

UN report: Women now living longer, better educated

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Women worldwide live longer, are more independent and enjoy more educational opportunities than they did two decades ago, though some still suffer violence and employment gaps compared to men, according to a United Nations report released in New York yesterday.

According to the UN's World Women's Report 2015, the average life expectancy for women is now 72 years, compared with 68 for men. In 1995 both sexes died on average eight years earlier.

The death rate for mothers in childbirth declined 45 percent between 1990 and 2013, falling from 380 deaths per 100,000 births to 210. The report's finding that women are marrying at an older age comports with results showing that they are better educated

and are a larger part of the workforce.

Still, the report found that child marriage remains a problem, affecting 26 percent of all women under 18 worldwide, down from 31 percent in 1995.

Violence against women remains a grave problem

The employment opportunity gap between women and men remains substantial, and closing that gap by 2030 is one of the UN's goals.

The report found that 77 percent of men work, while only 50 percent of the world's women are employed, and they are more likely to have badly paying jobs and earn 70 to 90 percent what men do on average.

While literacy is on the rise throughout the globe, the report says women account for two-thirds of the world's illiterate. That proportion hasn't changed over the last two decades. Violence against women remains a grave problem, with about a third of the world's women experiencing violence at some point in their lifetimes. Only 60 percent of the victims of violence ever report it.

The report, the sixth of its kind issued since 1995, follows the UN's recent adoption of its Sustainable Development Goals, "which aims to empower all women and girls by 2030."

"We cannot achieve our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without full and equal rights for half of the world's population, in law and in practice," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at a recent event on gender equality organised on the margins of the Sustainable Development Summit.

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