International Women’s Day: March 8, 2014

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
What does gender have to do with human rights?

Although human rights are universal, access to claiming these rights, unfortunately, is not. Every day, in countries around the world, women and girls are denied their human rights simply because of their gender.

Although sexual and reproductive rights belong to everyone, women disproportionately suffer violations of their sexual and reproductive rights and the consequences are devastating—in Burkina Faso, women and girls are not given contraceptives at health clinics unless they are accompanied by their husbands or parents; in Morocco, rape survivors can be forced to marry their rapists to preserve family honor; in El Salvador, abortion is banned in all circumstances, even when it poses a severe risk to the mother’s life. And in many countries, loving someone of the same gender is enough to land you in jail. That these restrictions still exist tell us that there is much to do.

Women and girls have the right to make their own decisions about their bodies, but in every region of the world, it is a right that is violated daily. Amnesty International recognizes that in order to ensure that sexual and reproductive rights are fulfilled and protected; we must identify the underlying gender inequalities that put women at a heightened risk of experiencing these types of violations.

Critical factors like women’s economic insecurity, lack of access to resources and education, gendered power hierarchies and discriminatory attitudes combine to push women into vulnerable positions where violations of their sexual and reproductive rights are more likely to occur.

Criminalizing, restricting and punishing sexuality and reproduction has a knock on effect for a whole range of other human rights. If a woman cannot make the most fundamental decisions about her own body, how can she be empowered to make decisions in other areas of her life? This is why the My Body My Rights campaign is so important and a key part of Amnesty International’s broader goal of achieving gender equality and the full realization of women’s human rights.

International Women’s Day: March 8, 2014
Everyone has sexual and reproductive rights. Governments have an obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy these rights freely, without fear, coercion or discrimination!

You have the right to:
- Make decisions about your own health
- Ask for and receive information about health services
- Decide whether and when to have children
- Choose whether or not to marry
- Access family planning; contraception; legal abortion in cases of rape, incest, or threat to health or life; and maternal health care, among a range of other health care services
- Live free from rape and other violence

Being able to make our own decisions about our bodies and our lives is a basic human right. But for millions worldwide, it's a right violated daily.

Join us! Defend Human Rights!

Join Amnesty International’s ‘My body, my rights’ campaign to help stop the violations on sexual and reproductive rights and gender equality.

Find out more about the ordinary young women, men, and teens who struggle every day to access the information, sexuality education, and sexual and reproductive health services we all need for a safe and healthy life – and join their struggle.

What you can do Right Now:

Take the actions in the March 8 International Toolkit and spread the word! We need you to stand up for your human rights and the human rights of all people!

Take Action! Learn more!
- Visit our Website to get background materials, fact-sheets, actions, event ideas, and more!
  www.amnestyusa.org/mybodymyrights
- Contact your regional office to get post-card actions, t-shirts, buttons, bags, stickers, & posters. To get materials, call 1-866-A-REGION.

Tell world leaders:
Protect sexual and reproductive rights now and for the next generation!

International Women’s Day: March 8, 2014
What’s ICPD+20?

In 1994, the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo was a milestone in the history of population and development, as well as in the history of women's rights. At the conference the world agreed that population is not just about counting people, but about making sure that every person counts.

ICPD delegates reached a consensus that the equality and empowerment of women is a global priority. A woman’s ability to access reproductive health and rights is the cornerstone of her empowerment. It is also the key to sustainable development. A total of 179 governments, including the United States, signed the ICPD Programme of Action, which set out to:

- Provide universal access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights;
- Deliver gender equality, empowerment of women and equal access to education for girls;
- Address the individual, social and economic impact of urbanization and migration;
- Support sustainable development and address environmental issues associated with population changes.

Yet, 20 years later, many of the commitments made by UN Member States have not been upheld, and most of the 1.8 billion young people worldwide still struggle to access the information, sexuality education, and sexual and reproductive health services they need!

But why should I care about ICPD+20?

Because you care about Young People:

1. There are over 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24 in the world today, the largest generation of young people in history. Almost 90% of young people live in developing countries, where they tend to make up a large proportion of the population.
2. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth, gender-based violence and AIDS are among the leading causes of mortality for young people.
3. According to a 2001 UNICEF survey, in 10 out of 12 developed countries with available data, more than two thirds of young people have had sexual intercourse while still in their teens.
4. Yet, despite high sexual activity rates, gaps in laws and regulations, poor application in practice, inadequate enforcement as well as social and cultural taboos, gender discrimination and geographic and financial barriers prevent many adolescents from reaching information and services.

Because you care about people’s rights to access information, education, and services:

5. According to UN estimates, the vast majority of adolescents and young people still do not have access to the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and education that they need.
6. Contraceptive use is relatively low among married young women aged 15-24. In Asia and Africa, for example, less than 25% of the married girls have used contraception.
7. An in-depth study of four sub-Saharan African countries found that more than 60% of adolescents did not know how to prevent pregnancy and more than 1/3 didn’t know of a source for contraceptives.

Because you care about preventing HIV/AIDS

8. Young people aged 15-24 account for 41% of all new HIV infections among the 15-49 age group. Nearly 3000 young people are becoming infected with HIV every day. And yet only 34% of youth (24% of young women and 36% of young men) in developing countries can answer correctly the five basic questions about HIV and how to prevent it, far below the global target of 95% by 2010.

9. Young women are at a higher risk of HIV infection than young men: there are almost twice as many young women with HIV globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, young women are 71% of the young with HIV.

Because you care about child marriage:

10. Child marriage is still widespread, especially in least developed countries, where 30% of women aged 15-19 are married.

11. Across several regions, girls remain significantly more likely than their male peers to be married as children and to begin having sex at a young age.

12. Due to child marriage, unsafe and unprotected sex and inadequate care during pregnancy, maternal deaths are 28% higher among adolescents than among those aged 20-24. Most adolescent girls, whether married or unmarried give birth with insufficient information, health care or support.

Because you care about sexual violence:

13. Approximately 150 million girls under the age of 18 are estimated to have experienced some form of sexual violence. Up to 50% of sexual assaults are committed against girls under age 16.

14. It is estimated that one in two adolescent girls in the Caribbean are forced into sexual initiation. Central American women also suffer high rates of violence.

15. The overwhelming majority of girls pregnant as a result of rape or incest in Nicaragua are young – aged between 10 and 14. The legislation that came into effect in 2008 criminalizes all abortion, including for survivors of rape and incest and now rape survivors must either carry the pregnancy to term, or seek an unsafe, illegal abortion and risk possible imprisonment if they are discovered.

16. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa found that a partner’s violence and the fear of abuse stopped girls from saying “no” to sex and jeopardized condom use.

17. Between 100 and 140 million women and girls in Africa have been subjected to Female genital mutilation (FGM). Although the proportion of girls undergoing FGM is decreasing in some countries, over 3 million girls worldwide remain at risk of the procedure every year.

Because you care about preventing unsafe abortions:

18. Many adolescent pregnancies are unintended and as a result the rates of unsafe abortion among young women are high, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where girls aged 15-19 account for one in every four unsafe abortions.

19. Adolescent girls and young women face high levels of injury and death as a result of unsafe abortion. In 2008, there were an estimated 3 million unsafe abortions in developing countries among girls aged 15-19. More than 90% of maternal deaths occur in the developing world.
Because you care about all human rights!

20. Everyone has sexual and reproductive rights. Governments have an obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy these rights freely, without fear, coercion or discrimination!

You have the right to:
• Make decisions about your own health
• Ask for and receive information about health services
• Decide whether and when to have children
• Choose whether or not to marry
• Access family planning, contraception, legal abortion, and maternal health care, among a range of other health care services
• Live free from rape and other violence

The ICPD Programme of Action outlines following human rights principles (based on international human rights documents and other consensus documents):

• Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person. (Principle 1)
• Advancing gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women and eliminating all forms of violence against women are cornerstones of population /development-related programs. (Principle 4)
• Everyone has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so. (Principle 8)
• Everyone has the right to education. Education should be designed to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. (Principle 10)
• Every child has the right to an adequate standard of living, health and education and to be free from neglect, exploitation and abuse. (Principle 11)

Everyone has the right to have access to quality, comprehensive, integrated sexual and reproductive health services, counseling, comprehensive sexuality education and information. Laws, policies, and other barriers to the services and information people need for a healthy life have to be removed.

For all sources for the cited data, visit www.amnestyusa.org/mybodymyrights and click “20 reasons to care”

Take Action! Learn more!

• Gather Signatures on the ICPD+20 petition to Secretary of State John Kerry
• Visit our Website to get background materials, fact-sheets, actions, event ideas, and more! www.amnestyusa.org/mybodymyrights--you can also find the online action there where you can email Secretary Kerry directly.
• Contact your regional office to get post-card actions, t-shirts, buttons, bags, stickers, & posters. To get materials, call 1-866-A-REGION.

IT’S YOUR BODY
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
Being able to make our own decisions about our bodies and our lives is a basic human right. But for millions worldwide, it’s a right violated daily—that’s because governments are failing in their obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy these rights freely, without fear, coercion or discrimination. Despite commitments made nearly 20 years ago at the International Conference on Population and Development, most of the 1.8 billion young people worldwide still struggle to access the information, sexuality education, and sexual and reproductive health services they need. The sexual and reproductive rights of many more are at risk in the future if world leaders fail to keep their commitments to securing these rights for current and future generations.

Tell Secretary Kerry to prioritize sexual and reproductive rights in the upcoming United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+20).

Secretary Kerry: We ask for your sustained action on prioritizing the health and human rights of young people, particularly young women and adolescent girls, at ICPD+20 and in the post-2015 development agenda and beyond. Specifically, we ask that your commitment to universal sexual and reproductive rights include the following priorities:

• Universal access to quality, comprehensive, integrated sexual and reproductive health services, counseling, and information, with respect for human rights, and with an emphasis on equality, equity and respect for diversity.
• Comprehensive sexuality education and other programs that empower young people to know their bodies and to exercise their human rights.
• Respect, protect, and fulfill sexual and reproductive rights.
• Acceptance and promotion of young women’s leadership at all levels and in all types of decision-making processes that affect their lives.

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Send to: AIUSA Women’s Human Rights Program, 600 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, 5th Floor, Washington, DC
It’s your body—they’re you’re rights!
Photo Actions

On March 8, Amnesty International supporters around the world will be taking selfies with messages about the My Body My Rights campaign and posting them to a social media website. The collage created with everyone’s photos will show the groundswell of support for the protection of sexual and reproductive rights and women’s rights more broadly.

Take your own photo
• Take a photo of yourself with a message supporting the My Body My Rights campaign for sexual and reproductive rights.
• You can you hold up a sign with a message or, since this is a campaign about our bodies, try writing a message directly on your body.
• Here’s some ideas:
  • My Body My Rights!
  • Human rights for everyBODY!
  • This body has rights!

Have a photo booth at an International Women’s Day event
• If you have an Amnesty International table at an International Women’s Day event or a human rights event, make a poster saying “Come take your photo to support women’s rights!”
• Take photos for people, or encourage people to take their own photos and immediately upload them to social media. Have markers, a camera, and some sample messages, as well as information about the My Body My Rights campaign available. Ask people to sign our petitions.

Take your phone and hit the streets
• Visit an art class and ask students to draw body art on each other with our campaign messages.
• Take photos of the body art and post them to social media.
• Ask local henna or tattoo artists to draw non-permanent body art on themselves or on you with our campaign messages, or to draw images that illustrate what My Body My Rights means to them. Post the photos to social media.

Then upload all your photos to our My Body, My Rights Flickr page!
http://www.flickr.com/groups/mybodymyrights
Over 600,000 women in Nepal experience high rates of uterine prolapse - a painful and debilitating condition with adverse reproductive health consequences. Uterine prolapse primarily affects younger women, most often those aged below 30, and gender-based inequality is commonly identified as the root cause.

Gender discrimination in Nepal limits women's ability to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives, denying them control over their bodies. It makes it difficult for them to challenge early marriages, access adequate antenatal care, and make sure they get enough nutritious food. Additionally it exposes them to multiple risk factors like adolescent pregnancy; no power to decide if, when and how many children to have; inadequate nutrition; lack of access to skilled birth attendants; and gender-based violence. Uterine prolapse is an urgent human rights issue and needs to be addressed immediately.

The government has done very little to raise awareness or prevent women from developing uterine prolapse. Efforts have been limited to providing treatment- almost exclusively surgery, which although necessary, fails to address the multiple risk factors of uterine prolapse and do little to end the underlying gender based discrimination. Currently there is a draft strategy that has been in place since 2008 that requires government ministries to collaborate to improve prevention and treatment measures; however, it has not been officially adopted or implemented yet.

Nepal has ratified the international Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on Elimination of All form of Racial Discrimination. These instruments require the protection of a range of human rights including- the right to live free from discrimination and violence, control over your own sexuality and reproduction, the right to access appropriate health information and services to prevent and treat conditions. Current government efforts fail to uphold these human rights commitments.

Under International Human rights law, the government of Nepal has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls to the highest attainable standard of health, and to end gender based discrimination. This includes developing a comprehensive strategy for uterine prolapse information, which effectively addresses the underlying gender based discrimination that increases the risk of developing this condition. The strategy must include measures that effectively address discriminatory attitudes and empower women and girls to make their own decisions about their bodies and lives. It should also ensure that men and boys know, understand, and support the rights of women and girls.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Government of Nepal must publicly recognize that uterine prolapse in Nepal is an urgent human rights issue that must be addressed immediately.
- And must commit to ensuring that all relevant government ministries co-operate to develop, adopt, fund and implement a comprehensive strategy to prevent uterine prolapse by ending the gender discrimination which puts women and girls at risk of the condition.
To the Honorable Prime Minister Sushil Koirala:

Over 600,000 women in Nepal suffer from uterine prolapse – a painful and debilitating reproductive health condition. Unusually, it affects young women in Nepal – those aged below 30. For Nepali women and girls, persistent gender discrimination is at the root cause of uterine prolapse. Nepal has an obligation to protect the rights of women and girls to live free from gender discrimination, to control their sexuality, to access health information and services and to make informed choices about whether and when to have children.

We urge you to:

• Publicly recognize that uterine prolapse in Nepal is an urgent human rights issue that must be addressed immediately.
• Commit to ensuring that all relevant government ministries co-operate to develop, adopt, fund and implement a comprehensive strategy to prevent uterine prolapse by ending the gender discrimination that puts women and girls at risk of the condition.

Please mail completed petitions to: Amnesty International Nepal
Attn: Abhriram, P.O. Box135 Basanta Nagar (Amnesty Road) Balaju
Kathmandu NP, Nepal, Telephone: (977-1) 4364706
THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (I-VAWA)

Every year, violence devastates the lives of millions of women and girls. Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic and a human rights violation occurring daily. It includes physical, sexual and psychological violence, and harmful practices such as rape, “honor killings”, female genital cutting, and human trafficking. The United Nations Development Fund for Women estimates that at least one in every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries. Violence against women destabilizes countries, impedes economic progress, and prevents women from contributing to their community, and creating better lives for themselves and their families.

The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) makes ending violence against women and girls a top U.S. diplomatic priority. In August 2012, the U.S. government released its first ever U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. The Strategy is largely derived from and has long been a core component of the I-VAWA and requires federal agencies engaged in foreign assistance work to undertake measurable steps in their programming to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and to be coordinated in these efforts.

In 2013, the I-VAWA will ensure that the U.S. government implements the Strategy to reduce violence against women and girls in at least 5 countries where it is severe. The bill supports measures to prevent violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice. It contains best practice provisions for preventing and responding to violence against women during times of peace and times of conflict. The legislation was developed by Amnesty International USA, Futures Without Violence, and Women Thrive Worldwide with input from more than 40 international and 150 U.S. based groups with relevant expertise. The bill was introduced during the 110th, 111th, 112th, and 113th Congresses. Rep. Jan Schakowsky reintroduced a bipartisan I-VAWA, H.R. 3571, in November 2013 with Reps. Eliot Engel, Chris Gibson, Richard Hanna, Nita Lowey, and Debbie Wasserman Schultz joining her as original sponsors.

Specifically, I-VAWA would:

- Address violence against women and girls comprehensively by supporting health, legal, economic, and humanitarian assistance sectors and incorporating violence prevention and response into such programs.
- Alleviate poverty and increase the cost effectiveness of foreign assistance by investing in women.
- Support survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and prevent violence.
- Codify and implement the U.S Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally in five select countries which have a high incidence of violence against women.
- Permanently authorize the Office of Global Women’s Issues in the State Department, as well as the position of the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues, who is responsible for coordinating activities, policies, programs, and funding relating to gender integration and women’s empowerment internationally, including those intended to prevent and respond to violence against women.
- Enable the U.S. government to develop a faster and more efficient response to violence against women in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-related situations.
- Build the effectiveness of overseas non-governmental organizations – particularly women’s non-governmental organizations – in addressing violence against women.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA RECOMMENDATIONS:

✓ U.S. Representatives should co-sponsor I-VAWA, H.R. 3571.
✓ U.S. Senators should co-sponsor I-VAWA upon introduction.
One out of every three women worldwide will be physically, sexually, or otherwise abused during her lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries. Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic and a human rights violation occurring daily. It devastates the lives of millions of women and girls worldwide, in peacetime and in conflict, and knows no national or cultural barriers. Violence against women destabilizes countries, impedes economic progress, prevents women from contributing to their household and community, and creating better lives for themselves and their families.

The **International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)** is a piece of legislation being reintroduced into the 113th Congress that makes preventing and responding to violence against women and girls a top U.S. diplomatic and foreign assistance priority. The I-VAWA directs the U.S. government to implement a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy to reduce violence in at least five countries where violence against women and girls is severe.

The **International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)** would:
- Prevent violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Support health, legal, economic, and humanitarian assistance sectors by incorporating violence prevention and response into such programs.
- Work to change social norms about acceptability of violence against women and girls.
- Support local women’s organizations already working to stop violence against women and girls on the ground.

We urge our Senators and Representative to co-sponsor the I-VAWA in support of the right of all women and girls worldwide to live free from violence.

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Please send completed petitions to Amnesty International USA, attention Julia Drost at 600 Pennsylvania Ave, SE, 5th Floor, Washington DC, 20003 or by fax at (202)546-7142
What else can I do??

Take action online
Find all the actions here online at: www.amnestyusa.org/women or hyperlinked below:

- ICPD
- Nepal
- I-VAWA

Take action online and share them with your friends!

Stay connected
Find us on Facebook: Amnesty International USA Women’s Human Rights Network
Follow us on Twitter: @AmnestyWomenRts
Visit our webpages: www.amnestyusa.org/women and www.amnestyusa.org/mybodymyrights

Join our action network
Stay updated by joining the Women’s Human Rights Action Network! Email us at WHR@aiusa.org or visit this link: http://eepurl.com/lCr3H