

UPR Statement on Education and GBV

This statement is delivered on behalf of Titi Foundation, a nonprofit women-led organization set up to advance and protect human rights in South Sudan.

This statement addresses education and gender-based violence against women and girls in the country.

Lack of proper education contributes to the high prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls. For example, during the onset of the COVID pandemic, in a span of less than five months we saw 1500 girls becoming pregnant. It's also worth noting that about 52% of girls in South Sudan are married off before their 18th birthday and 9% married off before clocking 15 years old. This situation not only violates their rights to education but also encourages the prevalence of gender-based violence by ensuring that toxic social norms such as early child marriages persist.

It has also reached a point in some communities where male children are prioritized for education instead of the girl child.

Despite these challenges, there has been some small progress on curbing gender-based violence by NGO partners and the government. There has been an establishment of the GBV court which helps to address GBV survivors' concerns.

Humanitarian partners are also raising awareness both at national and global levels on gender-based violence and the need for education programs in the country.

Recommendations

We urge that education rights are made prominent through community outreach in South Sudan and sufficient resources are available within every humanitarian response, including within the national budgets framework.

We must address the root causes of gender-based violence and education in South Sudan. This means ending conflict by deploying all diplomatic powers and influence, while holding parties to conflicts accountable for safeguarding and protecting civilians.

We must also acknowledge that gender inequality creates disproportionate effects on women and girls which increases on their risk of violence. Hence, women must be protected and empowered to have full and meaningful participation in prevention and response efforts.

Finally, we must invest in preventing climate-induced disasters that hinder education activities from progressing through gender-responsive early warning systems, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have an opportunity to deepen and work on our collective advocacy to raise our voices and use our powers in creating an environment conducive for women and girls to pursue their rights to education and not be subjected to gender-based violence. Hence, I call upon all of you today to make this a reality.