

# A Woman's World?



## Aim

to investigate health issues for girls and women around the world

## Age

12 years and older

## Time

45 minutes

## Materials

flipchart paper, markers, set of role cards

## Note to Leader

Choose role cards that are appropriate to the age of your group and the ethos of your organisation.

When using the role card on female genital cutting, you may want to have a discussion about the practice.\*

## Action Idea

March 8<sup>th</sup> is International Women's Day. Organise an activity or event and invite a guest speaker to raise awareness in your community about women's health issues around the world.

\*Female genital cutting (FGC) is the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-health related reasons. It is often performed by traditional practitioners, including midwives and barbers, without anaesthetic, using scissors, razor blades or broken glass. These unhygienic methods of FGC also put girls at greater risk of contracting HIV.

## What to do

Tape some flipchart sheets together and stick them on the wall. Hand out markers and ask the group to write or draw examples or ideas on the theme 'health issues for young people around the world'. Allow 5 minutes for this. Now ask whether any of the issues identified affect girls and women particularly. Highlight these issues.

Form groups of four or five people. Read out the following: 'You work for Global News Network (GNN), a large media corporation with both radio and TV stations. You have been asked to prepare a three minute report to be broadcast as part of a primetime news programme highlighting health issues for girls and women. It is up to you who you talk to and how you want to put the report together.' Give each group a role card. Allow 20 minutes to read the cards and develop the report. Each group then does a presentation to the large group. Participants should play the different roles, as well as the reporter.

In the large group, discuss the issues raised by the reports. Ask if the issues are specific to particular countries or regions of the world. Which of the issues presents the biggest risk to the health of girls and women? Why? What needs to happen to reduce the health risk for girls and women?

## ROLE CARDS

### Education and Health

Anna is ten and comes from Honduras in Central America. Before she can even think about going to school she has to collect water from the well, firewood for cooking and then help her mother and older sister prepare breakfast for her father and brother. After school she has to clean the house and help with dinner. She is always tired at school and has little time to study. Anna's mother was sick last year and the hospital bills meant that they couldn't afford to send all three children to school. Anna's parents felt that it was most important that their son got an education, so her older sister now stays at home. The way work is divided in the household is one of many obstacles to girls getting an education. Anna knows that if girls get an education, they themselves, their families and communities will be healthier.

Based on: Education International (2003). *A Fair Chance: Attaining Gender Equality in Basic Education* by 2005.



# ROLE CARDS

## Maternal Health

Gladys is nineteen and lives in southern Ghana. She is pregnant with her first child. The local clinic closed down due to a lack of trained staff so she will rely on her family when she is due to give birth. A neighbour of hers died last year while giving birth and Gladys is scared. She doesn't think it's fair that a woman is 100 times more likely to die during childbirth in Ghana compared to women in a country like Ireland. Pregnancy and childbirth are still the leading causes of death and disease in women of childbearing age in developing countries.

## Female Genital Cutting

Aicha is 14 years old. She lives in Mali in West Africa. Three years ago, she underwent female genital cutting (FGC) as part of a traditional 'initiation' ceremony in her village. The pain was unbearable and she tried to block out the memory of it. Now however her parents want to perform FGC on her younger sister Aminata and the terrible memories are coming back. Aicha thinks it's an abuse of children's and women's rights to be protected from harm. After the ceremony she was sick for weeks and might have died. Her younger sister is looking forward to the ceremony because her older sister and all the other girls get it done and she couldn't bear to be different. Also, her parents and other villagers strongly support it. Her father says that it is an important cultural tradition, done to satisfy their ancestors, while her mother says it brings respect to the girls. Aicha knows that there are organisations working in Mali who are trying to encourage communities to abandon the practice but will it come in time to help her younger sister? Based on: Plan (2006). Tradition and Rights: Female genital cutting in West Africa.

## Health and HIV/AIDS

Goretti is 18. She comes from Burundi. She left school because she lost her father and had no money. She is HIV Positive and has a two year old child. She says 'any girls and young women are forced to sell themselves to survive. They don't have a choice. They go into bars and clubs and pick up men – truck drivers, soldiers – anyone with money. The girls who do this are 14 years and over, mainly poor girls and girls displaced by war. It is consensual. We are not taken by force. To prevent the spread of HIV, girls should have a source of income. This way we'd have money to live and care for our children.' She says she would prefer to trade vegetables, rice, beans, tomatoes and oil instead of going to the bars and clubs. But to be able to trade, she needs a place to live and some money. Overall Goretti thinks that HIV/AIDS is the main problem facing Burundi and that war is the cause. Source: Save the Children (2002). HIV and Conflict: A double emergency.

## Bullying

Sinéad is fifteen and moved with her family to Drogheda last year. She's studying for her Junior Certificate. At her old school she got on well and had friends. However, girls at her new school have started a whispering campaign about her, saying things like she's fat and a loser. Nobody wants to sit beside her and she feels alone. Her grades have started to suffer. She has started looking at herself in the mirror and wondering if she really is fat. Sometimes she thinks she'd do anything to get in their good books, maybe try to deflect their attention onto another girl.