community, since she has a mobile phone with internet connection and, more importantly, she can help assist girls in their learning. Zeina speaks about the time spent with Samah in the classroom, the exercises they did on the blackboard, the stories they read together and talked about, the many drawings and creative activities, and the traditional Palestinian games such as Taq taq taqiye and building games.

Zeina and Rahaf have not had direct contact with their teachers and classmates for a long time. Zeina's dad has a mobile phone with internet connection, but he gets home at 8 PM every day and she says she is unable to follow the lessons her school has set up. Fortunately, however, Abeer, one of the support teachers recruited by Terre des Hommes, managed to get worksheets and exercises to her through Samah, who then helps her do the work. Both girls eagerly hope that the arrival of September will bring them good news of the reopening of the school and the beginning of a new school year in the company of their friends.



Photo: Tanya Habjouqa



CHAPTER 4

# EARLY AND FORCED

# MARRIAGES

There is no region in the world where child marriages do not, or have not, taken place, whether on a small or large scale. Under international agreements, child marriage is defined as a formal union involving at least one child. It is considered forced if the child is unable to fully consent to the marriage, partly due to the “important responsibilities” they take on, but also if their age means they have not yet reached “full maturity and the capacity to act”. Article 16 of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)<sup>1</sup> establishes that child betrothal and marriage “have no legal effect” and calls on governments to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation” to specify a minimum age for marriage. Following the Convention on the Rights of the Child, most nations established the minimum age for consent to marriage as 18 years old, although in some contexts the minimum age is 16 or 21 years old, sometimes depending on the gender of the individual.<sup>2</sup>

Child marriage takes place across different countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. Poverty, insecurity and limited access to quality education and good job opportunities mean that child marriage is considered the best option for girls or a way for parents to mitigate a family’s difficult economic circumstances. The prevailing patriarchal culture considers women, and therefore girls, as subordinate to males, relegating

them to stereotypical roles, such as that of wife and mother, at the service of her husband and her family.

Although there has been progress in recent decades (according to UNICEF<sup>3</sup>, between 2006 and 2018, child marriage rates fell from 25% to 21% of the total number of marriages stipulated), efforts must be intensified to eradicate this phenomenon which, above all, affects little girls and teenage girls. With the Fifth Sustainable Development Goal, the UN and most of the international community set 2030 as the deadline for achieving the elimination of the harmful practices (including FGM and child marriage) that hinder gender equality. However, achieving this goal is very difficult, if not impossible.

Nowadays, the problem is more widespread in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and in certain areas of Latin America and the Caribbean (Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua), but even some areas of Europe and the United States are not immune. According to recent data<sup>4</sup> from New Jersey, USA, up until 2019, couples were able to get married as young as 16 providing they had parental consent. Between 1995 and 2012, about 3,500 children got married. Most of them were girls aged 16 - 17 who married an adult aged 18+.

Until 1990, southern Asia had the highest rate (60%) of child marriages. These days (again

1 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>

2 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

3 <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

4 <http://apps.frontline.org/child-marriage-by-the-numbers/>



according to UNICEF data),<sup>5</sup> the highest child marriage rates are concentrated in western Africa (40%), followed by eastern and southern Africa (34%). In Latin America and the Caribbean, 1 in 4 girls are married or in an informal union before the age of 18, but in some areas of Latin America the rate is more than 1 in 3.

Despite a significant decline in child marriages in southern Asia (a 30% drop in 2018 alone), the region still boasts the largest number of child brides each year (4.1 million in 2017), while sub-Saharan Africa had 3.4 million in 2018. Other parts of the developing world have considerably lower rates: 18% in the Middle East and North Africa, and 7% in East Asia and the Pacific. In Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and in 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, at least 10% of young women marry before they reach the age of 15.

## COVID-19 and child marriage: the dangers of school closures

The alarm regarding the risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the escalation and increase of child marriages was sounded by international network *Girls not brides*, which Terre des Hommes is part of. “We already know there are clear links between lack of access to education and an increase in child marriage rates. Widespread school closures are having a direct, negative impact”, according to the latest report<sup>6</sup>.

This impact is particularly severe for poorer families who, for example, rely on school meals to feed their children. Bad news comes in particular from India, where the Indian government decided to close all schools in the country on 31 March 2020, leaving 320 million students - 158 million

5 <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

6 <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/educating-girls-during-covid-19/>

### EARLY MARRIAGES: NO REDUCTION

### IN MORE THAN ONE THIRD OF COUNTRIES

	Number of countries with a steady decline	Number of countries with an abrupt decrease	Number of countries with no change or an increase	total
Sub-Saharan Africa	7	9	12	28
South Asia	2	3	0	5
Latin America	3	1	6	10
Other	5	4	4	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Girls married as of 2018</b>	<b>16.2 million</b>	<b>41.6 million</b>	<b>13.1 million</b>	<b>70.9 million</b>

Note: trend for the years 1990-2018

Source: World Development Indicators, 2019, UNPFA





of whom are little girls and teenage girls - unable to attend lessons for months. “If parents don’t know when this pandemic will end, they won’t wait around for a solution to their daughters’ education. They will marry them off right away”, said one Indian activist from the *Girls not brides* network.

So, marriage becomes the most economically sustainable and socially “most secure” solution, providing girls with a status, “protection”, and a place to “work”.

## Awareness campaigns at risk

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that the COVID-19 epidemic is forcing NGOs and governments to suspend their campaigns against child marriage, at least for a year. In addition, the current world economic recession is having a large impact on poverty levels in low-income countries, where child marriage is prevalent. Therefore, it is unfortunately foreseeable that the near future will bring a turnaround, with an increase in the number of child brides. An agency document predicts “over 13 million child marriages between 2020 and 2030, which could have been avoided”<sup>7</sup>.

## American child brides: Sherry, Donna, and Sarah

“It was a bad experience for me,” Sherry Johnson describes her marriage aged eleven in the US state of Florida after being raped by a trusted member of her family’s religious community and becoming pregnant. After giving birth, her parents forced her to marry, to protect the rapist from investigation. Although this all happened 49 years ago, Sherry says she still feels the consequences every day. “Being abused at that age affects your growth in all



Photo: Grazyna Makara

senses. I was never able to go to college and get a degree. I work three jobs to survive”.

Child marriage still exists in the United States today. Since marriageable age is established by each state and not by the national government, laws on marriages involving children vary widely. Only four out of fifty states have outlawed child marriage without exceptions, according to the Tahirih Justice Center<sup>8</sup>, a non-governmental organisation fighting for regulatory change. Most states allow exceptions to marriage age limits in cases of pregnancy or if minors have parental consent, but ten states have no statutory age limits at all. So, according to US documentary series *Frontline*, between 2000 and 2015 more

7 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19\\_impact\\_brief\\_for\\_UNFPA\\_24\\_April\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf)

8 <https://www.tahirih.org/>

than 200,000 girls under the age of 18 got married in the United States<sup>9</sup>.

One of those girls was Donna Pollard. With her mother's permission, Donna, aged 16 at the time, got married to a 30-year-old man who worked in a mental health facility in Indiana, where her mother had had her hospitalised. Donna says the man was always violent during their marriage and that she was talked into marrying him, but had not been fully aware.

Parental consent also enabled Sara Tasneem's marriage, which was initially informal, from the age of 15, and then legal when she turned 16. Tasneem says she had no choice. "We grew up with very strict gender roles," she says speaking from her home in California. "When boys started showing interest in me, my father rushed to get me married. I was told that I would have to get married immediately because sex outside of marriage is prohibited.

I was introduced to a man in the morning and forced to marry him that same night." Sara's husband was 28 years old. "It was a very dominant, violent relationship," she says. "I got pregnant immediately and got married legally in Reno, Nevada, where the administrative authorities only requested a consent form signed by my father."

At the moment, many state legislatures have increased marriageable age to 17 years old or have submitted requests to the juvenile courts, which no longer blindly grant permission with parental consent alone, but also question the minors contracting marriage.

9 <http://apps.frontline.org/child-marriage-by-the-numbers/>

## NANDHINI FROM CHILD BRIDE TO ACTIVIST AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGES

"Do what your aunt says and don't be ungrateful!" Nandhini's friends had no doubts - if her aunt had decided that she should get married, she could not object, even though she was only 14 and the husband they wanted her to have was 28. Her aunt and uncle were Nandhini's only family, following her mother's death and her father's departure with his new wife for Chennai, formerly Madras. Since then he had lost interest in her and her sister, who had gone to live in the home of their maternal aunt, with her husband and their children, all huddled together in a little two-roomed house. Her uncle was the only one to work in her new family and her sister had already got married very young, partly to avoid being a burden on the meagre family budget.

Nandhini was torn by guilt. If she objected to the arranged marriage, she would thus show herself to be completely ungrateful. She just wanted to continue studying, as she immediately explained to her aunt. A few days later she had to take an exam and her teacher expected a lot from her. She was also afraid of men - her father was often drunk and violent, especially with their mother. She had seen her bleed several times from those beatings.

So the day before her wedding, while she was locked in her room crying over the books that she would have to abandon shortly thereafter, she saw a leaflet that had been given to everyone at school. It was about the Childline 1098 telephone service, the toll-free number to report any child abuse, activated by Terre des Hommes in Tamil Nadu. While everyone was busy planning the wedding, Nandhini gathered all her courage, took her aunt's phone and called. On the other side of the wire, the operator tried to calm her down, asked for her home address, and assured her that in a couple of hours they would come to save her. Then Nandhini returned to the others. Nobody had noticed anything. She was very anxious



*The story of Nandhini is becoming a graphic novel. The project started from the collaboration of Terre des Hommes with IED Cagliari as part of a dissertation in Media Design by Irene Lai, Mattia Mura, Lorenzo Solina and Giulia Usai. The author of the illustration is Irene Lai.*

UNICEF estimates that India is the country with most child brides - at least 15.5 million. This is why after the end of the nightmare, Nandhini decided to tell her story in schools, to get girls to understand that we must oppose child marriages. Now, she is a bit of a star. The Tamil Nadu government wanted to acknowledge her courage, and the Prime Minister gave her a checkcheque for 1,200 euros. On 24 January 2019, National Girl Child Day, the Minister of Welfare for Women and Children invited her to Delhi to tell her story, and they named her a "Local Champion". She was even asked to go on TV to talk about herself with the famous actor Vijay Sethupathy on the programme "Namma Ooru Hero". Meanwhile, she continues to study and lives in Terre des Hommes' Alaigal II house in Tiruvannamalai.

and feared that nobody would come. At eight in the evening, they finished making her up for the ceremony and took her to the temple near the house where the groom's family was waiting for her. Shortly after, cars arrived with about twenty people, including some police officers. A relative of hers immediately hid her in a house, took off her jewellery and makeup and told her to shut up. "If the police ask you anything, say it's just a family function in the temple!" she said. But when she finally got out, she started screaming and begged them to save her from the forced marriage. The operators comforted her and took her to a Terre des Hommes refuge. The groom's family and Nandhini's aunt and uncle were reported. According to Indian law, the minimum age for contracting marriage is 18, without exception. Yet, 27% of girls get married earlier and 7% do so even before they turn 15.

In November 2019, Terre des Hommes invited her to Italy to tell her story at "Stand Up For Girls!", an event brought to life by a collaboration between 5x15 Italy and the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation, with support from the Municipality of Milan. Nandhini was accompanied by Maria Grazia Calandrone, poet and RAI presenter, who wrote and recited a moving verse about her story.



# CHAPTER 5



# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

## AND ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES

Elisenda is sitting at the edge of her hut. Her eyes are empty and she is holding her baby in her arms. She will soon have to go back to breastfeeding him. Although she is 15, almost 16, she cannot find the energy within herself to take care of the house, the child and her partner, who comes back late in the evenings after working at Managua market. Elisenda is one of nearly 13 million<sup>1</sup> girls under the age of 19 who become mothers every year, often encountering serious physical and mental health problems. Following pregnancy and childbirth, Elisenda has been suffering from severe anaemia, which weakens her a lot.

Most teenagers are not physically, emotionally, intellectually or financially ready to become mothers at such a young age. They are more likely to die from complications in pregnancy and childbirth than women aged 20 or older, and it is more likely that their babies will be stillborn or at risk of dying in the first month of life.

Child motherhood is a direct consequence of child marriages. In sub-Saharan Africa, an analysis of demographic and health data conducted in 34 countries by UNICEF<sup>2</sup> found that 96% of women aged 20 to 24 who married before the age of 18 had children.

Of these women, 56% gave birth within the first year of marriage and 28% had another baby less than 24 months after the first birth. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 86 percent of child brides gave birth before reaching the age of 20, compared with 34 percent of those who married after the age of majority. In India, 60%

of the girls who married before the age of 18 also gave birth before reaching the age of 18, and 79% gave birth before the age of 20. The World Health Organization reports that in 2018 almost 95% of births to adolescent girls took place in developing countries and, in these countries, about 90% of births to adolescents aged 15 to 19 occurred within marriage or in a stable relationship.

### A dangerous birth

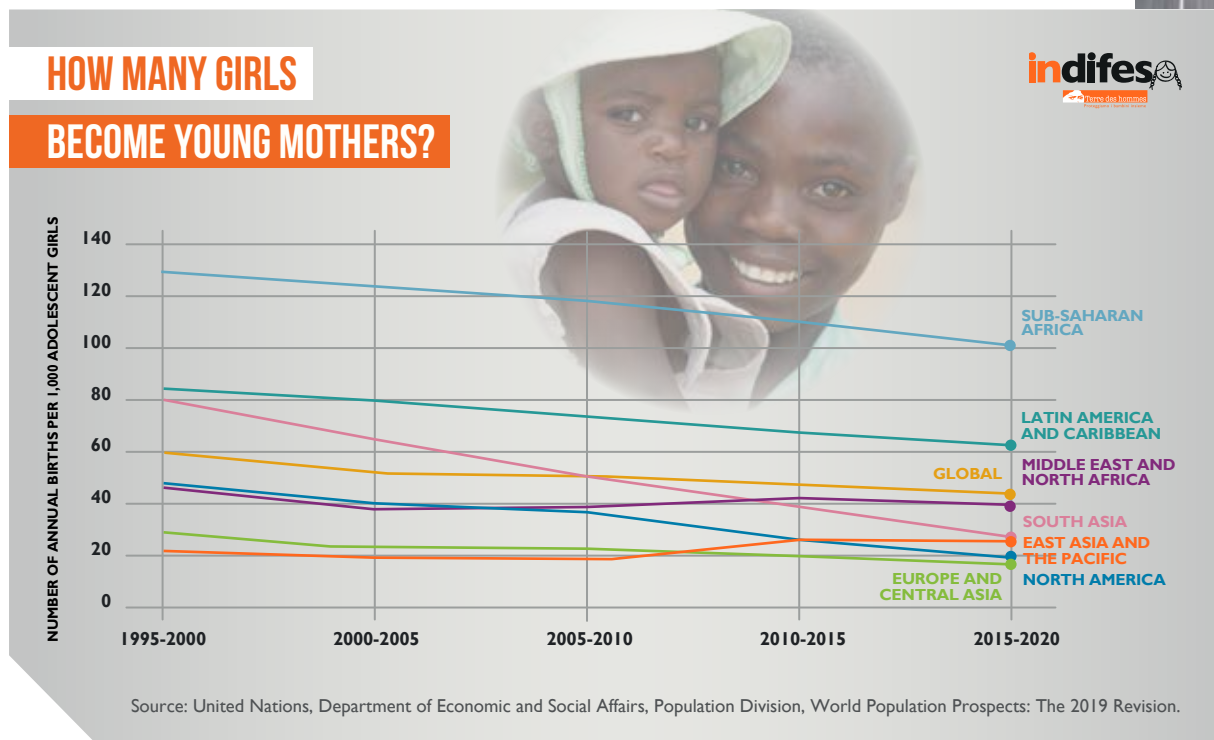
Becoming a mother too young can cost you your life. Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading cause of death for adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide<sup>3</sup>. The risks are about 28% higher for young mothers aged 15 to 19 than for those giving birth aged 20 to 24, although poverty and lack of access to health services also carry weight among the risk factors. The maternal mortality ratio (number of deaths per 100,000 live births) in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 was 504 for mothers aged 15 to 19, compared with 416 for mothers aged 20 to 24. Similarly, in Asia the numbers were 269 versus 201, and in Latin America 190 versus 164.

One of the biggest risks for girls who give birth too young is obstetric fistula, a condition in which a hole develops between the vagina and the bladder and/or rectum, making the woman incontinent. In 2019, it was estimated that between 2 and 3.5 million women in developing countries had obstetric fistulas, with 50,000-100,000 new cases every year. Obstructed labour, which can be resolved by caesarean section,

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

2 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_PUB\\_2020\\_EN\\_State\\_of\\_World\\_Population.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_PUB_2020_EN_State_of_World_Population.pdf), p.108

3 Ibid



causes 90% of obstetric fistulas in developing countries in natural births and is often linked to ‘pelvic immaturity’, i.e. the smaller size and diameter of the pelvic bone of young mothers and the smaller size of the pelvic opening, trapping the baby in the birth canal.

### The risks for the child

Numerous studies on the children of young mothers have found an increased likelihood of death during delivery or soon after, low birth weight and disease in the first 5 years of life. It is, however, difficult to separate this from other factors contributing to these outcomes, such as poor education, poor nutrition for mother and child, and poor access to health services.

A study into stunted growth (*stunting*) in South Asia and Africa found that mothers who gave birth before the age of 18 have children who are on average smaller in terms of height and weight. In Bangladesh and India, there is a 6% higher risk

of stunted children due to the young age of mothers, and a 10% higher risk in Burkina Faso and Mozambique<sup>4</sup>.

### Impact of COVID-19

The spread of the pandemic, leading to a rise in child marriages, is also increasing the risks to girls’ reproductive health.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa was a good litmus test: between 2014 and 2016, around 5 million children were affected by school closures in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone at the peak of the epidemic. At that time, several UNESCO studies highlighted how this phenomenon increased the vulnerability of girls and young women, exposing them to higher risks of physical and sexual violence from both peers and adults. At the same time, many girls from the poorest social strata were forced to marry young or to prostitute themselves to help support their families. ‘In some communities in Sierra Leone,

4 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_PUB\\_2020\\_EN\\_State\\_of\\_World\\_Population.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_PUB_2020_EN_State_of_World_Population.pdf)



Foto: Grzegorz Banaszak

teenage pregnancies increased by 65% during the Ebola crisis', UNESCO stated<sup>5</sup>.

Without the safe environment of schools, girls became even easier 'prey'. Added to this is the fact that the closure of services and the inability to leave the house during the Ebola epidemic prevented women and girls from accessing modern clinics and means of contraception. Thus, according to UNFPA estimates<sup>6</sup>, the coronavirus epidemic could translate into over 7 million unwanted pregnancies, if lockdown measures were prolonged for six months.

## Period poverty on the rise

According to UNICEF<sup>7</sup>, the pandemic is also having a significant impact on the ability of girls and women to adequately manage their menstruation.

About 1.8 billion girls and women menstruate each month, yet millions of them cannot manage their monthly periods in a dignified and healthy way. In normal times, *period poverty*<sup>8</sup> is caused by discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, poverty and a lack of basic services. Over the past few months - following the impact of the coronavirus and the lockdown measures adopted to reduce the spread of the virus - *period poverty* seems to have worsened further. An increasing number of girls and young women (both in the poorest countries and in more industrialised nations) have found themselves unable to purchase sanitary pads and tampons.

"I usually buy sanitary pads, but I haven't been paid since *lockdown* began. So, I'm having to use what I have available - old clothes." Chantal is 22 years old and is one of the many young Rwandan women who, since the entry into force of lockdown measures, can no longer afford to buy sanitary pads, as she explains in *The New Times*<sup>9</sup>. In Rwanda, the only way for many female students to be sure they could have real tampons during their period days was through a government programme that distributed them for free<sup>10</sup>. Although the country has removed VAT from these products, prices have remained unchanged and, in some cases, have even increased.

Research which has been ongoing and updated for eight years in an informal settlement in Nairobi,

5 <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest>

6 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19\\_impact\\_brief\\_for\\_UNFPA\\_24\\_April\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf)

7 <https://www.unicef.org/media/68371/file/Mitigating-the-impacts-of-COVID-19-on-menstrual-health-and-hygiene-Brief.pdf>

8 A phenomenon that describes the inability or difficulty of accessing essential products such as sanitary towels and tampons in order to manage one's monthly cycle in a dignified and healthy way, as well as the lack of sanitation

9 <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/how-girls-managed-period-poverty-during-covid-19-lockdown>

10 <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/192169>

the capital of Kenya<sup>11</sup>, found that the difficulty for girls and women in the area to manage their periods with dignity has increased with the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, as they are no longer able to buy sanitary pads.

This is why UNICEF<sup>12</sup> has called on governments to ensure that all girls have access to affordable sanitary towels and sanitation facilities with safe water during and after the pandemic. One of the first countries to launch this measure was New Zealand, which at the end of June 2020 allocated 2.6 million New Zealand dollars (just under 1.5 million euros) to distributing sanitary pads and sanitary products free of charge to female students in all the country's schools.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, "We know that nearly 95,000 adolescent girls up to aged 18 may have to stay at home during their periods due to not being able to afford period products. By making them freely available, we support these young people to continue learning at school".

UNICEF suggests governments work with development partners and non-governmental organisations to provide 'dignity kits'<sup>13</sup> to the most vulnerable girls and women.

## Sam Mzenda, period poverty activist

"The pandemic is a real problem, but we hope to get out of lockdown soon". Sam Mzenda, one of the most ardent young activists in the *Girls Not Brides* international network, is full of hope and never fails to point out that "A real man doesn't marry a girl. A real man marries a woman". Born in Zimbabwe, Sam Mzenda is one of the founders of the Tariro Youth Development Trust, an association created in 2015 to promote respect



for children's rights, with a focus on education and gender equality. In recent years, the Tariro Trust has worked hard to promote greater care for the reproductive health of girls in schools, cities and villages. "Here, menstruating girls cannot go to school on their period days. It is presented as a 'religious necessity' in Zimbabwe, especially by the evangelical Christian community. Through our activism, we want to show that religious motivations behind physiological issues are just a cover-up to maintain tribal traditions that no longer serve today's youth of Zimbabwe, male or female".

11 <https://theconversation.com/periods-in-a-pandemic-women-and-girls-in-low-income-settlements-need-more-support-139480>

12 <https://www.unicef.org/media/68371/file/Mitigating-the-impacts-of-COVID-19-on-menstrual-health-and-hygiene-Brief.pdf>

13 Packages including tampons, sanitary towels, soap, knickers, washing powder, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb and flashlight.

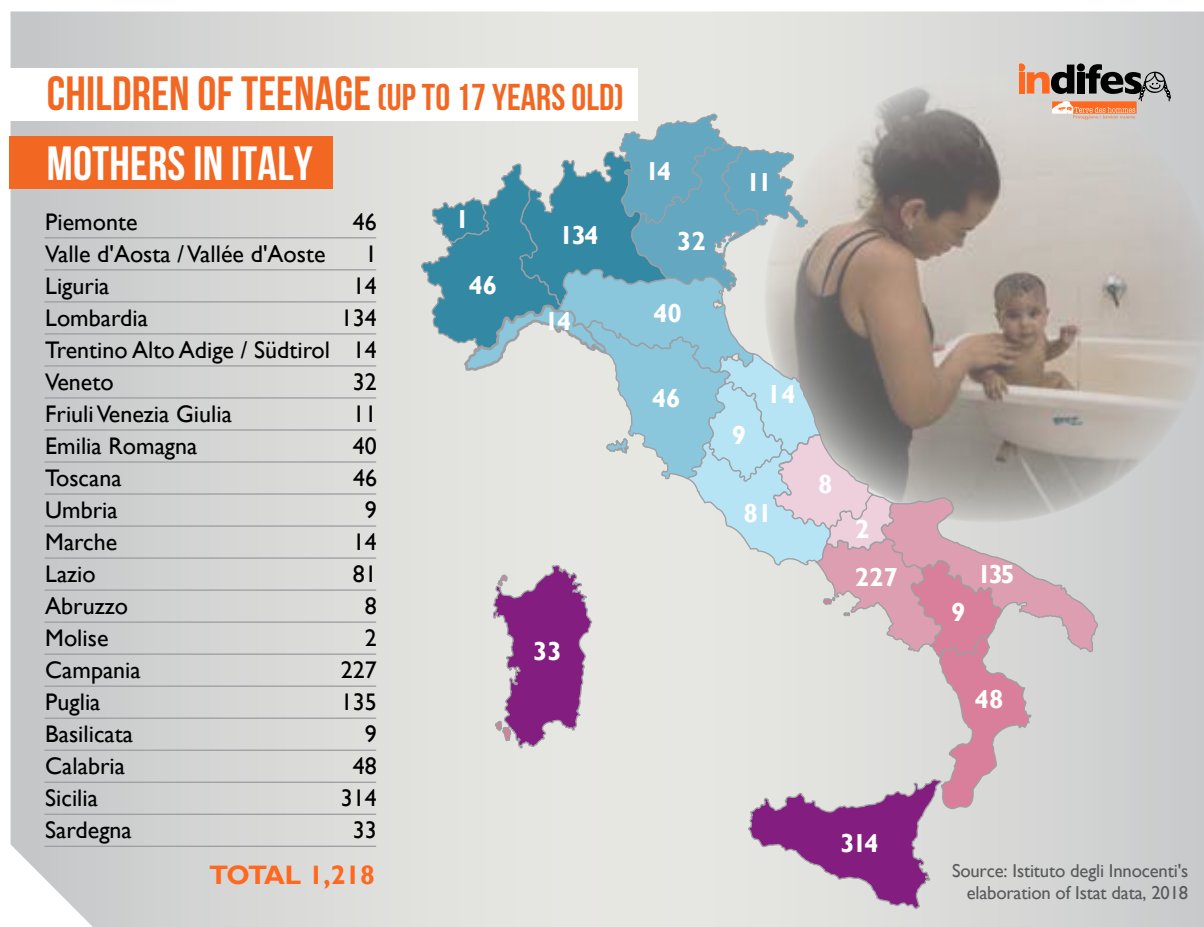


In July 2019, Zimbabwean activists twinned with Ugandan activists for the #EndMenstrualStigma campaign, organising a public event at Machiva Primary School in Masvingo Province, involving children aged 5 to 7, teachers and parents. During the event, menstrual hygiene was also discussed. The girls received medical and biological information on the subject and were given practical ways to manage blood flow in a hygienic and discreet way. “We also worked with boys, because they need to change their perception of women’s menstruation to reduce stigma and embarrassment. They need to help increase girls’ self-esteem and restore their dignity”, says Sam Mzenda proudly. In recent years, the Tariro Trust has donated sanitary pads to 180 girls for the entire school year. But this year is different and

there are many reasons for concern. “We haven’t been able to travel to meet young people. Schools are closed and we cannot go around villages or deliver packages with sanitary pads to girls, nor organise awareness courses. If these lockdown measures go on much longer, we risk nullifying years of patient and intense work”.

## Teen births in Italy are decreasing

According to ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) data processed by the Research and Monitoring Department of Childhood and Adolescence of the Istituto degli Innocenti, in 2018, 1,218 children were born in Italy to



adolescent mothers (172 less than in 2017) out of a total of 439,747 births. Most of the underage mothers in Italy were Italian nationals (994), compared to 224 of foreign origin. The region with the highest number of births from adolescent mothers was Sicily, with 314.

Campania followed with 227, then Puglia (135), Lombardy (134) and Lazio, with 81 births. According to ISTAT data,<sup>14</sup> the provinces with the most births from adolescent mothers were Naples (154), Catania (112), Palermo (71) and Rome (55).

Not all pregnancies are successful. For the year 2018, the Istituto degli Innocenti recorded 552 miscarriages in girls aged 15-19 and 5 miscarriages in girls up to the age of 14 years old. The previous year, these figures were 782 and 12 respectively. Once again, Sicily topped the list (122, of which

1 under 14), followed by Puglia (75), Lazio (60, of which 1 under 14) and Lombardy (34).

## The use of abortion

Many teenage pregnancies are unwanted, so it is not surprising that in 2018 there were 5,493 abortions for girls aged 15-19, and 143 for girls up to the age of 14. In 2017, these figures were 5,884 and 136 respectively.

Lombardy is the region that had the most (908 abortions in 2018, 24 of which were for girls under the age of 14), followed by Lazio (618 abortions, of which 14 for girls under the age of 14). This data probably also reflects the greater availability of such health services in these regions. The figures are also high for Campania (509, of which 20 under the age of 14 years), Puglia (491,

14 Data extracted on 29 Jul 2020 17:30 UTC (GMT) by I.Stat

# AN IMPORTANT SERVICE FOR ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

Being a teenage parent can be a real challenge, and not just from a health point of view. This is why centres such as the Service for Adolescent Parents (SAGA) at the ASST Santi Paolo e Carlo hospital in Milan offer vital services for citizens. Margherita Moioli, SAGA representative and a developmental age neurological and psychomotor therapist, explains that the number of adolescents cared for is growing year on year. In 2017, this figure was just 32% and by 2019 it had become the majority (55%).

Care involves both members of the couple, offering parental support as well as psychomotor and psychological support to gain awareness on how to deal with childbirth and raise the child. "Officially, only 40% of adolescent mothers claim they had wanted to get pregnant, but almost all admitted that they had often desired it. And this desire is often shared by their partners too", explains Moioli. "At least 50% considered terminating their pregnancy soon after discovering it, but most girls choose to continue it after a few days of reflection.

A small number consider abortion more seriously and then change their minds when it comes to the procedure. It is often the parents who ask for the pregnancy to be terminated and in some cases the daughters agree". Many teenage mothers have a problematic time at school and end up permanently discontinuing their studies. "It's very rare for adolescent mothers to continue studying after having the child.

They are often girls with undiagnosed learning disabilities or those who have been bullied at school and therefore don't want to



Photo: Claudia Bellante

go back, even though they often have a good IQ. After their child is born, most girls look for work because they are usually single and dependent on their parents". About half the girls that SAGA takes care of are foreigners, with a third coming from outside Milan or even outside the region.

"They are sent by facilities in their area since we are the regional reference service, but now we also receive consultation requests from other regions, as we also have specific expertise on child psychopathology through the Emergency Inpatient Unit." The Service has an academic collaboration with the Department of Psychology at the University of Milano-Bicocca.



of which 13 under the age of 14 years) and Sicily (467, of which 13 abortions for girls under the age of 14 years).

The latest report from the Italian Ministry of Health on the implementation of Law 194/78<sup>15</sup> showed the final data for 2018, the year in which the number of abortions decreased throughout all age groups, especially among adolescents. Among adolescents, the abortion rate was 2.4 in 1,000,

a figure lower than that of 2017, confirming a downward trend that began in 2004 (4.8 in 2005, 4.4 in 2012, 2.7 in 2017), with higher levels in central Italy.

As in previous years, there were fewer abortions among young Italian women compared to those recorded in other Western European countries and most industrialised countries. Whilst the data for 2019 and 2020 is pending, there are likely to be further drops on account of lockdown.

15 <http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/donna/dettaglioPubblicazioniDonna.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=2924>



Photo: Claudia Bellante





Photo: Grzegorz Banaszak

## BECOMING MOTHERS TOO SOON IN IRAQI REFUGEE CAMPS

Layla is 16 years old and lives in the Jeddah refugee camp, in Nineveh Governorate in Iraq, together with her 22-year-old husband. Her marriage was arranged two years ago by her parents, who feared their daughter may be subject to violence in the camp, where they were displaced due to the ongoing conflict. But this was just the beginning of a long chain of physical and psychological attacks made towards her, from both her husband and his family. Not even becoming pregnant improved the situation. In fact, the man has already declared he wants to take a second wife. This is putting additional pressure on Layla and her family, as the marriage was never registered, despite their insistence. Workers at Terre des Hommes have followed up on her case, firstly by offering psychological support to help her get through this difficult time. At our centre for children and families, Layla has been able to receive information about reproductive health, family planning and raising children. It was also suggested that she should avoid becoming pregnant again before the age of 18. An assistant accompanied her to antenatal appointments right up until the birth, which thankfully took place without any complications. Moreover, a lawyer followed up on the procedure for registering the marriage. While the problems with her husband have not been completely resolved, the son has been acknowledged and, in the event of a divorce, Layla has more tools at hand to assert her rights.

The story of Noor is even more dramatic. At just 14 years old, her grandmother forced her to marry a 20-year-old man. She too has experienced the traumatic effects of the war. Her parents both died in the battle of Mosul, after which she was left with her grandmother and sister and was displaced in a refugee camp in Jeddah. Just three months after the wedding, Noor became pregnant, but neither her husband nor her mother-in-law helped her at all. In fact, they continued to treat her so badly that she lost the baby. After our workers identified her case as highly vulnerable, Noor was taken in for a series of regular psychological support meetings as well as medical and informative visits on reproductive health and family planning, with the main aim of avoiding another premature pregnancy. Project workers also involved the husband and mother-in-law in the sessions, raising awareness about domestic violence and the rights of children and mothers. However, the family situation still seems to be largely compromised. Therefore, it was decided that it would be best to continue providing support for Noor until she no longer needs it.

# CHAPTER 6



# CLIMATE CHANGE

# AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Joint studies carried out by the United Nations and the World Bank<sup>1</sup> have revealed that climate change has a more severe impact on women than on men<sup>2</sup>. This is because 80% of the people already displaced by climate change are women and girls and their role as *caregivers* for the whole family makes them more vulnerable in the event of a flood or drought. The Paris Agreement of 2015<sup>3</sup> laid down specific provisions for the emancipation of women, recognising that they were disproportionately affected during these events. However, since then, not a lot has changed.

The environmental disasters of the last few decades demonstrate this. In central Africa, where 90% of Lake Chad has disappeared, indigenous nomadic groups are particularly at risk. As the lake's shoreline continues to recede, women have to walk much further to collect water. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, coordinator of the Association of Peul Women and Autochthonous Peoples of Chad (AFPAT), told the BBC<sup>4</sup> that "in the dry season, men go to cities, leaving women to take care of the community". Since the dry seasons are getting longer, women are working harder to feed their families without any support. "It requires a lot of hard work and they're becoming more vulnerable," says Ibrahim.

It is not only women in rural areas who are affected. Globally, women are more likely to experience poverty and have less socio-economic power than men. After Hurricane Katrina, which struck the US in 2005, African American women

were among the hardest hit by the Louisiana floods. And with the rising sea levels, low-altitude cities like New Orleans will be increasingly at risk. In New Orleans, before the hurricane, more than half of the city's poor families contained single mothers. The social network these women had managed to create for their survival was destroyed with the hurricane.

During natural disasters, there is often a lack of support for women. For example, the Louisiana Superdome, in which the evacuees were temporarily housed following Hurricane Katrina, did not have enough sanitary products for the girls and women housed there.

There is also another aspect linked to survival. An Oxfam report<sup>5</sup> revealed that in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India, male survivors of the 2004 tsunami far outnumbered women, by nearly 3 to 1. It was concluded that there were two main reasons for this unbalanced ratio: men are more likely to be able to swim (in many cultures, women do not learn how to swim), and in addition to this, women always lose precious evacuation time in trying to take care of children and older relatives.

## The gender gap within environmental organisations

The United Nations has underlined the need for gender-sensitive responses when it comes to the impact of climate change. However, the average representation of women in national and global bodies negotiating about the climate is less than

1 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/11/news-un-women-and-the-world-bank-unveil-new-data-analysis-on-women-and-poverty>

2 <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43294221>

3 [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/paris\\_it](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/paris_it)

4 <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43294221>

5 <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/115038/bn-tsunami-impact-on-women-250305-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



30%, according to the studies carried out by the Green Diversity Initiative in 2014<sup>6</sup> and 2018<sup>7</sup>, which also highlighted a significant gap regarding gender representation in NGOs dedicated to climate.

As a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), environmental scientist Diana Liverman stated, “Women are often not involved in decisions regarding responses to climate change, so the money ends up going to men rather than to women. Women make up half of the world’s population. It’s vital that they participate in all important decisions<sup>8</sup>”.

The new generation of “Fridays for Future” girls have accepted this appeal to the letter. Dana Fisher, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, has studied environmental movements for decades and is convinced that the huge demonstrations of 2019 have made a difference: “We have a new wave of battles in society that are being led by women. And the climate movement is driving this generational shift,” she told the *Washington Post*<sup>9</sup>. A statistical survey conducted by Fisher on the #Fridaysforfuture demonstration, which took place in Washington in September 2019, confirms it: 68% of the organisers and 58% of the participants were girls. Not only that: African Americans accounted for more than a third of the kids who took to the streets in Washington, a proportion that roughly corresponds to the demographics of the United States. The participation and sensitivity shown by women and minorities (of gender or ethnicity) with regards to this phenomenon is “incontestable”.

Another survey conducted by the Washington

Post in collaboration with the Kaiser Family Foundation further confirms this.<sup>10</sup> Girls proved to be more sensitive and attentive to the issue than their male peers: climate change was considered “extremely important” for 46% of the girls interviewed, compared to 23% of boys. There is also a particularly strong consideration of the climate amongst minorities: at least twice as many black and Hispanic teens have participated in “climate strikes” than their white peers. And even among minorities, there are more girls than boys. Although Greta Thunberg is an inspiration and the most famous figure regarding global climate protests, she is only the tip of an all-female “green” iceberg.

## Young activists for a greener future

Isra Hirsi is just 17 years old and is the executive director of the “Youth Climate Strike” group. Incidentally, she is also the daughter of Ilhan Omar, the American Democratic Congresswoman of Somali origin. However, this affiliation does not intimidate her: “The battle against climate change is a problem for my generation and must be fought immediately”<sup>11</sup>. Isra participated in her first protest when she was only six years old. She then dedicated herself to the “Black Lives Matter” movement and to raising awareness for the control of the sale and distribution of weapons in the United States. For two years now, she has focused her attention on the topic of climate change. By attending the school’s environmentalist club, she developed her commitment within this field, becoming aware of the fact that black communities are particularly vulnerable to the

6 <https://www.diversegreen.org/the-challenge/>

7 [https://www.diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGOs\\_30Jan2018.pdf](https://www.diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGOs_30Jan2018.pdf)

8 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3c5vrh9>

9 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2019/09/24/teen-girls-are-leading-climate-strikes-helping-change-face-environmentalism/>

10 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/most-american-teens-are-frightened-by-climate-change-poll-finds-and-about-1-in-4-are-taking-action/2019/09/15/1936da1c-d639-11e9-9610-fb56c5522e1c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/most-american-teens-are-frightened-by-climate-change-poll-finds-and-about-1-in-4-are-taking-action/2019/09/15/1936da1c-d639-11e9-9610-fb56c5522e1c_story.html)

11 [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/a357wp/isra-hirsi-ilhan-omar-daughter-climate-strike-profile](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/a357wp/isra-hirsi-ilhan-omar-daughter-climate-strike-profile)



Photo: Bruno Neri

negative effects of climate change: they are more likely to die following a heatwave in a large city or more likely to live in communities affected by environmental pollution.

Of Latin American origin, the eighteen year old Jamie Margolin founded the environmental justice organisation “Zero Hour”<sup>12</sup>. In addition to inventing an all-female section within the movement, the #sister-marches<sup>13</sup>, she frequently writes as a columnist on environmental issues. In the English newspaper *The Guardian*<sup>14</sup>, she makes a connection between the climate crisis, poverty, racism and the status of women, stating that “addressing the climate crisis as an independent problem is a mistake. The matter of justice - economic, racial, gender and intergenerational

justice - is at the heart of this crisis and these injustices must be addressed if the fight for a habitable future is to be successful. We can't just slap on solar panels everywhere and fix the problems in one day. We need to dismantle the systems of oppression that have caused and perpetuated the climate crisis, including colonialism, racism and patriarchy”. Jamie has very clear ideas on the topic and not even a pandemic will stop her. Despite having to give up on the tour to promote her new book (*Youth to Power: Your Voice and How to Use it*) and the marches scheduled for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, she has organised livestreams and webinars together with the other “Zero Hour” activists<sup>15</sup> in order to keep the climate issue at the centre of the debate during the US presidential race.

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12 <http://thisiszerohour.org/>

13 <http://thisiszerohour.org/our-actions/#sister-marches>

14 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/12/jamie-margolin-zero-hour-climate-change>

15 <https://www.voanews.com/science-health/young-climate-activists-slowed-pandemic-not-defeated>



Photo: Stefano Stranges

In Ecuador, 18-year-old Helena Gualinga<sup>16</sup> is fighting for the environmental rights of indigenous communities. Born into the Sarayaku community, which consists of around 1,500 people in the Amazon, Helena says she has learned from the example of her parents and elders of how to talk about rights to her people.

The Sarayaku community has been fighting for several years against the government, which the community believes has given grants too freely to mining and oil companies to exploit their lands. In late January 2020, the community launched the *Polluters Out* campaign which groups together over 200 young activists, scientists, local people and grassroots organisations from over 40 countries.

## The Italian #Fridaysforfuture and the letter after the pandemic

They are following Greta Thunberg because they have faith in her and her battle against global warming. They are participating in strikes on Fridays to bring attention to a problem that adults rarely take into consideration. They are responding to the calls of fellow activists around the world, with issues ranging from deforestation in the Amazon to the melting of permafrost in the Arctic, but they also have clear ideas about Italy. In a nutshell, they believe in it. And they certainly don't want to be prophets who are ignored - especially not Federica Gasbarro, an

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16 <https://latinamericareports.com/helena-gualinga-voice-indigenous-communities-fight-climate-change/4192/>



**Federica Gasbarro, biologist**

outspoken young biologist who represented Italy at the first UN Youth Climate Summit in 2019, and in her blog in the *Huffington Post*, stating: “How dare you call us catastrophists!”<sup>17</sup>. All because the youth from Fridays for Future have been criticised for worrying about the future of Venice. “All the words used by the media on occasions like these, words like “catastrophe”, “alert”, “warning” and “exceptional circumstances” are absolutely false and inappropriate. In reality, they serve to paint a picture that humans have caused by their carelessness and indifference. Thus, witnessing yet more victims, we asked ourselves: where are we headed? Is it possible that people don’t realise this is the result of nefarious policies, and infrastructural and organisational interventions that should have been carried out, but that no one was able to or wanted to do?” Gasbarro emphasises: “We’re not just concerned about Venice. Italy as a country is often at risk of floods, as well as rivers overflowing because we have built illegally even on stream beds, not to mention the tonnes of toxic waste we’ve dumped

into the waters over the years. It’s our duty to highlight that in our country, we need concrete, courageous, forward-thinking measures that follow the Paris agreements and that are created from the knowledge of the United Nations’ planning panel on the subject. In the meantime, the members of the #Fridays movement are preparing for new action: “If everything goes as planned,” adds Federica, “we’ll be operational again by the end of September 2020, after schools have recommenced, and we will invade the squares, in spite of COVID-19”.

In the meantime, however, in April 2020,<sup>18</sup> the movement made itself heard with a letter entitled “Dear Italy”, addressed to the government regarding its policies. Using the crisis stemming from the spread of the Coronavirus as a starting point, the letter argues that the solution needed to avoid other pandemics and to have a future that everyone deserves already exists. “We must launch a colossal, historic, sustainable public investment plan that will bring work and wellbeing for everyone and that will finally re-establish a future for us to return to, after the journey into the darkness of this pandemic.

A future in which we will produce all our energy from renewable sources and we will no longer need to buy oil, coal and methane from abroad. (...) Imagine, dear Italy, your cities will be green and free from traffic. Not because we will still be housebound, but because we will be travelling on efficient public transport that is accessible to everyone. (...) We will be able to rely on air, water and the essential goods that your natural, healthy and complete ecosystems give us. We will sustainably produce the food for which we are globally famous. In this way, we will create hundreds of thousands of new high-paying jobs, in all sectors. Dear Italy, we are convinced that this Future is indeed possible”. And the girls will step up to this challenge without a doubt.

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/con-quale-coraggio-continuate-a-definirci-catastrofisti\\_it\\_5dcc43a6e4b0a794d1f9896f](https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/con-quale-coraggio-continuate-a-definirci-catastrofisti_it_5dcc43a6e4b0a794d1f9896f)

<sup>18</sup> <https://ritornoalfuturo.org/la-lettera/>



# CHAPTER 7





# GENDER GAP, DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE IN SPORTS

*I always got into trouble both at home and school. My teachers said I had ants in my pants and that I could never sit still. So much so that I ended up fighting with the boys in my class. Instead of punishing me, a teacher talked to my mother and advised her to sign me up for some kind of sport. Last year, I did Taekwondo, while this year I started playing football in the Buryj al Luqluq club in the old city of East Jerusalem. Some people say football is only for guys, but I assure you it's not true! I love football, it makes me feel free and like I can do anything.*

Those are words from Rinal, a 10-year-old Palestinian girl who participated in the inclusive education programme “Valuing Diversity” for girls and boys in East Jerusalem, which Terre des Hommes has been organising for three years through funds from the UEFA Foundation.

Playing a sport is a powerful tool for young people’s growth, strengthening the body and increasing their self-esteem and social skills. But it can also serve to bridge the gender gap and to achieve a more inclusive society without violence.



“The increased participation of women and girls in sports can help boost their involvement in society, combat gender stereotypes and accelerate progress towards gender equality.” This was highlighted in 2015<sup>1</sup> by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the then-executive director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. “Tackling gender equality and the emancipation of women has been a marathon. But I really hope we are close to the finish line, so from now on everyone has to be a sprinter.” In fact, the number of sports education programmes for girls is growing every year. The World Health Organization points out that, in addition to the obvious health benefits, team sports offer a number of psychological benefits for children - they help them build a social network where they learn about the ethics of teamwork. But most of all, playing a sport has the advantage of making gender inclusion possible at its highest level. Olympic ice skating champion Michelle Kwan summed it up in a very simple image: “Giving a girl a ball to play with means giving a girl the chance to dream”<sup>2</sup>.

## The European Charter of Women’s Rights in Sports

In 1985, the Italian Association of Sport for All (UISP) presented the Charter of Women’s Rights in Sports, involving athletes, journalists, coaches, as well as women active in politics and institutions. This document contained some important recommendations and principles, highlighting the many differences between male and female sports - for example, in terms of financial recognition, access to sports facilities and venues, and grants and sponsorships.

In 1987, the Charter was endorsed by the European Legislative Assembly with the resolution on women in sports (doc.A 2-32 / 87 / rev), which officially recognises the demand for equal opportunities for women and men in sports, in the context of the European Union. 25 years later, the document was edited<sup>3</sup> to make it more up-to-date. It has the aim of publicising and promoting good practices that have been tested and implemented in the various European countries,

1 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/03/493592>

2 Ibid

3 [http://www.uisp.it/nazionale/aree/politichegenere/files/CHART\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.uisp.it/nazionale/aree/politichegenere/files/CHART_ENGLISH.pdf)



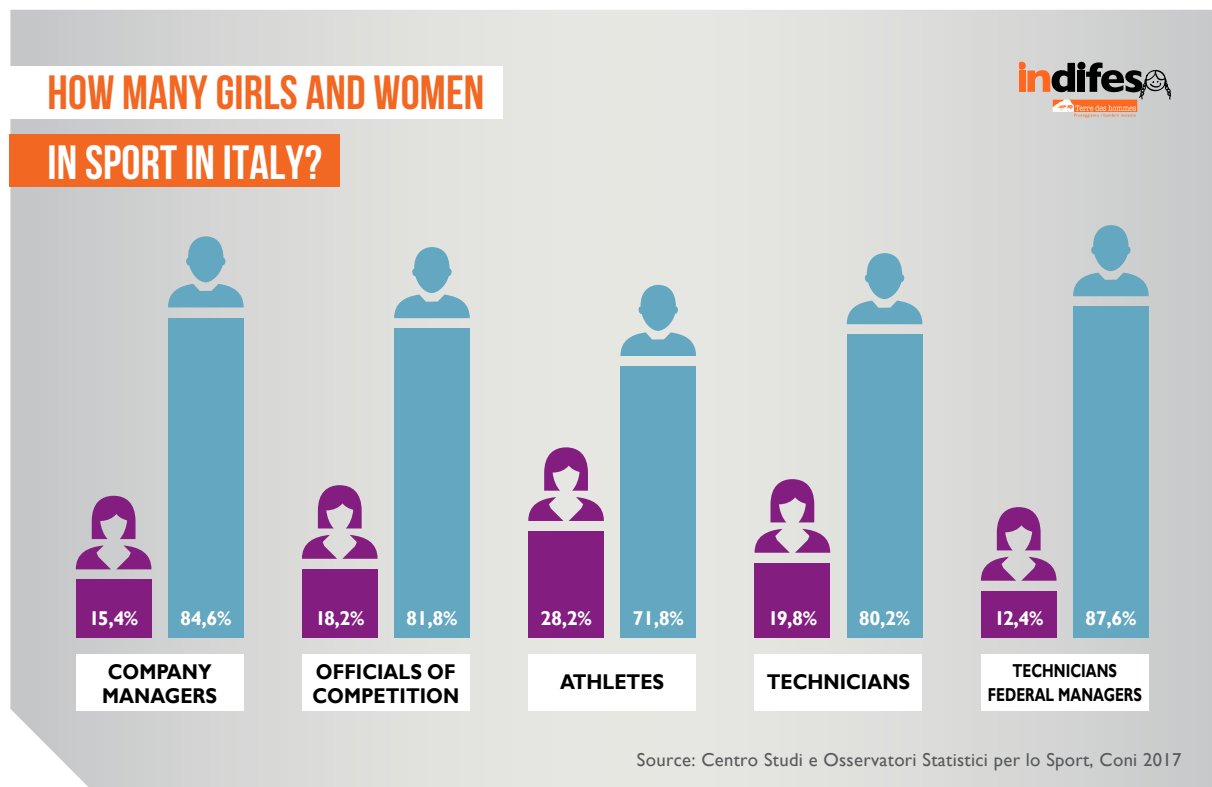
in order to promote equal opportunities and reduce discrimination against women in sports. Despite some progress and the increase in the number of girls and women playing sports, there are still discrepancies in opportunities in some areas of sports, in particular regarding economic status and the wage gap. Last year, the World Cup in France began with a protest organised by Ballon d'Or winner, Ada Hegerberg, who went up against the Norwegian Federation regarding the reimbursements to athletes and the wage gap between men and women in the world of football. Winners of the Women's World Cup for the second time in a row, the female American footballers shouted the slogan "equal pay" during their triumphant parade in New York. In fact, they had an ongoing legal dispute with their federation for gender discrimination in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as they argued that their male colleagues (who win much less often than they do) are paid more and receive match bonuses ten times greater than

theirs. In May 2020, judge Gary Klausner of the Los Angeles court rejected a \$66 million claim for compensation made by the Football Association because, in his opinion, the women's national team received higher cumulative and average earnings per game than the men's national team. Spokeswoman Molly Levinson revealed that Carli Lloyd and the 27 other US team members will make an appeal.

## Women and sports in Italy

Despite the various sports initiatives that aim to support women's participation, Italian sports is still male-dominated, according to "I numeri dello sport 2017"<sup>4</sup> data (the latest available) released by Coni. "Although the proportion of female athletes in recent years has been gradually increasing," reads the report, "women are under-represented in the governing bodies of local, national and

4 [https://www.coni.it/images/1-Primo-piano-2018-fine/Report\\_FSN\\_DSA\\_2018\\_12\\_17\\_v.GN.pdf](https://www.coni.it/images/1-Primo-piano-2018-fine/Report_FSN_DSA_2018_12_17_v.GN.pdf)





European sporting institutions. In 2017, the percentage of female athletes reached an all-time high with 28.2% against 71.8% of male athletes, out of a total of 4.7 million members. More than four out of five sportspeople are male. The highest proportion of women is found among technicians (19.8%, an increase compared to 2016). Women account for 18.2% of tournament officials, while just over 15% of managerial positions in corporate entities are held by women.

The lowest “female ratio” can be seen among the members of federal, central and peripheral bodies, with a proportion of 12.4%. More generally, the gender gap observed in the sports domain, like in other areas, has revealed that one of the main factors hindering women is their lack of free time. According to the Coni report, family commitments mean that girls between the ages of 3 and 24 have an average of 36 minutes less time than their male peers to devote to leisure activities.

A cause for debate lies mainly with Law 91/1981, which governs the “rules on relations between clubs and professional sportspeople”. The law on

sports professionalism, which (hastily) came about by virtue of the great economic movement that began to revolve around the world of football, established appropriate and basic safeguards that had to be guaranteed for those working in sports, especially if they were making sports itself part of their work or profession. Despite still being in force, Law 91 now appears to be completely out of date. If we look at women’s football, for example, where the female professional footballers even went to the World Cup, according to this law, the players are still considered to be “amateurs”, i.e. they are paid less, they do not have pension contributions or maternity leave, and are not compensated for harassment.

Something has changed in the last year: an amendment to the Stability Law of 2019 has designated 20 million for the three years in the form of state contributions for sports clubs that choose to give their athletes professional contracts. In the summer months of 2020, we can expect the presentation of the Consolidated Act for sports, or the legislative decree implementing the delegation law 86/2019, which would



reform the Law of 1981 once and for all and would consist of an ad hoc fund for women's professionalism.

Assist (National Association of Athletes) stresses, however, that there is not only a problem of wage discrimination. Female athletes out on the pitch are often bombarded with sexist insults, or are the subject of *online hate speech*. As Luisa Rizzitelli, president of Assist<sup>5</sup> points out, "Insults should be reported and stigmatised, and if necessary, matches should be suspended. The entities in charge, such as the Italian Football Federation, must give exemplary punishments, because such incidents cannot be allowed to go unpunished". Rizzitelli also points the finger at the often sexist and stereotyped representation of women engaged in sport, which appears in the media, inviting journalists and newspapers to stand up for a portrayal that respects and values the commitment and results of female athletes.

## Media, women and sports: an all-Italian manifesto

The 2019 Women's World Cup gave the opportunity to widen the debate on women and sport in Italy and, above all, on their representation in the media. A few months earlier, the group of journalists called GIULIA and the UISP, together with numerous partners including the Italian Footballers' Association, presented the manifesto "Media, women and sport"<sup>6</sup> with the purpose of developing a type of language in sports journalism that overcomes stereotypes and prejudices. The language would focus on the skills and performance of female athletes, highlighting their technical and competitive aspects as is done for their male colleagues. The problem with how women are represented in the media is both quantitative and qualitative. "Amazing body", "style icon", "beautiful and talented": these are some examples of how the

media have often spoken and written about female athletes and sportswomen, making judgements about their appearance rather than their sports performance and skills. Such judgements are very rarely made in reports about sportsmen. Among the rules of good journalism suggested, the media should: avoid dwelling on physical appearance, style and romantic relationships; specify female roles and positions (e.g. use 'la centrocampista' rather than 'il centrocampista'); raise the visibility of female sporting disciplines to be equal to men's, starting with TV and radio programmes; and highlight discrimination and gender differences in sport, for example with regard to sports salaries, prize and benefit amounts, and legal protection for female athletes.

On this issue, the journalist Alessia Cruciani has been through every form of prejudice used to overturn it. In the children's book 'Invasione di campo'<sup>7</sup>, she highlights how in the Italian language "the word for 'goal' uses a masculine article but the word 'ball' has a feminine article. And as if that wasn't enough, the word for 'training' is masculine, whereas 'team' is feminine. The word for 'respect' is masculine, whereas 'freedom' is feminine. The word for 'dream' is masculine, whereas 'victory' is feminine. Thus, there is discrimination between men and women in the world of sports and football in particular, but the process of overcoming these stereotypes starts with language. With this children's book, I tried to portray through the story what happened to me after years of hard work and dedication, first as a sportswoman and then as a sports journalist, and also as a witness to athlete's stories, from childhood to adulthood. So the story of some girls who desperately want to play five-a-side football becomes a prism that reflects the society around them - from the kids who make fun of them to the adults who criticise them and threaten that their "legs will become crooked". A few years ago, it was difficult for girls to get involved in football. Nowadays it's a bit easier,

5 <https://www.assistitaly.it/>

6 <http://www.uisp.it/nazionale/pagina/media-donne-sport-idee-guida-per-una-diversa-informazione#:~:text=Il%20manifesto%20E2%80%9CMedia%20Donne%20Sport,degli%20sport%20femminili%20sui%20media.>

7 <https://www.edizpiemme.it/libri/invasione-di-campo>



Photo: Andy Hall

but it's still hard to be recognised as a professional sportswoman. Starting from schools and from a young age, one day it might be possible to see gender equality on the field”.

### A new centre against discrimination in sports

A substantial step forward was made in summer 2020. Unar, Uisp and Lunaria signed an agreement protocol to monitor local cases of discrimination and intolerance, for sports players who experience discrimination based on their origin, skin colour, gender, religious belief or physical condition<sup>8</sup>. The goal is not only to report such occurrences, but also to restore victims' trust. The creation of the Monitoring Centre has been a new arrival across Europe, and is the first resource specifically designed to monitor discrimination in sports and accurately analyse it. Notably, the

Monitoring Centre is not focusing on professional sports but rather on amateur or non-professional sports - the training ground of the young athletes of tomorrow, and where most of these events occur. The Monitoring Centre also aims to raise awareness and provide training for young people in order to promote a respectful and welcoming culture, especially among themselves. The new monitoring centre was 'christened' by Beatrice Ion, a young athlete in the Paralympic women's basketball team.

She and her father were recently attacked with racist threats and insults, and her father was injured. "I have experienced discrimination in Italy both as a woman and as a foreigner. If you know someone is there to protect you, it gives you the courage to speak up," she said. The more we talk about discrimination in sports, the less ignorance there will be on the subject, and fewer incidences like this will happen.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unar.it/razzismo-nello-sport-e-nato-losservatorio-contro-le-discriminazioni/>

# DOUMOUH AL BAKKAR. THE MOST FAMOUS FEMALE REFEREE IN THE ARAB WORLD

She made history twice: firstly, by becoming one of the main referees of women's football in Lebanon. Secondly, by covering various male roles on the pitch. To those who ask her how it happened, she replies: "All because of a course". Indeed, because after attending a training course in 2014 organised by the national football federation - "Referees of Tomorrow" - Doumouh al Bakkar understood this is the path that she was meant to take. In an interview for FIFA<sup>9</sup> she explained how, from player to coach, she became a referee: "It was a new challenge for me in the world of football and I wanted to acquire new skills. At the time, I liked the idea of being involved in sports, making sure the matches ran smoothly and that I learned as much as possible in the world of football."

Al Bakkar has repeatedly played in the Lebanese Women's Football Cup in addition to the Women's League final. She has also refereed matches in the qualifying rounds for the Women's World Cup and the women's football at the Olympics, as well as other women's tournaments in Asia and matches in Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Jordan. In 2016, she refereed several men's friendly matches as well as some second division matches and youth tournaments, becoming one of the most important female referees in Asia. When talking about her passion and route to becoming a referee, she said: "I support every girl who loves football and who wants to become a referee. I never hesitate to offer help and share my knowledge and experiences with the girls I meet, in order to encourage them to follow the same path."

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.fifa.com/womens-football/news/al-bakkar-writes-new-history-in-lebanon?fbclid=IwAR2jVj-r0DHeeM-ZK-EnY\\_MXj\\_gMf8t-4WyA2aqAOz6hBOlxWMhujuTA2drU](https://www.fifa.com/womens-football/news/al-bakkar-writes-new-history-in-lebanon?fbclid=IwAR2jVj-r0DHeeM-ZK-EnY_MXj_gMf8t-4WyA2aqAOz6hBOlxWMhujuTA2drU)



Photo: ©Fifa



# CHAPTER 8



# ACHIEVING GENDER

# EQUALITY TO EMPOWER GIRLS

For as long as half the human race is denied basic rights, with women and girls being considered inferior to men, it will be impossible to create a society in which every individual can reach their full potential.

This is how the UN General Assembly summarised the issue of gender inequality in the resolution adopted on 25 September 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda. This agenda sets out the Fifth Sustainable Development Goal, a commitment signed by 193 nations (including Italy) to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls within the next 10 years. The World Bank<sup>1</sup> has estimated that the global cost of gender inequality is \$160 trillion. It is therefore important to reach this goal as soon as possible.

However, the World Economic Forum's latest Global Gender Gap Report<sup>2</sup> states that gender parity is still a long way away, so much so that it would take just under 100 years to attain it worldwide. The good news is that compared to 2018 (when it was estimated that it would take 108 years to reach gender parity), there has been some progress in the 153 countries under review, and gender parity has already been fully achieved in 40 countries. Italy's rank, however, slipped from 70th to 76th (one rank higher than it was in 2006). But in terms of economic participation and equal opportunities in the workplace, our country places lower (117th), mainly due to wage gaps.

The representation of women in politics is also an area that requires improvement: Italy ranks 44th and is still one of the 85 countries that have never had a female head of state. In the coming years, our country's economic struggles, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus epidemic, could cause it to fall further down the rankings of countries that have been the most successful at closing the gender gap. True investments, however, are made over the long term. For this reason, we have assembled here a few contributions from organisations that are engaged in empowering girls in terms of finance and business education, STEM subjects, and political participation.

Girls can be powerful agents of change in society. Yasmine Ouihrane, whose story we have included here, promises to be one of these people. When girls are provided with the freedom of action and with all the tools that boys and men have been guaranteed for millennia, they can considerably speed up progress towards a more just and sustainable world.

## Investing in financial education to bridge the gender gap

The results of the Global Financial Literacy Survey, which the OECD unveiled on 25 June 2020, indicate that financial literacy in Italy is poor.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/unrealized-potential-the-high-cost-of-gender-inequality-in-earnings>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality> (December 2019)



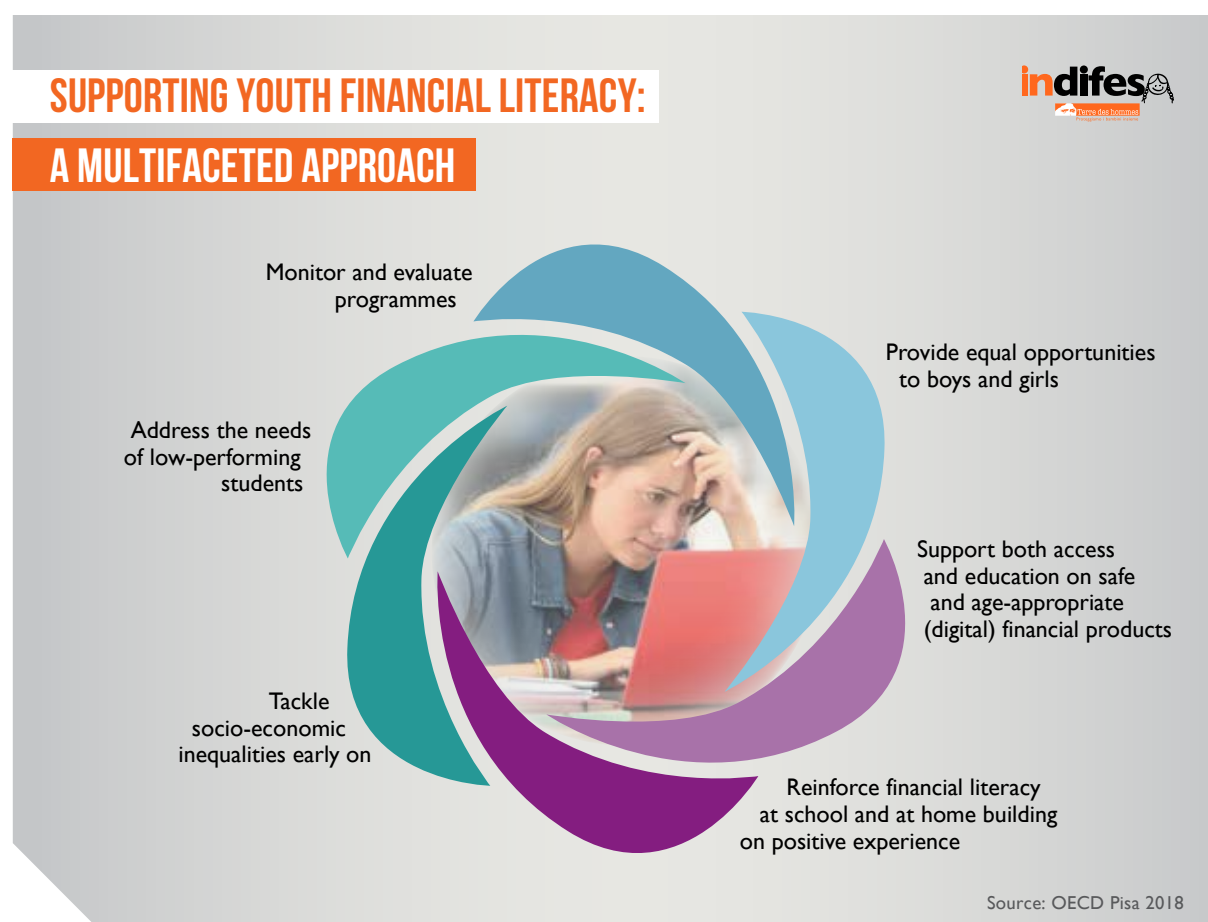
In fact, with a financial literacy score of only 11.1, Italy ranks last, below the OECD country average (13 points) as well as the average of the 26 countries that participated in the survey (12.7). Lack of financial knowledge is the aspect that had the most weight in terms of the absolute result: Italian adults scored 3.9 out of 7<sup>3</sup> which was the lowest score of all the continental European countries, second only to Romania. Lastly, we also (unfortunately) placed at last regarding the gender gap in the overall score: Italian women, along with Colombian women, scored the lowest out of all the participating countries.

It is clear that financially literate girls and young women have the tools they need to increase their own economic resources and to use these resources to contribute to the causes they believe

in. This includes more significant participation in political and social movements, as well as an ability to contribute money to charitable initiatives. More generally, closing the financial literacy gap will also allow women to support and invest in other businesswomen.

In order to overcome these gaps, OECD experts maintain that countries should adopt a multidisciplinary approach in order to develop national financial education strategies that support youth while taking socioeconomic and gender differences into account. They should provide secure access to financial services, making use of online training opportunities, especially in the context of the pandemic. They should also encourage individuals to keep developing good habits, both at school and at home. However,

3 <https://www.oecd.org/financial/education/oecd-infe-2020-international-survey-of-adult-financial-literacy.pdf>





there are still some differences that should not be underestimated:

- 1) Differences between girls and boys in mathematics<sup>4</sup>. In OECD countries, the difference between boys and girls in mathematics is, on average, 5 points (with boys scoring higher). In Italy, this difference is more substantial: 16 points.
- 2) Differences between girls and boys in science.

Regarding school programmes, there is a significant and quite marked gap in high schools, where boys score an average of 25 points higher than girls. Although this gap is not as wide in technical institutes, it is still significant (14 points on average). Italy remains in second-to-last place in terms of providing children with opportunities to learn financial concepts at school.

Investing in the financial literacy of young women is the key to achieving economic and social equality, because today's women are tomorrow's leaders, and it is crucial to ensure that they have access to a thorough and meaningful education in finance. If we become more financially independent and empowered, there is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish.

**Claudia Segre**, President, Global Thinking Foundation

## “When I grow up, I’m going to be a Mind Transfer Specialist”

When Gaia enters, she is almost suspicious; after those lengthy security procedures, she does not know what awaits her. She adjusts her blouse as well as her backpack, which has slipped down her shoulder. Then, she turns to her right and smiles at Sara. Life in the small Umbrian town was carrying on as usual. School, homework, playing sports,



**Claudia Segre**,  
President, Global Thinking Foundation

going out with friends - it was an everyday routine that felt almost overly familiar, nothing new. Then came that business education project (edu- what?) the professor proposed. You started to feel a buzz of energy in your chest, that spread everywhere. There were questions that spontaneously began to arise: “Why? How does it happen? What can be done to solve it? Whom could I ask for help? Shall we do it together? What does the data say? And what do you think?” And in an instant, there you are, crossing the waiting room that will lead you to the Research and Development Centre of the most famous multinational organisation you can think of. Because you were the most enterprising, the most innovative, the most well-versed in STEM, the most curious, the most everything in your group. And all Gaia can do is ask herself, “Me?! Yes, me.”<sup>5</sup>

According to the World Economic Forum, “65% of children currently attending primary school will have job types that do not yet exist.” It may seem like science fiction to think that one of our children may become a “Commercial Space Pilot” or an “Organ Part Creator”, that our granddaughter might grow up to be an “Extinct Species Revivalist” or a “Mind Transfer Specialist”. But this is already happening.

The labour market of both advanced and emerging countries has for some time been undergoing profound changes that many define as structural. Academic literature (OECD 2017, 2019; Balliester,

4 OECD (2020a), PISA 2018 Results (Volume IV): Are Students Smart about Money?, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/48ebd1ba-en.pdf?expires=1596470679&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=F8E88B3D7214E3D37D172C31EB8FD2E2>

5 From the Junior Achievement Italia project for girls and STEM subjects



Elsheiki, 2018; Future Work Skills<sup>6</sup>) identifies a few major factors that are bringing about change (commonly called megatrends), such as digitisation and technological progress, globalisation and the role of new media, the consequences of climate change, and the aging of the population. These megatrends are revolutionising the job market and, as a result, the related skills that schools and universities require. This has led to an ever-increasing demand for people with a background in a STEM field: *science, technology, engineering and mathematics*<sup>7</sup>. This increase in demand is often not met with a corresponding increase in supply, resulting in a shortage of human resources with the necessary qualifications and skills. Italy in particular is significantly behind in terms of STEM skills acquisition: only 23.3% of graduates in Italy have them, compared with 35.6% of graduates in Germany. There is also a clear gender gap: only 1 in 4 STEM students is female. This figure is even lower in faculties whose students most match the emerging profiles required in the workplace. Over

the last decade, however, young women enrolled in STEM faculties have performed better than men in terms of both academic results and time to graduate. The average grade upon graduation was 103.4 for females against 101.8 for males, and females took an average of 1.3 years to complete their degrees versus 1.5 years for males<sup>8</sup>.

Without going into the details of this trend, it is clear that the Italian education system must increasingly equip itself with the right tools to raise awareness about STEM among boys and girls - not only because these skills best match those that are currently needed, and will continue to be needed, in the workplace, but also because it is inherently inclusive and non-discriminatory. Based on Junior Achievement Italia's experience with students, eliminating distorted perceptions regarding one's own aspirations and one's ability to succeed in STEM disciplines depends on whether teachers encourage curiosity and practice, and

6 Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research, 2020

7 "La domanda di professioni e di formazione delle imprese italiane nel 2019", Sistema Informativo Excelsior - created by Unioncamere and ANPAL, 2020

8 "ReGeneration STEM, Le competenze del futuro passano da scienza e tecnologia", Fondazione Deloitte Observatory, 2020



Photo: ©Prime Minister



**Miriam Cresta,**  
CEO, Junior Achievement Italia

whether or not students are exposed to working collaboratively, to learning about themselves and others, to acquiring personal experience in the workplace, and to confronting and overcoming the insecurities and cultural limitations that we still see within them. Only when the Italian school system begins to take into account the specific situation of every boy and girl who makes up the scholastic community it will be on the right path to truly empowering students, or in other words to training free citizens.

**Miriam Cresta,** CEO, Junior Achievement Italia

### A lesson in politics

Although there has been a rise in the number of women working in parliaments and governments worldwide, only 22 women in the world are heads of state or government (i.e. 6.4% of the total number)<sup>9</sup>. Women with political power are a minority in Italy as well: today, only 35% of Members of Parliament

<sup>9</sup> Women in politics: 2020 data, UN.

**Denise Di Dio, Angela Laurenza, Eva Vittoria Cammerino e Florinda Saieva,**  
founders of Prime Minister



## YASMINE OUIHRANE, GENDER EQUALITY ACTIVIST

Selected by the Schwarzkopf Young Europe Foundation as Young European of the Year in 2019, she truly summarises all the corners of the Mediterranean, bringing them together into one European identity. Her mother is Sicilian, while her father is North African; she lived in Turin; and she completed her university training in France, studying in Paris and Bordeaux. 24-year-old Yasmine Ouihrane is a young European to follow, as there is a good chance that among the youth of her generation, she will become a European politician. In fact, the award—which aims to recognise individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to international understanding and European values—was conferred upon her for the many initiatives that she is currently developing to promote gender equality, better opportunities for refugees, and programmes for underprivileged youth. This is all happening at a historic

moment in time. Yasmine, like a salmon, is swimming against the tide: European populist movements are increasingly exploiting the politics of identity in order to paint a picture of nations that are all distinct, and Yasmine's powerful vision of a Europe united in diversity threatens this model.

Her vision also threatens many European Muslims. Yasmine identifies with their culture and ethnicity, but only to a certain degree: she is proud of her hijab (veil), and she wears it not as an acceptance of gender submission, but as a symbol of diversity and otherness. The empowerment of women is her mantra, and it has been the foundation of many of her projects. "Being different does not stop people from being part of society, and the fact that I have won this award is a testament to that: it shows that everyone, starting at



Photo: Abbey Drucker

the bottom, can do it.” Yasmine started her social commitment by volunteering in the poor neighbourhoods of Grenoble, which is the city in France where she moved to when she was sixteen. There, she collaborated with local associations and did private tutoring. Yasmine states, “I felt that the young people I was trying to help needed to be represented on a political level, so that’s why I began engaging at the European Parliament when I was selected for the European Youth Convention in 2017.” Yasmine started in Strasbourg, then she also spoke to the public in New York, Nairobi and Paris. “My message has always been this: I am a young woman from an underprivileged background who wants to stand up for women, migrants and diversity in Europe. That’s who I am and why I stand for what I stand for.” As an activist, Yasmine became a member of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, a European advocacy team, as well as of the Young Leader Women Deliver programme, which aims to improve gender equality and women’s quality of life. Regarding peace and gender issues, she says, “What is young people’s role in peace-building processes? It is essential, because we young people are more resilient, we are more likely to make changes, we dare more, we are dreamers, we are believers, we bet on things. It is crucial to involve us. We are the future, but we are never at the negotiation table. When decisions are made for us, we are not there. That is a very serious mistake.” Yasmine’s next project, which has already partially come to life, is to develop a platform with podcasts that include stories about young European activists, politicians and entrepreneurs united in diversity—all stories about women. Thinking of a possible role model in the profession, Yasmine says, “Angela Davis is my role model. She’s a former activist, an intersectional feminist and is now a professor emeritus at the University of California. She has given me the keys to understanding the concepts of race, gender and class within feminism”.

are women, and 16.35% are under 40 years old. Only 15% of mayors are women<sup>10</sup>. For women - especially younger women - working in politics has two meanings. On the one hand, it is essential to democracy, because increasing the representation of women means influencing a country’s political choices and bringing it closer to meeting the needs of its citizens. On the other hand, for girls, working in politics also signifies becoming more aware of themselves and their rights, as well as improving their ability to have their voices heard and become agents of change within their own schools, communities, cities and countries. Speaking up and demonstrating for their rights and at times even finding solutions. That is the goal of Prime Minister - School of Politics for Young Women, an initiative aimed at girls between the ages of 14 and 19. Through its format based on inspirational speeches and experimental workshops, the initiative allows young girls who are students to discuss social justice, stereotypes and civic activism, as well as to collaborate on projects that have an impact in the area.

Carla Bartoli, who is 14 years old, took part in the Favara edition: “Prime Minister was a learning experience; it was both constructive and fun. The relationship I gained with the other girls is one of sisterhood. But above all, I learned to be brave. When we think about politics, we often picture a selfish organisation. But politics should provide the finest example of sharing. Perhaps it is enough to learn to share ideas and hopes.”

Vittoria Tamaro, who is 18 years old, participated in the Naples edition. “I learned to assert my ideas, to fight for what I believe is right and one of the parliamentarians we met taught us to surround ourselves with allies. Women must be strong enough to overcome gender stereotypes, sexism and injustice, which exclude us. Too many times, I have stood by silently, believing that I wasn’t being heard. Thanks to Prime Minister, however, I have understood that there will always be somebody ready to fight with me. The slogan, ‘Never silent’ was my favourite and I now repeat it to myself all the time.”

**Denise Di Dio, Angela Laurenza, Eva Vittoria Cammerino and Florinda Saieva**, founders of Prime Minister

<sup>10</sup> Openpolis and AGI data.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

*“And it wasn’t my fault, not where I was and not how I dressed.”* At the end of 2019, the powerful refrain of the anthem against gender-based violence resounded in streets around the world. Beginning in Plaza Italia in Santiago, Chile, based on an idea from the feminist collective Las Tesis, the flash mob *“El violador eres tú”* showed the anger of Chilean girls and women at the persistence of laws against abortion (which remains punishable by imprisonment) and the more general climate of machismo that allows many sexual crimes to go unpunished. *“Patriarchy is a judge that judges us for being born and our punishment is the violence you don’t see”* the song begins.

It is this very invisibility that makes sexual violence, and domestic violence in general, one of the most difficult forms of abuse to identify and eradicate, as well as how strongly it is intertwined with traditional norms and roles that persist throughout much of the world. From witnessed violence within the family to corporal punishment, sexual harassment in public and online spaces, and various other forms of psychological, physical and sexual violence, girls are still too often deprived of their rights such as the fundamental right to manage one’s body and consent to sexual intercourse.

Worldwide, it is estimated that at least 15 million girls (aged 15 to 19)<sup>1</sup> have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other types of sexual acts at some point in their lives, with the partner almost always the perpetrator. The uncertainty of being able to seek justice and a lack of security often

lead to girls passively suffering these abuses as if they were normal, instead of reporting them.

## Dramatic numbers for Latin America

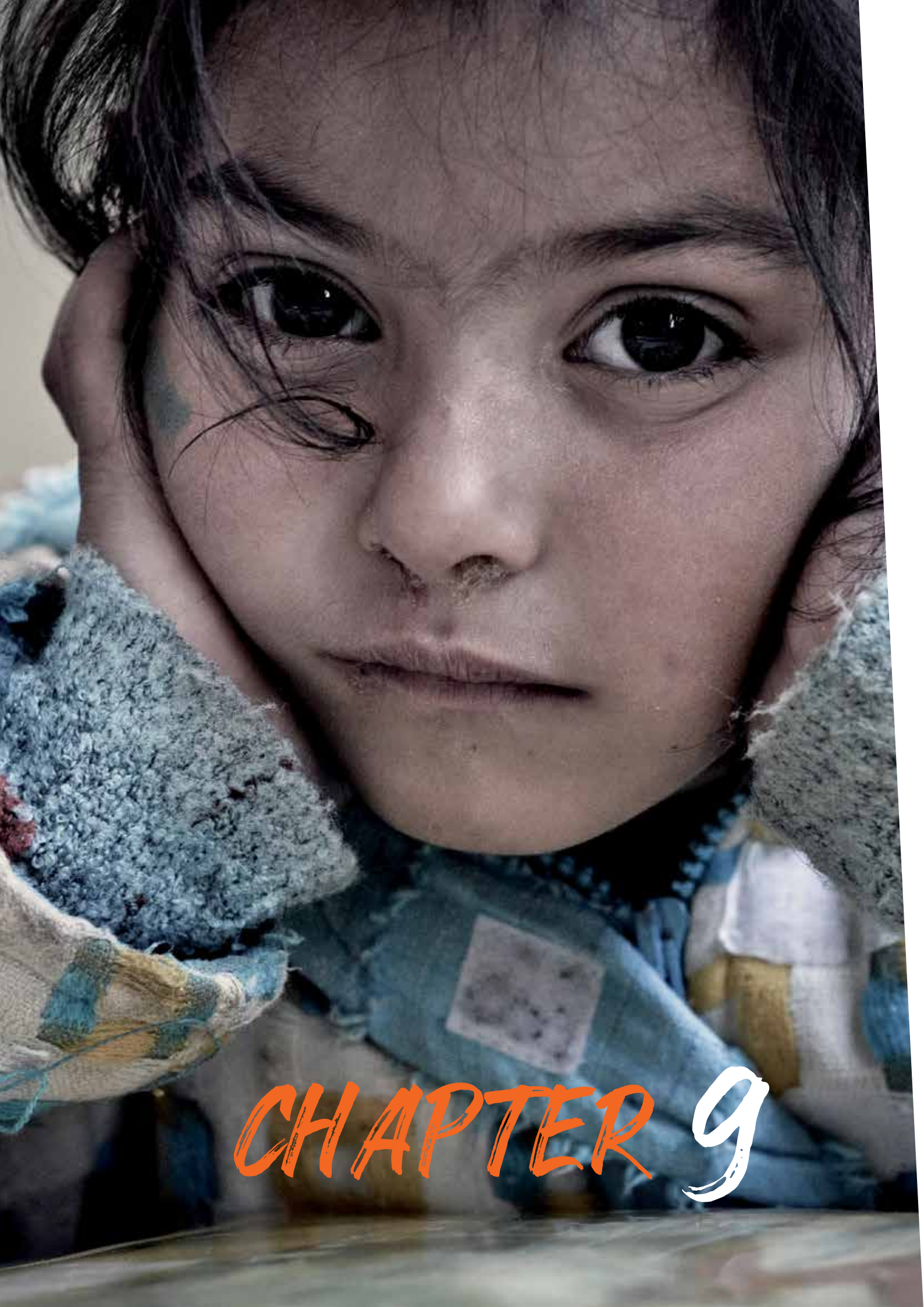
One of the continents where the phenomenon of gender-based violence has reached enormous proportions is Latin America. It is estimated that every two hours a woman is killed for simply belonging to the female gender, mostly by a partner. Where it is possible to concentrate solely on girls and adolescents, the data is even more striking. More than one million minors were victims of sexual violence and forced intercourse in 2018 across Central and South America, according to UN Women.

Peru is one of the countries with the highest rate of gender-based violence. According to the Peruvian Ministry of Women in 2019, 5,140 reports of sexual violence against girls and adolescents were registered. In the first six months of 2020, the Peruvian Ministry of Health registered 459 births due to sexual violence suffered by girls and adolescents, with 16 victims being girls as young as 10. With the pandemic, the situation is at risk of worsening: the Peruvian Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology estimates that during the country’s compulsory lockdown (lasting until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020), adolescent pregnancies increased by 12% compared to the previous year, mostly due to sexual violence within the family. The Ministry of Women stated that

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>





# CHAPTER 9



Illustrations: Getting Grief Right, Arianna Vairo



between March and July the hotline for reporting incidents of sexual violence received 900 reports, almost 70% of which were concerned girls and adolescents.

To prevent this phenomenon, Terre des Hommes in Peru promoted in 2019 a series of meetings with beneficiaries of its projects, including parents and children, in Pichanaki together with Centro de Emergencia Mujeres (CEM), which offers free and specialised services for victims of domestic and sexual violence. During these awareness-raising meetings, adults and adolescents were able to reflect on the vicious cycle of violence, the different types of abuse, the effects on victims and the protection mechanisms available, offered by the institutions created to combat gender-based violence. In 2020, despite the pandemic, operators continued to raise awareness via WhatsApp, social media and telephone assistance.

## The pandemic increases requests for help

The alarm about the increase in domestic violence during lockdown first started in China, where calls for help tripled in February<sup>2</sup> compared to the previous year, and then it spread across the world along with the COVID-19 epidemic. UN

Women<sup>3</sup> reports how in France, since the start of the lockdown (17<sup>th</sup> March), calls to anti-violence services have increased by 30%, with similar figures in Cyprus (+30%), Singapore (+33%), and Argentina (+25%). Even nations like the United States and United Kingdom have recorded significant rises.

In Italy, while in the very first weeks of the lockdown calls to the anti-violence number 1522 fell by 55%, in the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> of April to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May the number of requests that reached the organisations part of the D.i.Re network (Donne in Rete contro violenza) grew by 79.9% compared to the same period in 2018, the last year for which data collection is available on a monthly basis<sup>4</sup>. Women and girls asking for help for the first time made up 33% of these requests, despite the difficulty of finding a time to do it, without their abusers hearing.

## Istanbul Convention under threat

In this international context of increased vulnerability of women, girls, and also of younger children, to domestic violence, it is disturbing to say the least to see declarations from representatives of some governments who want to abandon the Istanbul Convention.

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding act that in 2011 established standards to prevent and combat violence against women. In July, the Polish Minister of Justice, Zbigniew Ziobro, announced that his country will begin the process of terminating the convention, which he deemed “harmful to minors” for containing elements of the so-called gender ideology, which, if studied in schools, would undermine the foundations of Polish society. Turkey, the country in which it

2 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51705199>

3 <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf>

4 <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/2-956-donne-si-sono-rivolte-ai-centri-d-i-re-tra-il-6-aprile-e-il-3-maggio-il-33-per-cento-per-la-prima-volta/>



was created, is also thinking of abandoning the convention, which is why even Sumeyye Erdogan Bayraktar, daughter of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with her association of Islamic women Kadem, has mobilised against this decision. The parliaments of countries such as Bulgaria, Slovakia and, more recently, Hungary have failed to ratify the convention on the basis of misconceptions of the notion of 'gender,' failing to take into account the negative influence that gender stereotypes have on the justification, and perhaps even generation, of violence against women and girls. In Ukraine, despite a petition signed by more than 25,000 people, the ratification of the convention has not yet entered the parliamentary agenda.

## An increasingly violent web

Movement restrictions and school closures have also led to children spending more time online, thereby increasing their exposure to cyberbullying, pornography and sexual violence. Groomers took the opportunity to contact and then exploit children through sexual coercion and retaliation. Girls are particularly vulnerable, being featured in 90% of child abuse materials online<sup>5</sup>.

The Girls Advocacy Alliance, a coalition of non-governmental organisations promoting gender equality for girls, of which Terre des Hommes is also a part, expressed<sup>6</sup> its concern about the

5 <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Ending%20violence%20against%20children%20and%20COVID-19%20publication.pdf>

6 <https://www.terredeshommes.nl/en/latest/girls-advocacy-alliance-alarmed-over-cases-of-violence-against-women-and-children>

## AN APP TO REPORT CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

At the end of March 2020, in full lockdown, Italian police extended the use of the app Youpol, created to report episodes of drug dealing and bullying, to include crimes of violence taking place within the home.

The app allows the user to transmit messages and images in real time to state police operators; the reports are automatically geo-referenced, however it is possible for the user to change the place where the events occurred. It is also possible to call the single emergency number (112) directly from the app and where this is not yet active, the operations room of the local police headquarters (113) will answer.

It is possible to make reports anonymously for those who do not want to register by providing their data. Anyone who has been a direct or indirect witness (for example neighbours) can also report an incident by sending a message including photos and videos. The app is free to download and is available for iOS and Android devices.

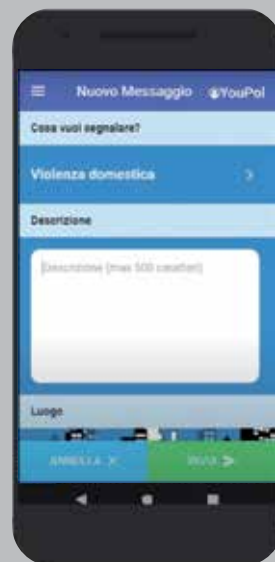




Photo: Giulio Di Sturco

situation in the Philippines. In June 2020, the country's State Police released data on child abuse recorded since quarantine began in March: 2,077 cases, with victims being mostly girls. Many involved the arrests of family members who, having lost their jobs and not knowing how to get by, had forced their daughters into engaging in online prostitution and performing sexual acts in front of a webcam, all without having to leave their homes.

Italy is also affected by this phenomenon. The months of lockdown have brought to light disturbing episodes, which confirm the increase in both the exposure to and "consumption" of violent content by teenagers. This is the case of the investigation named "Delirio", carried out by the criminal investigation department of the local Carabinieri in Siena, coordinated by the Florence Prosecutor for Minors. The investigation started in the autumn of 2019 with the complaint of a mother who had found in one of her son's

online chats child pornography videos and scenes of extreme violence being exchanged, along with Nazi symbols. In July 2020, the Carabinieri revealed that they had identified two minors from Piedmont, a boy and a girl, both 17, together with 25 other people (19 minors and six adults) residing in 13 Italian provinces, accused of the possession and distribution of child pornography as well as incitement. In the investigation, the existence of encrypted sites on the dark web (*Red Rooms*) are discussed, where, upon payment with cryptocurrency (bitcoin), it may be possible to witness live abuses of all kinds on minors. The violence, carried out by an adult and with users/spectators becoming active participants through requests, are believed to almost always end with the death of the minor involved - especially girls - and would take place in Southeast Asia. However, some dark web experts are sceptical of the actual existence of Red Rooms<sup>7</sup>.

Also, in July the postal police brought down

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.valigiablu.it/stanze-torture-deep-web/>






a network of Italian paedophiles who had exchanged child pornography material on a well-known messaging platform. The “pay per view” investigation, resulting from a report by two parents suspicious of the intense use of some social media platforms by their teenage daughter, led to the exposure of a consolidated system for the online sale of self-produced child pornography and pornographic images and videos by teenagers and adults sent in exchange for payments on

## CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN IN ITALY



SOURCE: INTERFORZE

	2009		2018		2019		Δ	
	victims <18	 %	victims <18	 %	victims <18	 %	2009 2019	2018 2019
Voluntary manslaughter*	33	42%	16	44%	14	35.71%	58%	-13%
Negligence of family duties	709	50%	914	48%	631	49.45%	-11%	-31%
Misuse of force during discipline	170	46%	347	38%	403	41.19%	137%	16%
Mistreatment within family	1.025	53%	1.965	52%	2.101	54.07%	105%	7%
Child abduction	175	49%	325	47%	237	49.37%	35%	-27%
Abandonment of minors, including disabled children	307	45%	501	40%	510	43.33%	66%	2%
Child prostitution	85	64%	69	64%	56	62.50%	-34%	-19%
Possession of pornographic material	11	73%	79	87%	88	84.09%	700%	11%
Child pornography	58	76%	199	80%	251	74.50%	333%	26%
Sexual violence	859	83%	656	89%	637	86.34%	-26%	-3%
Sexual acts with a minor	373	76%	420	77%	444	76.80%	19%	6%
Corruption of minors	105	70%	132	73%	164	76.83%	56%	24%
Aggravated sexual assault	301	77%	383	84%	403	81.39%	34%	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,211</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>5,990</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>5,939</b>	<b>60.58%</b>	<b>+41%</b>	<b>-1%</b>

Source: SDI-SSD, consolidated data. \*Operative Data - source D.C.P.C.

online accounts. Agreements were made through private chats on the basis of a “price list” published online which provided not only images and videos already produced, but also sex chat and live video chat.

## Domestic violence in Italy: it's time to talk about it seriously!

Among the photos that marked the news of 2020, the smiling faces of Elena and Diego Bressi, the two young brothers killed by their father as part of a desperate revenge against the wife who had “abandoned” him, are perhaps the ones that will leave the most vivid impression and most painful wound upon us: the image of the peaceful, happy family, contrasted with a tragedy that took place first in the mind and then in the violent arms of an adult continues to seem inexplicable, unnatural and absurd.

The family, however, as confirmed by new data collected by the Joint Forces Command of the Italian police and processed for this dossier, is not always that place of understanding, solidarity and selfless love that we want for every child. In fact, too often within a family, dynamics develop in which children end up becoming, directly or indirectly, sacrificial lambs. Thus, the stories of Elena and Diego, like that of little Evan, become symptoms of a profound malaise that is reflected in the data: it has been confirmed that in 2019 mistreatment within the family and towards children was by far the most common crime against minors, with an increase of 7% on the previous year and even a doubling (+105%) over 10 years.

We are talking about 2,101 minors (there were 1,025 in 2009), boys and girls, preadolescents or adolescents (females are the majority, 54%) whose stories reach our media only in the most shocking cases and, even more upsetting, of to which very little seems to be of interest to Italian politics,



Illustration: Indifesa, Guido Scarabottolo

except when it is beneficial to use isolated cases to win support.

It will obviously be up to others to indicate the causes of this exponential increase in cases. Here we can only point out, once again, that the cases collected are only a small part of those that take place, in silence and invisibly, between walls that should protect and not loom threateningly like those of a prison. We must only hope that this data will sound alarm bells once and for all, and that finally childhood will become a central issue for this country, starting with support for parenting and investment in education and protection.

For its part, Terre des Hommes, in addition to producing research and data on this phenomenon, has in recent years been creating an integrated system involving hospitals, local authorities, children's officers, schools and host communities. This is a system with a single goal: to offer increasingly personalised protection based on the needs of children, while helping the most fragile families with a pathway of support.

# TIMMI. A PROJECT TO PREVENT THE MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN

As is repeatedly stressed in the Istanbul Convention, the fight against gender-based violence requires, above all, prevention. An important step in this direction taken by our foundation is the Timmi project, an intervention for the interception and support of vulnerable families, created in 2019 at the Vittore Buzzi Children's Hospital in Milan. The goal is to prevent and intervene in all forms of child maltreatment. Made possible thanks to a three-year donation from Esselunga, the Timmi project aims to recognise, prevent and intervene in dysfunctional situations and therefore reduce risk in the child-parent or caregiver relationship, which, if not intercepted promptly, could lead to and sometimes does lead to forms of abuse and/or maltreatment. Families identified as vulnerable are offered a free listening and support service at the Timmi clinic located inside the Buzzi Hospital, as well as subsequent follow-up meetings. Experienced professionals are able to take charge of the case and/or refer the minors and/or family unit to the appropriate local services. The Timmi team can intercept cases directly with access to accident & emergency rooms or receive reports from hospital departments and local authorities. This allows them to act promptly to protect the minor

and prevent the onset of psychological and physical disorders resulting from the exposure of the child to forms of maltreatment.

In December 2019, the project 'The House of Timmi' was launched in conjunction with COMIN. This is a family-based host community which from the end of 2020 will host children up to five years old who have been separated from their families by judicial authority for maltreatment. The House of Timmi is located in Carugo, in a building confiscated from the 'Ndrangheta.



Photo: Laura Fazzini

## Child pornography: an unstoppable growing market

Looking through historical data, the other evidence that it is urgent to underline is that relating to the unstoppable rise of child pornography, a type of offence governed by article 600-ter of the Italian criminal code, under whose umbrella falls the use of minors under the age of 18 in the production of pornographic

performances or shows, as well as the distribution of the material produced, including electronic distribution.

In the last 10 years, child pornography crime has increased dramatically by 333%, from 58 cases to 251, with a clear prevalence of female victims: 74%. Even in comparison with 2018, child pornography is the crime that has increased the most with a rise of 26% and with 52 more victims.

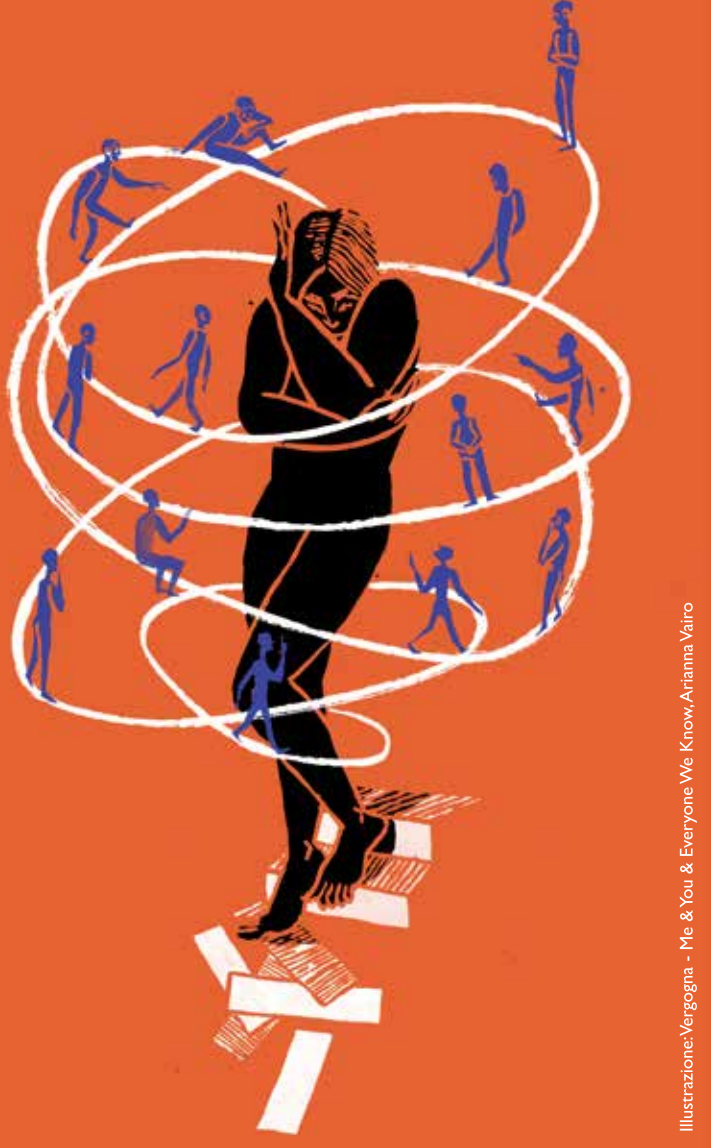


Illustrazione: Vergogna - Me & You & Everyone We Know, Arianna Vairo

In this case, though it may seem simplistic, we do not believe that an interpretation that focuses on the exponential growth of the demand and supply of pornographic material, which is now available for free, pervasively, in the constant search for differentiation, and ever more emotive, is far from the truth. It would certainly be interesting to analyse how factors such as the socio-economic condition of families, the mirage of easy earnings, the direct involvement of girls and boys in search of recognition from the world of adults or autonomy also come into play (remembering that this crime does not allow for 'consent', as declared by the Court of Cassation) and which age groups are most affected.

However, no analysis can change the objective data that sees minors increasingly victims of a crime that infringes upon fundamental rights to protection and well-being as enshrined in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights



of the Child and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (article 34), as well as expanding organised crime, a constant presence in the online pornography market.

## Sexual violence: the most serious cases are growing

The final aspect that we want to highlight here is connected to the sphere of sexual violence, where the prevalence of female victims becomes even more notable. According to data from the state police, cases of sexual violence, in contrast to other data recorded, are in sharp decline, with a drop of 26% in the last 10 years and 3% in the last year. Instead, other crimes are increasing, such as 'Sexual acts with minors', up 19% in the last decade, 'Corruption of minors', up 56%, and, above all, 'Aggravated sexual violence' (article 609-ter of the Criminal Code) which grew by 34% over the past 10 years, revealing an increase of the most hateful phenomena of violence. It must be said that the legislator, well-versed in this matter and aware of the growing attention towards cases of violence against women and the increase of the phenomenon regarding minors, has carried out an important reform with law 69 of 2019 (the so-called Code Red), listing among the aggravating circumstances all cases of violence against minors under the age of 18, with a generalised increase of penalties which, we hope, can act as a deterrent in the future.

You can read the other data in the infographics in these pages or on the Terre des Hommes website: the hope is that by being read they can serve to stimulate a new fight for children's rights. It is necessary. Paralysed as we are by the indifference of politicians, of the increasingly residual role of schools and private educational institutes not only regarding resources, but often also meaning, and by the exploitation of children in cases such as that of Bibbiano.



# indifesa Network

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE RADIO. SPEAKING OUT AGAINST STEREOTYPES, DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

“Being on the radio not only means talking about the beauty of life’s contradictions, but more importantly, giving listeners the chance to dream about a different world - a world of beauty and solidarity.” Francesca Falcini is a 21-year-old university student who lives in Torre del Greco, in the province of Naples. She has been collaborating for several years with Radio Siani, an online radio station in the town of Ercolano. The radio programme is recorded in an area confiscated from the Camorra (an Italian mafia-like criminal organisation), in a region suffering from the constant presence of illegal activities. Just like 11 other online radio stations scattered across Italy, Radio Siani is part of the **indifesa** Network, the first Italian network of online radio stations and young ambassadors, sponsored by Terre des Hommes Italy and Associazione Kreattiva.

At the end of an **indifesa** Network live interview, we speak to Francesca live on the Terre des Hommes Facebook and YouTube channels. Francesca has just finished interviewing Lucia Francesca Menna, equal opportunities councillor of the municipality of Naples. She is very happy with how the interview went, commenting “The COVID-19 emergency and subsequent lockdown have not allowed us to plan a great deal this year, but the opportunity to go live and talk about such important issues for Naples and its citizens has been exciting. It reminded me of when we attended the conference for the **indifesa** campaign by Terre des Hommes at Palazzo Montecitorio in October 2019!”

“Everything that has to do with political activity and the voluntary sector has always interested me, not only because it means I have the opportunity to make a contribution to my country (which is so

often mistreated) but also because I can change the status quo regarding stereotypes - such as gender - which have often limited me, first as a child, then as a teenager and now as a young woman.”

“As a speaker on Radio Siani, I’ve had the opportunity to become part of the **indifesa** Network. Thanks to this, in October 2019 I went to Parliament in Rome to present the **indifesa** Dossier by Terre des Hommes. I had the chance to hear the stories from the guests and speakers and it was an unforgettable experience. At the training organised the day before the event with all the speakers from the radio programmes in the Network, we were able to listen to Professor Nicoletta Del Franco who told us about the difficult lives some women are forced to endure in different countries around the world. It had a





profound impact on me the way she told us about these women using professionalism and passion and the clear need for solidarity which is require to change their lives. So much so that it made me realise how I would like to take my professional path in that direction: supporting and setting up projects for the emancipation of women around the world, starting in my own city!"

"During my experience in Rome, I had the chance to meet ministers, parliamentarians, and representatives from various organisations for the first time, who answered our questions regarding the work that is taking place in Italy for equal opportunities, the emancipation of women and the fight against gender stereotypes. I was very excited to be able to interview minister Spadafora and even if I had prepared myself for the occasion, I was struggling to believe it was real!"

"What has struck me the most in recent years is the opportunities the **indifesa** Network has created for us very young ambassadors, all from different backgrounds. We are able to have such direct contact with the people who represent us, both nationally in Parliament and locally in the towns and cities where our radio stations operate. This element is key, because these meetings give us the possibility - but also the responsibility - to look beyond the borders of our daily life. It opens our eyes to new issues and stories that we don't always talk about, at least from the point of view of us young people", concludes Falcini.

The **indifesa** Network project - funded by the Equal Opportunities Department of the Prime Minister's Office, and the BIC & BIC Foundation - supports the Network's online radio stations which dedicate a section of their programmes to the fight against violence, gender discrimination and stereotypes, putting young people's ideas at the forefront. These radio stations also address





TO FIND OUT MORE AND LISTEN TO THE BROADCASTS OF THE PROJECT, PLEASE VISIT [WWW.NETWORKINDIFESA.ORG](http://WWW.NETWORKINDIFESA.ORG)

issues such as bullying, cyberbullying, sexting and hate speech. The focus of the project is on youth leadership and the idea that meetings and open discussions between peers are essential for implementing processes of change in society. Alongside ScuolaZoo, Terre des Hommes has been gathering the opinions of young people from Generation Z on these issues since 2014, together with the **indifesa** monitoring centre. The monitoring centre's work has continued even in this strange year, including two studies in particular (one national and one on Milan) regarding students' concerns at the time of the coronavirus emergency and the new method of studying at school via online learning. We have reached more than 5,000 young students and also small children who have told us what they experienced during the lockdown period.

Around the same time, **Terre des Hommes Live** was launched on the Terre des Hommes Facebook and YouTube channels, and live broadcasts on various topics were set up. During these broadcasts, young **indifesa** Network radio reporters interviewed experts and representatives from various institutions - people such as Vincenzo

Spadafora, Minister for Sport and Youth Policies; Arianna Viscogliosi, former Equal Opportunities Councillor of the municipality of Genoa; Benedetta Chiavegatti, health worker and head of the Foodgame project; Alessio Rocco Ranieri, developmental psychologist; and Mirco Fagioli from the Health Protection Agency (ATS) of Milan (ATS). They spoke about issues such as youth participation, peer education, gender-based violence, the psychological effects of lockdown and child labour.

I conclude the chat with Francesca by asking her what are her plans for the future in radio in such an uncertain climate: "Just like other speakers and ambassadors in the Network who I'm in contact with, I want to continue speaking, informing and creating opportunities for discussion. However, most importantly, we must involve the public and be at the forefront in our cities, especially at a time like this, so we can create a network of citizens who are involved in local activities and who are vigilant and conscious of their rights."

**Manuela D'Andrea**, **indifesa** Network project coordinator



Photo: Giulio Di Sturco

## From 2012 to today: Terre des Hommes celebrates its first 9 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, Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Ecuador, Jordan, India, Iraq, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Peru.

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/](http://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!

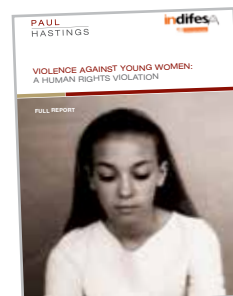
## The Girl Declaration and a petition in support of Maud Chifamba



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 **Scuola Zoo** 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 20,000 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 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 service 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 Hommes, the Milan Medical Association and the **SVSeD**.



Photo: Eugenio Grosso

In October 2019 we opened the **Timmi** space at the **Children's Hospital Vittore Buzzi of Milan**, which offers listening and support to fragile families, aimed to preventing violence against children. The service is financed by **Esselunga**.

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/2Qc1fva>.

## 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](http://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](http://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

Since 2017 we have been asking 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 each year 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 Foud** 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.

In 2019 the speakers of **Stand Up for Girls** included Stefania Andreoli, adolescent psychotherapist; Alessandra De Tommasi, journalist; Diana Gini, student of the ScuolaZoo community; Germano Lanzoni, actor and web star; Marianne Mirage, singer-songwriter; Diego Passoni, radio and television host; and Stella Pulpo, writer and creator of the blog "Memories of a Vagina". A special moment was **Nandhini's** testimony - a young ambassador of the fight against child and forced marriages in India. She was accompanied on stage by Maria Grazia Calandrone, poetess and RAI presenter who had written a powerful text based on the young lady's story.







## The ProteggiMI Tour for the Childhood and Adolescent Guarantor of Milan

In 2018, Terre des Hommes launched the project “**Childhood and Adolescent Guarantor - Support actions**” whose main objectives were the **spread of knowledge of children’s rights among the children themselves and among the operators who deal with them in various ways in the city of Milan**. Created for the Office of the Guarantor for Childhood and Adolescence of the Municipality of Milan, the project was working on 4 levels, which were all interconnected (school, research, health, and campaigns on the communication and promotion of rights) with the collaboration of various partners. Almost 1,000 high school students participated in the **ProteggiMI Tour**, carried out in collaboration with **ScuolaZoo**, to reflect on delicate issues such as **violence and gender discrimination, bullying, cyberbullying and sexting** in order to stimulate the involvement of students to take positive actions. Campoteatrale created the show **JukeBox of Rights** on the issues of hardships in adolescence and it was replicated several times in Milan. On the same theme was made the short film “*Invisible*”.

## A statue for the abused girls

In June 2020 Terre des Hommes launched a petition to ask the **Mayor of Milan Beppe Sala** to dedicate a statue to all the girls who are victims of abuse and violence. This is to give a tangible and lasting sign of the commitment of our community to reverse the course and move towards a more equal and fairer society, where every child can grow up sheltered from violence and fully express their potential.

Many personalities from the world of politics, culture and entertainment have already signed up to the petition, which you can sign at this link: <https://bit.ly/PetizioneStatua>



## Consultami - the first indifesa space

In October 2020, the first Indifesa space will be opened in Parma, in one of the most tough districts of the city, thanks to the support of Bata. It is a clinic where women, girls and children who are victims of physical, psychological or economic violence can access freely for support. The centre will offer psychological assistance, a legal desk along with many other activities carried out with schools and local associations, with the aim of preventing violence, gender discrimination and promoting social inclusion.



## 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 October 2018, all the major media channels made broadcasts on the presentation of the Dossier Indifesa and its data. National and local radio networks, the press and online media have also reported the Dossier's data. The potential reach of the **indifesa** campaign, with the hashtags **#indifesa** and **#liberaè**, reached over **19** million

On the occasion of the **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**, we organized a tweet up in which we involved a social team of 14 web influencers (mothers, fathers, lifestyle, communication) to convey the key campaign messages. The social activity reached over 7 million people and generated over 1000 results on Twitter.

## Companies for **indifesa**

Over the years, many companies have supported the campaign. Since 2019 Indifesa projects are supported by BIC®, BIC Foundation, BATA, MainAD, Valvorobica, Zanetti Foundation, Douglas.

## Celebrity endorsements

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 and #OrangeRevolution**.



Nina Zilli



# indifes

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For further information:

[www.terredeshommes.it](http://www.terredeshommes.it)

[www.indifesa.org](http://www.indifesa.org)

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