

# Chapter 4

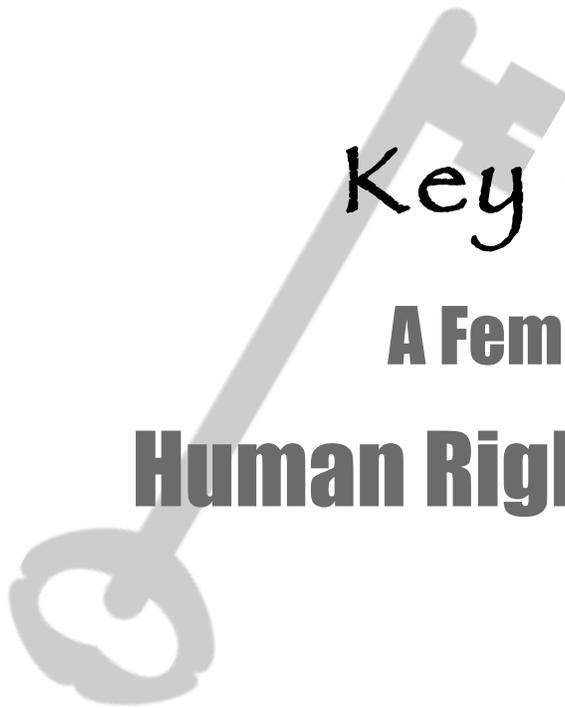
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# Global Citizenship

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Key Concepts:

**A Feminist Approach to  
Human Rights Education**



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# Chapter 4

## Key Concept:

# Global Citizenship

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### DEFINITION

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The US Fund for UNICEF:

Drawing from many sources, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF defines a global citizen as someone who understands interconnectedness, respects and values diversity, has the ability to challenge injustice, and takes action in personally meaningful ways. Today's education for global citizenship empowers students to understand and exercise their human rights in ways that demonstrate solidarity with human beings everywhere and make a positive impact on the world.

*(Global Citizenship 3)*

Characteristics of a global citizen:

- Feels responsible for helping others, in one's own community and distant places.
- Respects the rights of others, in one's own community and distant places.
- Is open-minded and interested in learning new things about the world.
- Has empathy for others, including understanding and concern for others' feelings, in one's own community and distant places.
- Demonstrates concern for the environment, locally and globally.
- Believes people should be treated fairly, in one's own community and distant places.
- Is able to solve problems or disagreements with others, including compromising and finding solutions together.

*(Exploring Our Roles 40)*

Oxfam UK, *Oxfam Education*:

Oxfam sees a global citizen as someone who:

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity
- has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global
- is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions

## HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS

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From the *United Nations Millennium Declaration*:

[I]n addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.

From UNESCO, *Global Citizenship Education: An Emerging Perspective*

Global citizenship [refers to] a sense of belonging to the global community and common humanity, with its presumed members experiencing solidarity and collective identity among themselves and collective responsibility at the global level.

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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### The Network of Mutuality

Global citizenship is the most recent of this project’s four key concepts. Yet the core principles on which this concept rests were articulated by Martin Luther King, Jr. nearly five decades ago, in a 1965 commencement address at Oberlin College:

First, I'd like to say that we are challenged to achieve a world perspective. Anyone who feels that we can live in isolation today, anyone who feels that we can live without being concerned about other individuals and other nations is sleeping through a revolution. The world in which we live is geographically one. The great challenge now is to make it one in terms of brotherhood.

\* \* \*

All I'm saying is simply this: that all mankind is tied together; all life is interrelated, and we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

(par. 6, 9)

In this speech, King argues for a new ideal of global civic engagement—one that resonates with Article 29 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: “Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.”

By acknowledging that people have “duties to the community,” the UDHR modifies the implied individualism of the first generation of human rights—rights that protect individuals from government interference. Article 29 asserts that individuals can only flourish within a community. This insight informs the second generation of rights, which deal with the responsibilities that communities or governments—duty-bearers—have to create just and favorable living conditions for their citizens.

The concept *global citizenship* extends the imperative to create a just and humane future to individuals. Global citizens embrace King’s insight that “we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.” They understand that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our “duties to the community” extend to the entire world, including future generations. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

asserted in his message for Human Solidarity Day 2013, “We all have a role in overcoming today’s economic, political, environmental and social challenges, and we must all share the costs and benefits of sustainable development according to needs and ability.”

### **Fostering Global Citizenship**

*The UN Secretary General’s Global Initiative on Education* emphasizes the importance of global citizenship for Human Rights Education: indeed, “Foster Global Citizenship” is one of the Initiative’s three major goals:

#### Priority #3. Foster Global Citizenship

The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it. Education must also be relevant in answering the big questions of the day. Technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century.

The activities in this chapter equip students to meet these challenges by introducing them to important formal human rights instruments: the *Convention the Rights of the Child*, the *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the *Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*. Along with the UDHR, these covenants form the International Bill of Human Rights.

The final activity in this chapter introduces students to the contributions of informal human rights instruments: *non-governmental organizations* (NGOs) dedicated to creating the world envisioned by Martin Luther King, Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, and René Cassin—a peaceful and just world that is “one in terms of brotherhood.”

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## Activity 14. Caring for Children: *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*

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This activity was inspired by the work of *Professor Lesley Loudon*, Photography Instructor at Cabrillo College, Foothill College, and West Valley College. I am grateful to Professor Loudon for her expert guidance during the development of this activity.

This lesson introduces students to a major human rights document, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Using an analytic pedagogy, the homework activity asks students to analyze visual elements of a collection of photographs. Then, the lesson uses healing and caring approaches as students make emotional connections with the children portrayed in these photographs.

Objectives	<p>Develop media analysis skills by examining the visual elements in a UNICEF photo-essay.</p> <p>Gain familiarity with the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>.</p> <p>Strengthen emotional intelligence by identifying dignity in representations of children around the world.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Websites</b></p> <p><i>The Danger of a Single Story</i>: A TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie  <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html">www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html</a></p> <p>UNICEF photo-essay on childhood  <a href="http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/Flash/photoessays/english/E_1_childhood.html">http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/Flash/photoessays/english/E_1_childhood.html</a></p> <p><b>Handouts</b></p> <p>Handout 14A— <i>Photography Analysis</i> (2 pages)</p> <p>Handout 14B— <i>The Rights of the Child</i></p>
Time	80 minutes
Process	<p><b>Homework</b>—to prepare for this lesson, each student should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Watch Chimamanda Adichie’s TED Talk, <i>The Danger of a Single Story</i>.</li> <li>▪ View all 5 chapters of UNICEF’s <i>Childhood</i> photo-essay and use Handout 14A to examine one photograph in each chapter.</li> <li>▪ Find two photographs (or take two selfies) that represent two different aspects of the student’s identity. Bring these two photographs to class.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>In-Class Activities:</b></p> <p>INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE: Students will need internet access in the classroom for their discussion of the UNICEF photo-essay.</p> <p>First, lead a discussion of Chimamanda Adichie’s TEDTalk by focusing on this assertion:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.</p> <p>Working in teams of 3-4, students compare their homework notes (Handout 14A) about multiple stories in photographs from the UNICEF photo-essay. Each team selects one photograph and describes the multiple stories it contains. After teams report on their photographs, ask them to consider how the images reveal the dignity of the children and adults in the photo-essay. Keep in mind Adichie’s claim that “Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”</p> <p>After all teams have reported on their analysis of an image, give students Handout 14B— <i>The Rights of the Child</i>. Direct them to read these excerpts from the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> (CRC) and identify specific rights linked to the stories in the photo-essay.</p> <p>Finally, working in pairs, students discuss how the photographs they brought to class reveal different aspects of their identity. Have each student write a list of the feelings these images convey. Then direct them to connect these feelings with one of the images in the UNICEF photo-essay.</p>
<p>Extending the Learning</p>	<p>As homework, have students take a “selfie” that conveys a sense of dignity.</p> <p><u>Simple Selfie Instructions provided by Photography Professor Lesley Loudon:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You may take the image using a cellphone or any camera.</li> <li>2. The selfie can be a photograph of you in a mirror or even a photo of you taken by a friend.</li> </ol> <p><u>Consider the:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background setting or location for your selfie and how it may suggest dignity.</li> <li>• Props &amp; use of symbolism to address dignity.</li> <li>• Your attire to address dignity.</li> <li>• Your pose, body language, and facial expression and how these suggest dignity.</li> <li>• Camera angle that will best portray dignity.</li> </ul>

## Photography Analysis

Look at all 5 chapters of UNICEF’s *Childhood* photo-essay:

[http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/Flash/photoessays/english/E\\_1\\_childhood.html](http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/Flash/photoessays/english/E_1_childhood.html)

For each chapter, identify an image that communicates more than one story—a story not only of challenges and catastrophes but also of resilience and dignity. Use the table below to analyze these multi-dimensional images.

Column A	Column B
<p>Choose a photograph. Copy the caption. Select words that describe multiple stories in this image.</p>	<p>Identify visual elements (facial expressions, clothing, positions and gestures, setting, lighting, background, symbols, camera angle, close-up or distant shot, cropped shot, etc.) that contribute to these stories.</p>
<p><b>Example:</b> <b>Childhood</b>, image # 12 Caption: <i>The world must reaffirm and recommit to its moral and legal responsibilities to children.</i> Words that describe multiple stories in this image:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>friendship</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>poverty</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>hope</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>connection</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>responsibility</i></p>	<p>Visual elements that contribute to these stories:</p> <p><i>Friendship: Positions and gestures—two boys are sitting close to each other, their arms touching.</i></p> <p><i>Poverty: Clothing—one boy is wearing a ragged brown tee-shirt.</i></p> <p><i>Hope: Clothing—one boy is wearing a fresh blue tee-shirt bearing these words: All Children, All Rights, Everywhere.</i></p> <p><i>Connection: Symbols—both shirts have the UNICEF logo, connecting the boys’ dreams.</i></p> <p><i>Responsibility: Camera work: cropping makes us focus on the words and symbols on the boys’ shirts, reinforcing the message of the caption: the world’s responsibility to these children.</i></p>
<p><b>Poverty</b>, image # ____ Caption:  Words that describe multiple stories in this image:</p>	<p>Visual elements that contribute to these stories:</p>

<p><b>Conflict</b>, image # ____</p> <p>Caption:</p>  <p>Words that describe multiple stories in this image:</p>	<p>Visual elements that contribute to these stories:</p>
<p><b>HIV/AIDS</b>, image # ____</p> <p>Caption:</p>  <p>Words that describe multiple stories in this image:</p>	<p>Visual elements that contribute to these stories:</p>
<p><b>A Childhood for Every Child</b>, image # ____</p> <p>Caption:</p>  <p>Words that describe multiple stories in this image:</p>	<p>Visual elements that contribute to these stories:</p>

## THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A summary of the rights in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted in 1989

**Article 22 (Refugee children):** Children have the right to special protection and help if they are refugees (if they have been forced to leave their home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

**Article 23 (Children with disabilities):** Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support, as well as all the rights in the Convention, so that they can live full and independent lives.

**Article 24 (Health and health services):** Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

**Article 25 (Review of treatment in care):** Children who are looked after by their local authorities, rather than their parents, have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate. Their care and treatment should always be based on “the best interests of the child”.

**Article 26 (Social security):** Children – either through their guardians or directly – have the right to help from the government if they are poor or in need.

**Article 27 (Adequate standard of living):** Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

**Article 28: (Right to education):** All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.

**Article 29 (Goals of education):** Children’s education should develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others’ human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

**Article 38 (War and armed conflicts):** Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. The Convention’s Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.

**Article 39 (Rehabilitation of child victims):** Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

— Excerpts from UNICEF, *Fact Sheet:  
A Summary of the Rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*

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## Activity 15. International Bill of Human Rights *Global Journeys: Cambodia, Haiti, Nepal, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Peru, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan*

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This lesson introduces students to two UN documents that implement the goals of the UDHR: the *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Together these three instruments comprise the **International Bill of Human Rights**.

Objective	<p>Gain knowledge of the components in the International Bill of Human Rights: the UDHR, the <i>Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</i> and the <i>Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i>.</p> <p>Examine the interconnections among these rights through the experiences of nine girls in different parts of the world.</p> <p>Investigate the importance of girls' education as a goal in itself and as a means for strengthening human rights.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Video and Film</b></p> <p><i>The Covenants</i>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8kP3pr6XPU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8kP3pr6XPU</a></p> <p><i>Girl Rising</i></p> <p>NOTE: If time is an issue, or if a copy of the film is not available, two segments of this film are available online:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Suma—Nepal: &lt; <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk2Q7WLzn0s">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk2Q7WLzn0s</a> &gt;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Senna—Peru: &lt; <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P6nL7PXILw">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P6nL7PXILw</a> &gt;</p> <p><b>Handouts</b></p> <p>Handout 15A—<i>Definitions</i></p> <p>Handout 3B—<i>Categories of Rights in the UDHR</i> (4 pages)</p> <p>Handout 15B—<i>International Bill of Human Rights</i> (2 pages)</p> <p>Handout 15C—<i>Human Rights in Girl Rising</i> (2 pages)</p>
Time	<p>Phase 1: 20 minutes</p> <p>Phase 2: 2 hours (three 40-minute sessions).</p>

<p>Process</p>	<p><b>Phase 1. The International Bill of Human Rights</b></p> <p>To introduce the three elements of the <i>International Bill of Human Rights</i>, give students Handout 15A—<i>Definitions</i> and show the 3½-minute video <i>The Covenants</i> in class.</p> <p>After discussing the terms introduced in <i>The Covenants</i>, give students Handout 3B—<i>Categories of Rights in the UDHR</i> and Handout 15B—<i>International Bill of Human Rights</i>. Divide the class into 9 teams based on these sections of the UDHR:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fundamental Rights</li> <li>2. Personal Safety</li> <li>3. Legal Rights</li> <li>4. Personal Rights</li> <li>5. Political Rights</li> <li>6. Social Rights</li> <li>7. Economic Rights</li> <li>8. Cultural Rights</li> <li>9. Responsibilities</li> </ol> <p>Give teams 5 minutes to locate the Covenant Articles that correspond to their section of the UDHR. As teams report on their findings, students can use the UDHR column on Handout 51B to note these correspondences.</p> <p>Next, encourage students to discuss differences between the UDHR and the Covenants. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Both Covenants are more explicit than the UDHR about equality between women and men.</li> <li>▪ Both Covenants acknowledge group rights, which are not addressed in the UDHR.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 2. Human Rights and the Education of Girls</b></p> <p>Give students Handout 15C—Human Rights in <i>Girl Rising</i>, and show the following segments of <i>Girl Rising</i> over three class periods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sokha, Wadley, and Suma (31 minutes)</li> <li>2. Yasmin, Asmera, and Ruksana (35 minutes)</li> <li>3. Senna, Mariama, and Amina (30 minutes)</li> </ol>
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	<p>After each showing, give students a few minutes to make notes on Handout 15C about rights that are honored or violated in these stories about girls and their quest for education.</p> <p>While discussing the relationship between education and other human rights in the film, encourage students to make similar connections between human rights and their own educational journeys: Ask them to identify the obstacles they have faced as well as the support they have received on their educational journeys.</p>
<p>Extending the Learning</p>	<p><b>Videos</b></p> <p><i>Focus Human Rights.</i>  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCAA1D8F69131A393">http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCAA1D8F69131A393</a></p> <p>The WissensWerte Project in Bremen, Germany produced this series of four animated videos on human rights. For more information about the dimensions (or generations) of human rights, students can watch the videos on the first dimension, second dimension, and third dimension of rights.</p>

## Definitions

**Convention:** A legally binding agreement between nations designed to protect human rights (used interchangeably with treaty and covenant). Conventions have more legal force than declarations because governments agree to enforce a convention once it has been ratified.

**Covenant:** A legally binding agreement between nations. While a covenant has the same legal force as a convention or a treaty, the word *covenant* connotes an especially intense promise to honor and uphold agreements. Two major international human rights covenants were adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976: the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR).

**Declaration:** A document comprising standards that nations agree upon as a statement of aspirations and goals. Unlike a *treaty* or *convention*, a declaration is not legally binding. Nevertheless, declarations issued by the UN General Assembly are highly influential as statements of internationally accepted standards.

**Generations of Rights:** A system for classifying human rights into three categories (also called *dimensions*). The first generation comprises the civil and political rights of individuals. The second generation includes the individual's economic, social, and cultural rights. The third generation addresses the rights of groups; these include the rights of cultural groups to their language, religion, and traditions; the rights of communities of people to sustainable development, and environmental rights of present and future generations.

**International Bill of Human Rights:** The combination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its Optional Protocols, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

**Protocol:** A treaty that modifies another treaty by adding additional procedures or substantive provisions.

**Signing and Ratification:** The process by which a government formally adopts a treaty. In a democracy, the head of State first signs the treaty, after which the representative government body (such as the parliament or congress) confirms agreement to the legal obligations of the treaty.

**Reservation:** The exceptions that State Parties make to a treaty (i.e., provisions that they do not agree to follow). Reservations, however, may not undermine the fundamental objective and purpose of the treaty.

**Treaty:** A formal agreement between nations, which defines and modifies their mutual duties and obligations (a treaty which may be ratified by more than two States Parties is a multilateral treaty, sometimes known as a convention). When conventions are adopted by the UN General Assembly, they create legally binding international obligations for the Member States that have ratified the treaty.

— Adapted from *Close the Gap: An Educator Guide*, University of Minnesota Human Rights Center

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## International Bill of Rights: the UDHR and the Covenants

UDHR	Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Articles 2-15: Rights of Individuals</u></b></p> <p><b>Article 2.</b> Freedom from discrimination</p> <p><b>Article 3.</b> Equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, and cultural rights</p> <p><b>Article 4.</b> Limits on temporary restrictions of rights in times of public emergency.</p> <p><b>Article 5.</b> No person, group or government may destroy any of these rights.</p> <p><b>Articles 6-8.</b> Right to work, to choose one's employment, and to receive vocational training</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Right to just and favorable conditions of work, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fair wages and equal pay for equal work;</li> <li>wages ensuring a decent living for the worker's family;</li> <li>safe and healthy working conditions;</li> <li>equal opportunity for job promotions;</li> <li>rest, leisure, and limitations of working hours</li> </ul> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Right to form and join trade unions and the right to strike</p> <p><b>Article 9.</b> Right to social security</p> <p><b>Article 10.</b> Protection and assistance to families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Right of both spouses to freely consent to marriage</li> <li>Protection for mothers before and after childbirth</li> <li>Protections for children, without discrimination, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>laws protecting children from economic exploitation</li> <li>laws protecting children in dangerous or harmful work</li> <li>laws prohibiting child labor below legal age limits</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Article 11.</b> Right to an adequate standard of living for oneself and one's family, including adequate food, clothing and housing</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Freedom from hunger; governments will improve food production and cooperate to distribute food worldwide.</p> <p><b>Article 12.</b> Right to physical and mental health care; governments will take steps to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduce infant mortality</li> <li>improve environmental and industrial hygiene</li> <li>prevent, treat or control epidemic and occupational diseases</li> <li>assure medical services to everyone</li> </ul> <p><b>Articles 13-14.</b> Right to education; governments shall provide compulsory, free primary education to all children.</p> <p><b>Article 15.</b> Right to take part in cultural life and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Article 1: Rights of Groups</u></b></p> <p><b>Article 1.</b> Right of all peoples to self-determination, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to freely determine their political status</li> <li>to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development</li> <li>to freely use their wealth and natural resources</li> </ul> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A people may not be deprived of its own means of subsistence</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Articles 16-30: Implementation</u></b></p> <p><b>Articles 16-25:</b> Specific elements of the operation of the Covenant.</p> <p><b>Articles 26-30:</b> The ratification process by which the Covenant becomes a legally binding document.</p>

## International Bill of Rights: the UDHR and the Covenants

UDHR	Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
	<b>Rights of Individuals</b>
	<p><b>Article 2 &amp; 26.</b> Freedom from discrimination and right to protection against discrimination; right to effective remedy if one's rights are violated</p> <p><b>Article 3.</b> Equal rights of men and women to enjoy all civil and political rights</p> <p><b>Article 4.</b> Limits on temporary restrictions of rights in times of public emergency.</p> <p><b>Article 5.</b> No person, group or government may destroy any of these rights.</p> <p><b>Article 6.</b> Right to life; limitations on the death penalty in countries that have not yet abolished it</p> <p><b>Article 7.</b> Freedom from torture or cruel or degrading treatment or punishment, including medical or scientific experiments conducted without one's consent</p> <p><b>Article 8.</b> Freedom from slavery, servitude, or compulsory labor</p> <p><b>Articles 9-11.</b> Freedom from arbitrary arrest; right of prisoners to be treated with humanity; aim of imprisonment is reformation and social rehabilitation; freedom from imprisonment for inability to fulfill a contractual obligation</p> <p><b>Articles 12-13.</b> Freedom of movement; freedom to choose one's residence and to leave and enter one's own country; freedom from unlawful expulsion from a country</p> <p><b>Articles 14-16.</b> Right to recognition as a person before the law, to equality before the law, and to a fair trial</p> <p><b>Article 17.</b> Freedom from unlawful interference with one's privacy, family, or correspondence; freedom from attacks on one's reputation</p> <p><b>Article 18.</b> Freedom of thought, conscience and religion</p> <p><b>Article 19.</b> Freedom of opinion and expression; freedom to seek receive and impart information and ideas</p> <p><b>Article 20.</b> Prohibition of war propaganda or advocacy of hatred that incites discrimination, hostility or violence</p> <p><b>Article 21.</b> Right to peaceful assembly</p> <p><b>Article 22.</b> Freedom of association, including the right to join a trade union</p> <p><b>Article 23.</b> Right of adult men and women to freely consent to marry and form a family; equal rights and responsibilities of spouses within marriage and at its dissolution</p> <p><b>Article 24.</b> Right of children to protection provided by their families, society and nations, without discrimination of any kind</p> <p><b>Article 25.</b> Right of citizens to take part in public affairs, to vote, and to have access to public service.</p>
	<b>Articles 1 and 27: Rights of Groups</b>
	<p><b>Article 1.</b> Right of all peoples to self-determination, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to freely determine their political status</li> <li>to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development</li> <li>to freely use their wealth and natural resources</li> </ul> <p>A people may not be deprived of its own means of subsistence</p> <p><b>Article 27.</b> Rights of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion, and use their own language</p>
	<b>Articles 28-53: Implementation</b>
	<p><b>Articles 28-47:</b> Specific elements of the operation of the Covenant.</p> <p><b>Articles 48-53:</b> The ratification process by which the Covenant becomes a legally binding document.</p>

Handout 15C

***Girl Rising:***  
**A Human Rights Analysis**

Find examples of human rights that are honored or dishonored in the stories in *Girl Rising*. Use the summary of UN Conventions in Handout 15A to decide which UN instrument protects these rights.

<b>Sokha – Cambodia</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Wadley – Haiti</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Suma – Nepal</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Yasmin – Egypt</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:

<b>Asmera – Ethiopia</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Ruksana – India</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Senna – Peru</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Mariama – Sierra Leone</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:
<b>Amina – Afghanistan</b>	
Economic, social, or cultural rights:	Civil or political rights:

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## Activity 16. Bridging Cultures

### *Global Journeys: USA, England, Australia, Senegal*

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In an influential article in the *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, human rights attorney Isabelle Gunning describes a method for bridging cultural divides about “challenging cultural practices” such as female genital cutting (“Arrogant Perception 191-3). I am grateful to Professor Karen Dugger, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Research on Women at Towson University, for introducing me to Professor Gunning’s thought-provoking work.

This lesson applies Gunning’s method to classroom discussions of FGC. First, students examine “challenging cultural practices” in Western culture—cosmetic FGC performed on children as well as adult women in the United States, England, and Australia. This information enables students to think critically about the cultural context surrounding women’s decisions to undergo labiaplasty/FGC. Next, students study the cultural context of ritual FGC in Senegal, and they examine the strategies used by Senegalese activists working to end this culturally entrenched practice. Finally, students compare strategies used by human rights NGOs in Senegal and the USA.

**A Note on Terminology:** To encourage respectful communication, I use the term *female genital cutting* (FGC), which provides a concise factual description of all forms of this practice—in the USA as well as in developing countries—without the suggestion of medical supervision implied by “surgery” or the ethnocentric judgment implied by “mutilation.” Gunning urges anti-FGC activists to pay attention to audience and context when choosing terms:

Naming must go on at multiple levels for different audiences. Harsh and blunt language [such as FGM] at the international level reveals respect for the lives of women and girls by placing their pain and suffering on the same level, internationally, with acknowledged public harm. At the grassroots, educational level, however, more muted tones carry respect for the cultural contexts and tensions in which particular women and girls struggle to survive. Whatever the name and whatever the level, the ultimate goal, eradicating surgeries, remains the same.

(“Cautionary Tale” 119-20)

Professor Gunning prefers the term *female genital surgery* to describe both cosmetic and ritual genital cutting. I encourage students to consider nuances of meaning carefully and to choose language that reflects their values and goals.

**A Note on Assumptions about Ritual FGC:** Phase 3 of this lesson focuses on the work of human rights educators working to end FGC in one African country, Senegal. This country-specific focus helps students avoid errors that historian Claire Robertson refers to as “the three r’s” regarding representations of Africa.” Robertson warns against “reducing all of Africa to one uncivilized place; reducing African women to the status of their genitals, presumed to be

infibulated, and Africans to being sadistic torturers or victims; and reducing all FGC to its worst form, infibulation” (60). By identifying similarities between cosmetic FGC in the USA and ritual FGC in Senegal, students gain knowledge that will help them avoid making reductive assumptions.

Objectives	<p>Examine human rights issues regarding female genital cutting (FGC) in four countries: England, Australia, Senegal, and the United States.</p> <p>Encourage respectful intercultural communication among global citizens from countries with different cultural traditions.</p> <p>Examine approaches taken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote human rights to physical integrity.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Videos and Film</b></p> <p><i>The Shape of Water</i></p> <p><i>Inner Critic and Friends</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.evidently.com/portfolio/case/dove_virals_inner_critic_and_friends">http://www.evidently.com/portfolio/case/dove_virals_inner_critic_and_friends</a></p> <p><b>Handouts</b></p> <p>Handout 16A—<i>Advertisements and Articles on FGC</i> (2 pages)</p> <p>Handout 16B—<i>Intersex People and Human Rights</i> (3 pages)</p> <p>Handout 16C—<i>Notes on NGOs</i> (2 pages)</p> <p><b>Websites</b></p> <p><i>Tostan: Dignity for All</i> &lt; <a href="http://www.tostan.org/">http://www.tostan.org/</a> &gt;</p> <p><i>Advocates for Informed Choice</i> &lt; <a href="http://aiclegal.org/">http://aiclegal.org/</a> &gt;</p>
Time	Two class sessions.
Process	<p><b>Phase 1. Challenging Cultural Practices: USA and England</b></p> <p><i>Brainstorming Session</i></p> <p>(NOTE: This exercise works best if students do <i>not</i> know that the rest of the lesson is about FGC.)</p> <p>Ask students to make a list of ways that people in the United States alter their bodies, either temporarily or permanently. After one minute, ask each student to call out one example of a body alteration, and write these on the board as each student makes a contribution. When everyone has named one body alteration, add “labiaplasty” to the list. Give students Handout 16A and read the advertisements out loud. Then lead a discussion during which students probe possible reasons for American women’s interest in cosmetic genital surgery.</p>

*FGC and Body Image*

Show the videos *Inner Critic* and *Friends* (3½ minutes). After discussing these videos briefly, give students 5-10 minutes to read the *Guardian* article “A Cut Too Far” by journalist Viv Groskop. Then have students discuss the videos and article in small groups. Important: make sure that all teams have men and women in them. Have teams discuss whether they agree or disagree about Groskop’s conclusion:

It is distressing to think that women are measuring themselves up against an unattainable ideal, often inspired by pornography. And that, despite all the risks, they see surgery—rather than talking about their insecurities—as the solution. This seems like the final frontier in body hatred.

Ask the teams to discuss whether it would be beneficial or harmful to refer to an elective labiaplasty as a “mutilation.” Encourage students to think about how different audiences might react to this label. Audiences to consider: plastic surgeons, psychologists, anthropologists, teenage girls or middle-aged women seeking this surgery.

**Phase 2. Human Rights and Physical Integrity**

*Human Rights of Intersex People*

Give students 10-15 minutes to read Handout 17B— *Intersex People and Human Rights*. Then ask students to list the human rights issues raised in these readings.

Discuss whether it would be beneficial or harmful to refer to a “normalizing” surgery as a “mutilation” *if the operation occurred without the patient’s consent*. Encourage students to think about how different audiences might react to this label. Audiences to consider: pediatric surgeons, the parents of an intersex child, an adult intersex person who was operated on as an infant.

*Women in Senegal and the USA*

Give students Handout 16C—*Notes on NGOs* and have them read the *UNFPA News* article on Tostan’s work in Senegal. Based on what they’ve learned about cosmetic FGC in the USA and ritual FGC in Senegal, ask students to consider how social attitudes toward women’s bodies in these two countries are similar. While there are also significant differences, these similarities can help us understand the persistence of FGC in both societies. Remind students that cosmetic female genital surgery is *increasing in popularity* in the USA.

Finally, explain that the homework assignment on Handout 16C guides students in investigating two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that address FGC, one in Senegal, and one in the USA, that contribute to the process of cultural change.

	<p><b>Phase 3. Human Rights and Cultural Change</b></p> <p><b>Homework</b>—Each student should spend 20-30 minutes studying these websites and making notes on Handout 16C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Tostan: Dignity for All</i> &lt; <a href="http://www.tostan.org/">http://www.tostan.org/</a> &gt;</li> <li>▪ <i>Advocates for Informed Choice</i> &lt; <a href="http://aiclegal.org/">http://aiclegal.org/</a> &gt;</li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Activities:</b></p> <p>Show portions of the film <i>The Shape of Water</i> (18 minutes total) that illuminate the debate about FGC in Senegal. Three sections of the film deal with this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ minutes 2:45-9:00;</li> <li>▪ minutes 34-39;</li> <li>▪ minutes 42:45-49:30.</li> </ul> <p>For class discussion, the last section is most useful because it depicts Senegalese women, men, and high-school girls discussing their beliefs about FGC.</p> <p>Have students compare the information in this film with the impressions they gathered from examining Tostan’s website. Next, ask them to compare and contrast the human rights issues addressed by Tostan and AIC. Then have students compare and contrast the strategies used by these two NGOs to promote human rights.</p> <p>Finally, ask students to make a list of the cultural challenges faced by these NGOs. While they are doing this, draw a picture of a bridge with labels as shown in Figure 16. This drawing provides a visual representation of how we can bridge two cultures by studying challenges to human rights at home as well as abroad.</p>
<p>Extending the Learning</p>	<p><b>For further study of Tostan’s work in Senegal:</b></p> <p>Kristof, Nicholas and Sheryl WuDunn. “Grassroots vs. Treetops.” <i>Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide</i>. New York: Vintage, 2010. 221-9. Print.</p> <p><b>For further study of intercultural communication about FGC:</b></p> <p>Gunning, Isabelle. “Arrogant Perception, ‘World’Traveling, and Multicultural Feminism: The Case of Female Genital Surgeries.” <i>Critical Race Feminism: A Reader</i>. Ed. Adrian Wing. New York: New York UP, 1997. Print.</p>

---. "Female Genital Surgeries: Eradication Measures at the Western Local Level—A Cautionary Tale." James and Robertson. 114-25. Print.

James, Stanlie and Claire Robertson, eds. *Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood: Disputing US Polemics*. Urbana: U Illinois P, 2002. Print.

**For further study of the human rights of intersex people:**

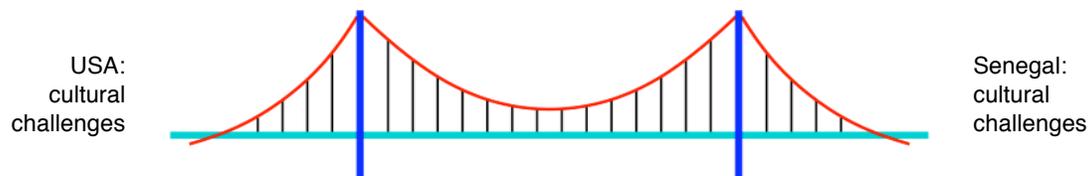
Arana, Marcus de María, et al. *A Human Rights Investigation into the Medical "Normalization" of Intersex People*. Human Rights Commission of the City & County of San Francisco. 28 April 2005. PDF file.

< <http://sf-hrc.org/reports-research-investigations> >.

Australian Human Rights Commission. *Surgery on Intersex Infants and Human Rights*. July 2009. PDF file. < [www.humanrights.gov.au/surgery-intersex-infants-and-human-rights-2009](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/surgery-intersex-infants-and-human-rights-2009) >.

Dreger, Alice. *Shifting the Paradigm of Intersex Treatment*. Intersex Society of North America, n.d. PDF file. < <http://www.isna.org/compare> >.

Figure 16



Advertisements for FGC in the United States

From the *Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation® Institute of Los Angeles*

**Wonder Woman Makeover™ / Mommy Makeover**

There is no where else in Beverly Hills where you can get a breast job, bottylicious J-Lo butt and a Designer Vagina all at one time. Our highly skilled team of cosmetic gynecologist and plastic surgeons can combine many of our **female genital surgery** procedures and other plastic surgeries.

*(Emphasis added)*

From the *Laguna Institute for Aesthetic Vaginal Surgery*

**Labiaplasty**

Dr. Alinsod's development of the Barbie or Smooth Look is an **aggressive reduction of the labia minora** to the point of complete excision. It leaves a refined look. This is the most requested technique of labial surgery Dr. Alinsod performs and the most popular appearance wanted on the West Coast.

The Hybrid Look leaves a very fine, petite, natural looking hint of a rim around the vaginal opening. The Hybrid look, developed by Dr. Alinsod is his personal favorite.

**Aesthetic Vaginal Surgery**

Dr. Alinsod is highly trained in this specialized cosmetic surgery designed to restore and enhance the appearance of the vaginal area. In ordinary terms, the procedure is essentially a "face lift" for the vulva and vagina, restoring their youthful appearance and function.

**Clitoral hood reduction** and hymenoplasty are also performed with extreme precision.

*(Emphasis added)*

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**A CUT TOO FAR:  
THE RISE IN COSMETIC SURGERY ON FEMALE GENITALIA**

by

**Viv Groskop**

*The Guardian*, UK edition, 19 November 2009

Before she had even turned 10, Anna had started worrying that there was something physically wrong with her. "I would look at other girls in the shower, and think, 'They don't have what I have,'" she says, and wearing a pair of jeans became uncomfortable. The issue was her inner labia. Anna felt that they were too large, and as an adult she grew increasingly self-conscious. Now in her mid-30s, Anna [not her real name], from London, recently had a procedure known as labiaplasty, which involves cutting back the inner labia. It costs around £3,000. She says that she is pleased with the results. "It's a weight off my mind. I'm so glad I had it done."

Anna's operation was performed privately and, although there are no industry-wide figures, there are clear signs that labiaplasties are increasing. Dr Sarah Creighton, a consultant gynaecologist at the Elizabeth

Garrett Anderson Institute for Women’s Health in London, says that “on the NHS [National Health Service] we are noticing more and more women coming to have their labia removed. It’s the tip of the iceberg because there will be more women seeing cosmetic surgeons privately.”

When I began looking into the reasons for this enormous rise in surgery, my initial assumption was that women must be having it because they had suffered some sort of unusual physical damage, possibly in childbirth. It turns out that this was naive; in the vast majority of cases, labiaplasty is simply a response to the physical appearance of the labia, a desire for more “attractive” external genitalia (known collectively as the vulva).

Those asking for this surgery on the NHS, Creighton says, “can be very young – sometimes as young as 10 or 11. Mostly they’re in their late teens or early 20s. There are two pairs of labia: the fat pads on each side and the thinner, slightly more frilly skin on the inside. The ideal these women want is not to be able to see their labia minora at all. That is the image from pornography and magazines. Because of shaving and fashions in underwear, this part of the body is more visible now. And everyone is more exposed to these images of a ‘perfect’ body, so people feel pressured to look a certain way.” She argues that women are aiming for “a certain genital appearance that used to be an obligation only for some glamour models”. The [NHS] report warns of a culture where a “homogenised, pre-pubescent genital appearance” is therefore being perceived as the norm.

As with any surgery, labiaplasty is potentially risky. Creighton says that there have been no studies into the after-effects or possible complications of labiaplasty, nor has there been any research into the impact on childbirth: she suggests that women who opt for this procedure might experience the same problems while giving birth as women who have undergone ritualistic female genital mutilations. Allison Henry, a US woman who had her labia reduced, recently wrote that the operation “was brutal. All [the] patients who say it doesn’t hurt are lying. I’d rather get my teeth pulled out than do that again.” In Anna’s case, she was unable to walk for two days after the operation, and was in recovery for six weeks.

Many cosmetic surgeons are nonetheless relaxed about the procedure. Douglas McGeorge, a past president of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons, said last week that, “This is just about removing a bit of loose flesh, leaving behind an elegant-looking labia with minimum scarring.”

It is distressing to think that women are measuring themselves up against an unattainable ideal, often inspired by pornography. And that, despite all the risks, they see surgery—rather than talking about their insecurities—as the solution. This seems like the final frontier in body hatred.

Many surgeons are comfortable about this surgery because they believe they are helping women to feel better about themselves, says Creighton. “If the patient is convinced that it ‘looks horrible’ and says she can’t wear jeans . . . They believe they are doing some good. One thing we have noticed is that people will have it done and then come back to have more taken off. Meanwhile, there is no regulation, no guidance and no one is following up on these women.”



**A BOY OR A GIRL OR A PERSON**  
**—INTERSEX PEOPLE LACK RECOGNITION IN EUROPE**

by

**Nils Muižnieks**

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

*Human Rights Comment, 9 May 2014*

On 1 March, Fox News presenter Clayton Morris had to apologise for his ‘ignorant and stupid’ comments mocking the new gender options for Facebook profiles which allow users to register as intersex. The TV presenter had ridiculed the move of the social media company referring to intersex by saying “whatever that is.” This case illustrates the prejudice and ignorance surrounding the reality of individuals who cannot be clearly classified as male or female at birth. Most countries worldwide still neglect this human rights problem and intersex people remain invisible to the majority.

The International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia of 17 May is also aimed at highlighting the struggle against the discrimination and prejudice suffered by intersex people. The word “intersex” has replaced “hermaphrodite,” which was widely used by medical practitioners during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The social expectations for either a girl or a boy at birth, or a woman or a man in society, are the source of the problems intersex people face. Society does not usually recognise a person without reference to their sex. Yet intersex individuals’ chromosomal, anatomical or gonadal characteristics do not belong exclusively to either sex. This is why intersex persons encounter huge barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights.

***Surgeries without consent***

The situation of intersex persons is not well known. Recent research has demonstrated that the parents of intersex babies are often ill-informed and baffled. Medical professionals may be quick to propose “corrective” surgeries and treatments aiming to “normalise” the sex of the child. Such surgeries, which are cosmetic rather than medically necessary, are often performed on intersex babies and toddlers. This can result in irreversible sex assignment and sterilisation performed without the fully informed consent of the parents and, even more importantly, without the consent of intersex persons themselves.

“Corrective” operations and treatment are usually traumatising and humiliating. They can take a long time and post-operative complications are common. There are long-term effects on intersex individuals’ mental health and well-being. The sex assigned to children at an early age may not correspond with their identity and feelings later on.

In addition, medical services are rarely transparent about the statistics of operations performed on intersex individuals and even the people treated experience difficulties in accessing their own medical records, as pointed out in a study published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation last year.

***Rights to self-determination and physical integrity***

The early “normalising” treatments do not respect intersex persons’ rights to self-determination and physical integrity. Intersex babies and younger children are not in a position to give their consent. The proxy consent given by parents may not be free and fully informed and can hardly take into account the best interests of the child in the long-run.

The UN special rapporteur on torture, Juan E. Méndez, has called on all states to repeal any law allowing intrusive and irreversible treatments, including forced genital-normalising surgery, when carried out without the free and informed consent of the person concerned. Intersex individuals’ choice not to undergo sex assignment treatment must be respected.

When operations are not necessary on medical grounds, they should only take place at an age when intersex persons can give their consent and participate actively in decisions about treatment and sex assignment. This position has been advocated by the Swiss National Advisory Commission on Biomedical Ethics which acknowledged the past suffering of intersex persons in November 2012 and called for an end to surgery for sociocultural reasons.

### ***Information and support***

Intersex children, their parents and families need adequate counselling and support, as highlighted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, among others. Civil society advocates of intersex people should be able to participate in the provision of information and services to intersex families in addition to medical and social professionals. There is also a need to improve training about intersex issues and their human rights implications among health and social services.

### ***Legal recognition***

Birth certificates and many other official documents almost always require the identification of the sex of the individual concerned. It is usually impossible to differentiate the official recognition of the person from the definition of that individual's sex. Therefore a person without a clearly identifiable sex can easily fall into a limbo of unrecognised personal status without official documentation.

Since November 2013 in Germany, it has been possible to choose “blank” in addition to “female” and “male” on birth certificates. Therefore it is no longer necessary to identify the sex of children at birth. The practical consequences of this legal change remain to be seen and it is not yet possible to exercise similar choices when issuing identity cards and passports.

### ***Raise awareness and review legislation***

There is a need to raise awareness of and collect more data on the situation of intersex persons in society and the discrimination and prejudice they encounter in daily life also as adults. The reform of the Sex Discrimination Act in Australia last year introduced the ground of “intersex status” among other prohibited grounds of discrimination. This is a powerful tool to foster the equality of intersex people.

I urge governments in Europe to review their current legislation and medical practices to identify gaps in the protection of intersex people and take measures to address the problems. Policy makers should involve civil society advocates of intersex persons such as the OII Europe and ILGA-Europe in these efforts. The enjoyment of human rights is universal and it cannot depend on the sex of the person. Intersex individuals must be granted full legal recognition from birth and amendments to their sex or gender classification should be facilitated to reflect their individual choices.

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## **IT'S TIME TO DEFEND INTERSEX RIGHTS**

**by**

**Morgan Carpenter**

*The Drum*, ABC TV Australia, 15 November 2013

The clitoris is the only part of any human body that's purely designed for pleasure. But is too much of a good thing a bad thing?

Research on what constitutes “normal” genitalia, for both men and women, is somewhat scarce—but labia reductions are becoming more common, and so a Dutch study in 2009 examined what doctors believe a normal labia looks like. It found that plastic surgeons were more likely to find larger labia minora “distasteful and unnatural, compared with general practitioners and gynaecologists.” It also found that male doctors in each of those specialties were more inclined than women doctors to recommend surgery.

A cross-party [Australian] Senate Standing Committee report released last month found such evidence “disturbing”; we can’t objectively define “normal.” The Senate committee goes further: “Normalising appearance goes hand in hand with the stigmatisation of difference.”

The Senate Committee was investigating the medical treatment of intersex people—people who do not meet typical, biological definitions of male or female. Intersex refers to a range of at least 30 or 40 testable genetic, anatomical or hormonal types of sex difference. Intersex people, particularly those born with ambiguous genitalia, are at the pointy end of the debate about what constitutes “normal.”

Unlike women who undergo labia surgery, intersex infants and children can’t consent.

The standard medical policy in Australia has been to surgically ‘correct’ nonconforming genitalia in infancy or childhood. The aim is to make the person it belongs to appear more “normal.” The Senate Committee says “normalisation surgery is more than physical reconstruction. The surgery is intended to deconstruct an intersex physiology and, in turn, construct an identity that conforms with stereotypical male and female gender categories.”

OII Australia<sup>1</sup> told the Senate Committee that all of its individual members have experienced some form of coerced medical intervention. Some members were not told of their diagnoses, or their parents were badgered into making their children undergo normalising surgeries.

The Senate Committee has been highly critical of current practice, saying that while enormous medical “effort has gone into assigning and ‘normalising’ sex: none has gone into asking whether this is necessary or beneficial.” In calmly restrained parliamentary language, they described this as “extremely unfortunate.”

Whether too big or too small, when outcomes are contested and we can’t even define what constitutes “normal,” normalising surgeries on infants and children can’t be justified. Australian intersex organisations have called for such surgeries to end, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has even called for such surgeries to be outlawed, along with gay conversion therapy.

The Senate Committee has accepted that the status quo is not acceptable; ‘normalising’ surgical interventions on infants should be deferred until they are of an age to give consent themselves. It recommends the development of national standards, and legal oversight of all therapeutic and non-therapeutic surgeries on intersex infants.

The Senate Committee has changed the debate on the correct treatment of intersex differences. If adopted, its recommendations will effectively protect the rights of intersex children and future adults. Coming on the back of intersex inclusion in new anti-discrimination legislation, these are hugely important developments that help end the stigmatisation of difference.

We should all feel good about what we’ve got, whatever our shape or size.

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<sup>1</sup> **OII AU:** the Australian chapter of Organisation Intersex International, a community-based NGO that promotes human rights for intersex people.

**MORE COMMUNITIES IN SENEGAL  
DISAVOW FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION AND CUTTING**

by

**Aminata Toure Sagna**

*UNFPA News*, 31 January 2012

**PATA, Senegal** — As Senegal edges closer to becoming the first African country to fully abandon female genital mutilation/cutting, younger women are supporting campaigns to change social norms surrounding the practice.

In Pata, a village in the Kolda region of southeastern Senegal near the Gambian border, a celebration in November drew a huge crowd to formally announce the decision of 69 communities in Kolda to stop cutting.

The ceremony was organized by Tostan with support from the UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. Tostan is a non-governmental organization that pioneered the human rights-based approach to community development that is one of the key strategies of the joint programme.

Teenage mothers at the celebration, many of whom have been cut, expressed their determination that their own young daughters would not have to endure the tradition, which can entail incredible suffering not only during the cutting process—done usually between the ages of two and five in Senegal—but also during childbirth and later, taking its toll both emotionally and physically.

**Mothers take a stand**

“I know I would not want my daughter to be circumcised [FGM/C is sometimes referred to as female circumcision], if I had one,” said Khardiata, a young mother of an infant boy, at the event in Pata’s public square. Khardiata admitted that going against the wishes of the elder in her village in Gambia, where FGM/C is still widely practised, would be difficult. But she thinks her village should follow the example of Pata. She believes that greater understanding of the dangers of the practice at all levels, especially among older generations, will bear fruit and that more communities will eventually disavow the traditional practice.

Mariama, a 17-year-old born in Pata, agrees wholeheartedly. She is the mother of a two-year-old girl, and swore she would ‘never accept’ that her daughter, Penda, would suffer as she did. “I had great difficulty at the time to have my first sex but also giving birth to my child,” she said.

**Working from the grass roots**

Up to 5,300 villages have reported ending FGM/C in Senegal, according to Tostan, whose advocacy work has gone beyond Senegal to the greater West African region, resulting in thousands of communities abandoning the practice. Tostan's holistic approach involves working in villages to promote literacy and foster projects on hygiene, child welfare, human rights and democracy, the environment and economic development. An emphasis on the rights of women and children often leads into community discussions of FGM/C.

**Changing marriageability standards**

Tostan’s work in the village of Malicounda Bambara in the Thiès region of Senegal led to the first declaration to end cutting in the country in 1997. The women decided to stop the practice to protect the human rights and health of their daughters, and they went so far to announce their collective decision—a breakthrough for Senegal, where cutting was always considered mandatory for girls to marry. But neighbouring villages were not on board, so a local imam traveled by foot long distances to persuade people that cutting was not in their best interests.

Tostan’s method of gradually changing attitudes and behaviour through human-rights platform became the model of change in Senegal, which is committed to abandoning cutting by 2015 with the help of the UNFPA/UNICEF joint programme.

A new map to track where FGM/C is still being practiced in Senegal is revealing stubborn pockets, however, notably in the Kolda region, despite the declaration in Pata. There is also concern about border regions along Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, where the tradition still dominates and could spur recurrences in Senegal, given that the areas share ethnic groups and family networks.

But the mothers in Pata feel confident that the next generation of girls will never suffer through cutting. As their statement in the November ceremony declared, “We have been circumcised and have excised our daughters, but our granddaughters . . . will never know the pain of circumcision.”

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### Homework: Notes on NGOs

Tostan	Advocates for Informed Choice
The purpose/mission of this NGO:	The purpose/mission of this NGO:
Countries where this NGO works:	Countries where this NGO works:
Human rights addressed by Tostan:	Human rights addressed by AIC:
Approaches and strategies Tostan uses to fulfill its mission:	Approaches and strategies AIC uses to fulfill its mission:

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