



GOAL 5: EQUALITY FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

'Only a camel can carry weight on two sides'
[proverb from Yemen]

A day spent with Sally from Yemen

Salam-Aleikum! Ana ismi Sally. This is not a typical name in my home country of Yemen. It's an English name and has become pretty popular over here. I live together with my little sister and my parents in our apartment in Sanaa, the capital city of Yemen.

At this moment I am just about to go out to meet my lawyer but before we leave the apartment I have to quickly put on my burka. It's a long, loose garment covering my entire body including my head but with a veiled opening for my eyes. All women in Yemen have to wear a burka in public but even so, I never ever go out without my baseball cap, which I just wear over the veil. Today is a really hot day and the air is dusty but I am very happy that I am allowed to leave the house by myself although I wasn't always allowed to do that! Two years ago, when I was 10 years old my father thought I was ready to get married and my family chose my husband, which is quite usual in my country. They picked a 25 year old businessman from the north of the country and I actually looked forward to the wedding. I thought it would be a big celebration and I would be given new dresses and new toys to play with. However, after the wedding the business man took me to his little home village in the countryside and I was not allowed to leave his house and I had to follow his instructions and do everything he told me to do. Whenever I didn't obey, he would hit me and after a couple of weeks I couldn't stand it anymore and fortunately managed to escape back to my parents. Luckily, my father agreed to let me stay with them because he realised he had given me to a bad man.

I have now walked to the house where my lawyer works. Let's go in, I can already smell the cardamom tea that she has prepared for us, so please let me introduce you to her. This is Schada; she is a really brave woman who fights for the rights for girls and women. She is helping me with my divorce papers and lets me know that I am not alone in this. Over half the girls living here in Yemen have an arranged marriage before they reach their eighteenth birthday.

I am not divorced yet. The businessman paid my parents a lot of money to be able to get married to me and now he wants his money back. Sometimes I start crying out of fear of having to move back to this man. But then Schada puts her hand on my shoulders and reassures me that we will go through this difficult time together. I am lucky that my parents are also on my side and support me. What happened to me is not going to happen to any of my younger sisters. I wish that all girls could always have the chance to enjoy their childhood and later on in life choose for themselves who they want to get married to. I really believe that it is important that grown up women have equal rights to men.





Gender equality and empowerment for all girls and women

'Do not leave anyone behind' is one of the key principles of the new international development goals. Unfortunately, women and girls are discriminated against in some way almost everywhere in the world. There is a long list of inequalities and two thirds of all people who live in poverty are women and although women are responsible for about 52 percent of the world's work, they only own 10 percent of the world's income. This is because women often have to do unpaid work like housekeeping, looking after the children, nursing their parents and stepparents or making sure the family has enough to eat. This is especially true for women in developing countries in the south but even here in Austria women are still discriminated against. At the moment they earn 23 percent less than men, they have fewer opportunities to get promoted and consequently they have lower pensions than men.

Goal 5 is about the equality of men and women. The aim is to end all forms of violence, exploitation and discrimination against women by 2030. So what does equality mean? It means everybody getting the same wages for the same work, giving greater recognition and agreed payments for household work, including childcare and making sure that women and men have the same rights and opportunities.

Women's' rights also includes their sexual and reproductive rights. Goal 5 expects that every person will have access to information on contraception and that affordable contraception devices will be available to all. Medical care should be accessible to every woman during pregnancy and when giving birth. Women and girls should also have the right to decide over their own bodies.

In some countries women are not allowed to sign contracts, are not allowed to inherit or even own something. This also should be changed by 2030.

What can we do to achieve this goal?

- First of all challenge yourself by critically questioning how women are depicted in society and in the media. Ask questions such as, what jobs are presented typically or women and men in society and how are they presented? Who does the housework and the washing? Who is the decision maker in your family? Discover whether stereotypes are used to

describe the typical man or woman. Are there are too many examples of women being described as touchy and sensitive and men as aggressive and ambitious. That is not correct! Question these stereotypes and do not let anyone push you into believing or using these cliches.

- Next get information on jobs that interest you, even if they are classified as typical jobs for the opposite gender. You can do that by accompanying either one of your parents or someone you know at their work for a whole day to get an insight into what their day to day work life looks like. In Vienna there is a special day for this idea. It is called '*Töchertag*' (www.toechtertag.at) (*Daughterday*) Across Austria this day is known as the 'Girl's Day'. www.bmb.gv.at/frauen/girlsday/index.html.
- Research 'Plan international' an organisation which fights for the equality for girls and women and especially for a girls rights to be able to attend school. There are different ways to support this organisation. Just visit the exhibition 'Because I am a girl'. Your whole class could think about a sponsorship or you can create awareness about girls rights on the 11th of October the 'World Girls Day'. There is more information on: plan-international.at/because-i-am-a-girl

Mana (15) from Vienna:
'I used to watch the TV Series 'Two and a half men'. The image of women that is presented in this programme is definitely problematic because women are usually depicted as being sexy and stupid.'

Sandra (14) from Dornbirn, Vorarlberg: 'I never played with dolls. I was always more interested in people. Now I learned that I could start a traineeship at Hilti. This is so cool!'