

UNICEF report says one in 20 girls aged 15 to 19 has been raped



United Nations, March 6 (RHC)-- Around 13 million, or one in 20 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 worldwide have experienced rape during their lifetime, according to a report published Tuesday by the United Nations' Children's Agency, UNICEF.

Despite progress in many areas, girls and women continue to face violence and discrimination, revealed the U.N. Children's Agency. The study took stock of the situation over the past 25 years, since the so-called Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was endorsed in 1995, the first major global commitment to achieving gender equality to date.

UNICEF highlighted progress in certain areas, particularly in girls' access to education, but stressed that violence and discrimination against girls and women are still common and accepted. "Access to education is not enough – we must also change people's behaviors and attitudes towards girls. True equality will only come when all girls are safe from violence, free to exercise their rights, and are able to enjoy equal opportunities in life," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

More girls than ever are going to and staying in school, but the world is still a violent and highly discriminatory place for girls.

The study also found that 70 percent of human trafficking victims are women and girls and that practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) are still common, even though they have decreased.

Each year, some 12 million girls are married in childhood, and four million are at risk of FGM, according to the report. UNICEF also pointed to some worrying trends for girls that did not exist 25 years ago, such as those in nutrition and health.

The report noted the increase in consumption of unhealthy products, which has contributed to a serious increase in overweight and obesity in childhood and adolescence. Between 1995 and 2016, the prevalence of overweight among girls and adolescents aged five to 19 rose from nine percent to 17 percent, which means that there are almost twice as many overweight girls now as there were 25 years ago.

The study warned about the rise in mental health problems linked to excessive use of digital technologies.

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