United Nations Human Rights Council
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights

Easy to read

Stopping women and girls from getting ill or dying when they are pregnant or having a baby

This is about stopping problems to do with being pregnant that should not happen in the first place





About us

We are part of the United Nations.

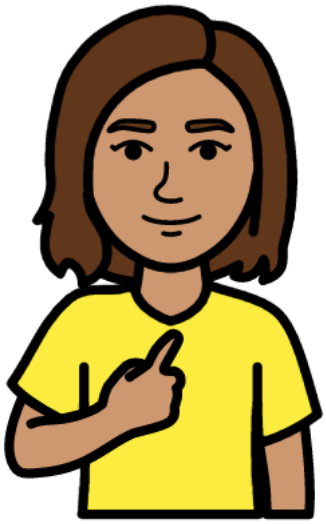


The United Nations is an organization of 193 countries. They work together to make the world better, safer and fairer.



Our work is about making sure that everyone is treated fairly and gets their human rights.

Everyone has human rights.



For example, everyone has the right to have the best health they can.

That includes the right to choose what happens to their body.

That is what should happen in everyone's lives.



About this report

This report is about stopping women and girls from getting ill or dying when they are pregnant or having a baby.



Things have been getting better in some parts of the world.

But too many women and girls are still getting ill or dying when they are pregnant or having a baby.



This should not happen. Most of the time these problems could be stopped.

That means it is not just a health problem.

It is a human rights problem.

This is because many people are treated unfairly. This is worse in poorer countries.



For example, many women and girls would not die if they got the right healthcare and support.

And if they were treated fairly.

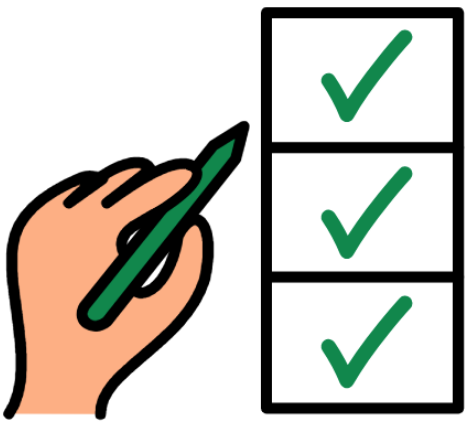


We wrote a document in 2012 about how to stop these problems for women and girls.

This is to make sure that women and girls get all their human rights.

This new report is about making the information from 2012 more up to date.

This report is about:



- Some problems that stop women and girls from being safe when they are pregnant, when they have a baby and after they have a baby.

- Some good work that countries are doing to stop the problems.

- What countries should do next to stop these very bad things from happening.



Many people, countries and organizations gave us their ideas for this report.



Why many women and girls get ill or die when they should not

There are many reasons why women and girls may be unsafe when they are pregnant or having a baby.



Problems with healthcare

There are problems with healthcare in some countries.

It is not as good as it should be.



This is because many countries do not spend enough money on healthcare for women and girls.

Or many poorer countries may not have enough money to spend.



This means many women and girls who are pregnant or having a baby do not get the healthcare they need.

For example, health places may be too far away.

Or they not have enough medicine, doctors or nurses.



It can be even harder to get healthcare when big problems are happening.

Like war, floods or bad storms.

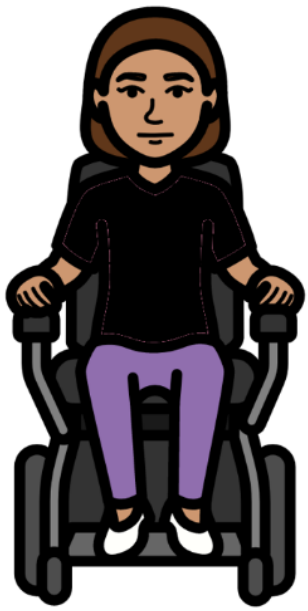
For example, many health services may get damaged. Or they may close.



Private companies often run healthcare.

They can charge a lot of money for medicines and healthcare.

This can be too much for many women and girls to afford.



All of these problems can be worse for some women and girls like:

- Women and girls in poorer countries.
- Women and girls who are poor
- Women and girls who live in the countryside.
- Women and girls with disabilities,
- Other groups of women and girls who are often left out and treated unfairly.

  For example, because of the colour of their skin.



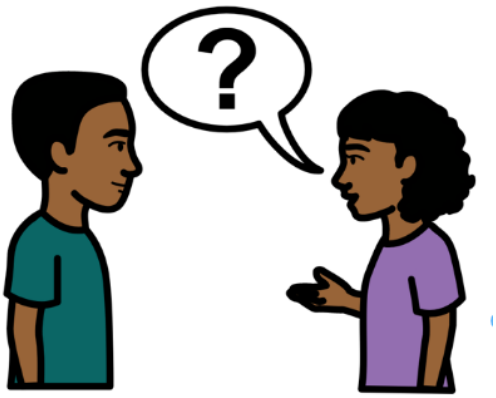
Many women and girls are treated badly

Many people have unfair ideas about women and girls.



For example, people may think that women and girls should not make their own choices about their lives.

Like choices about sex, relationships and having children.



Laws in some countries stop women and girls from making their own choices.

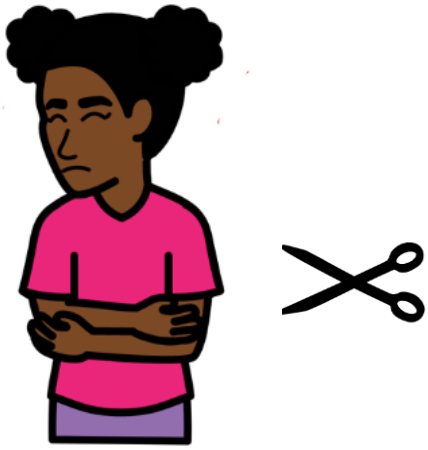
For example, many women and girls cannot choose the healthcare they want.

Other people may choose for them.
Like husbands, parents or health workers.



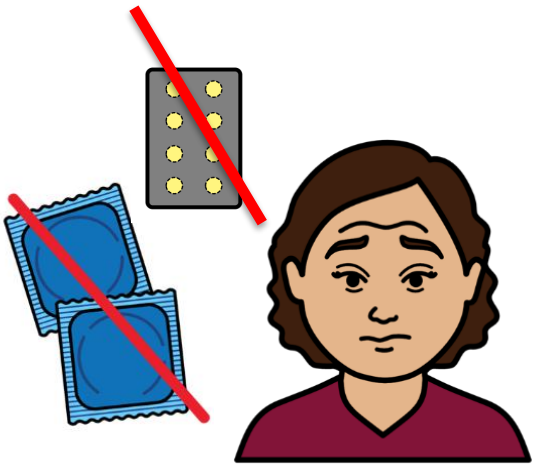
Some women and girls who are pregnant may not want to stay pregnant.

For example, they may be pregnant because someone hurt them and forced them to have sex.



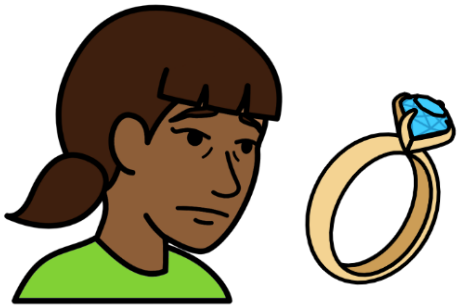
But laws in some countries stop women and girls from doing anything about it.

That means women and girls may have unsafe medical treatment if they want to stop being pregnant.



This means many women and girls cannot get the healthcare and information they need to keep safe.

For example, they cannot get condoms or pills to stop them from getting pregnant when they do not want to.



Other things may also make women and girls unsafe. For example, some girls are forced to get married.



That means some girls may get pregnant when they do not want to.

But it can be very dangerous for young girls to have a baby too young.



Schools may stop girls who are pregnant from going to school.



But going to school can help to stop girls from getting married and having children too early.

It can also help girls to learn about safe sex and relationships and their rights.



Some women and girls may be treated badly when they try to get healthcare.

For example, some women and girls may not get medicine to save their lives.



This may be because of unfair ideas that doctors and nurses have about them.

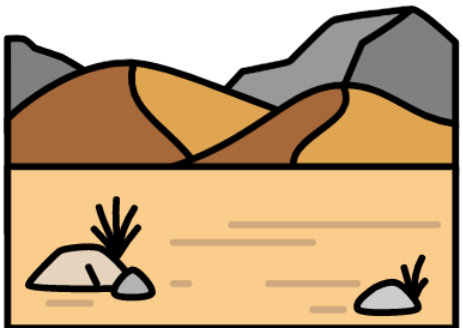
These problems may stop some women and girls from trying to get healthcare in the first place.



Some good work that countries have done

Some countries are making sure that all women and girls can get the right healthcare when they are pregnant or having a baby.

This healthcare is free.



Some countries are making it easier for women and girls to get the right healthcare near where they live.

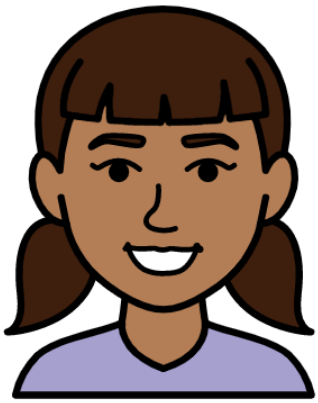
Like women and girls who live far away from cities.



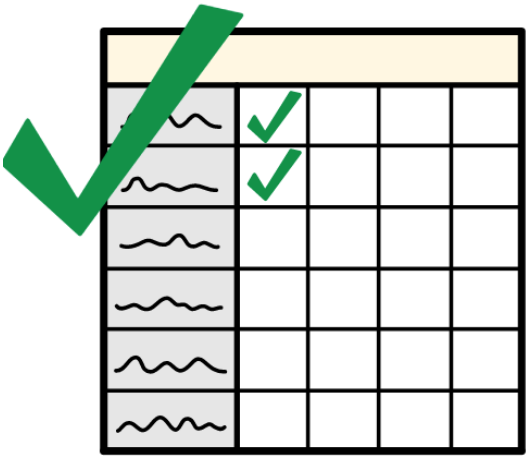
Some countries are giving doctors and nurses the right training to treat all women and girls fairly.

That includes:

- women and girls with disabilities.
- women and girls who are poor
- women and girls who live far away from cities.
- women and girls who are treated unfairly because of their skin colour.



This has helped to save many lives.

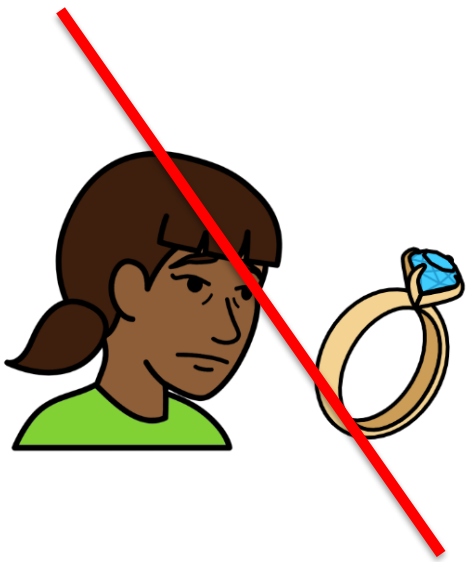


What countries should do next to keep all women and girls alive and safe

The things below are for countries and some organizations to work on straight away.



This is to make sure that countries follow laws in the world about human rights and the rights of women and girls.



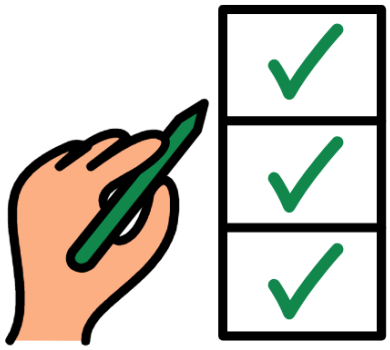
Countries should make good laws to keep women and girls safe.

For example, countries should stop bad things from happening to women and girls.

Like forcing girls to get married.



Laws should say that all women and girls can make their own choices about their bodies and their lives.



Women and girls should have everything they need to be safe and to choose what they want to do.

That means countries must work on:



Making sure that **everyone** can get the healthcare they need at all times.

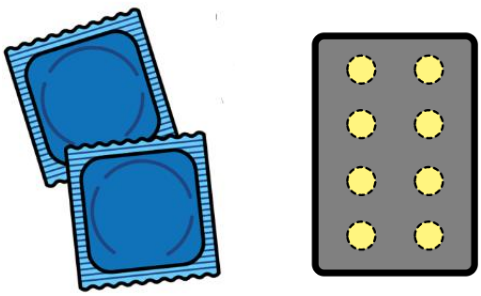
That means care for all women and girls who are pregnant or having a baby.

Healthcare and medicines should be free or easy for everyone to afford.



Making sure that all girls get a good education free of charge.

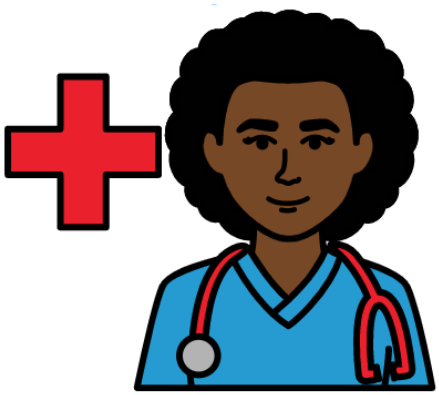
That also means learning about safe sex and relationships and their rights.



Making sure that women and girls can get condoms, pills and other things to do with sex and having children.



Making sure that women and girls can get safe healthcare if they want to stop being pregnant.



Making sure that women and girls can get healthcare near where they live.

Local doctors and other health workers should work together to give this care.

They should have the right training and everything they need.



Making sure that women and girls can do other things they need to keep safe.
Like going to school and work.

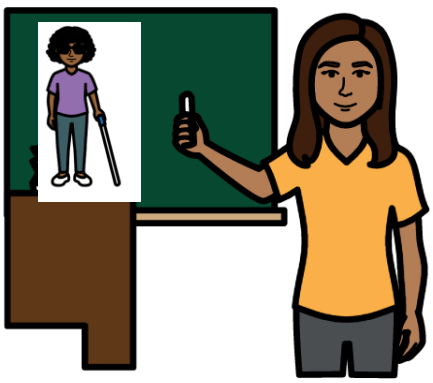
And having enough money to live on.



Women and girls should have the chance to help make laws and decisions about healthcare.

That includes women and girls who are often left out and treated unfairly.

They should help to check how healthcare is working and what needs to change.



Many people should get training about the rights of women and girls.

Like people who make laws and doctors and nurses.



There should be checks to make sure that healthcare for women and girls is safe and fair for everyone.

Countries should solve any problems with healthcare for women and girls.



Women and girls should get support if they do not get their rights.

Or they should sometimes get money.



Countries should have better information to help them know how to keep all women and girls safe.



Countries should have enough money to spend on healthcare for women and girls.

Richer countries should help poorer countries to have enough money for better healthcare.

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