

WHAT DOES IT TAKE – achieving equality for minority women

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the OSCE Secretariat Gender Issues Programme WIN Project commissioned research into the intersections of gender equality and national minorities. Gender inequality and discrimination affects minority women across the entire life cycle, and concrete measures are needed to achieve equality for all women, including those from national minorities.



2-6
(early childhood)

7-18
(mid-childhood and adolescence)

18-25
(young adulthood)

26-65
(adulthood)

65
(senior citizens)

Economic and social rights of minority girls and women



- The lack of data on the situation of minority girls and women hampers evidence-based policymaking for ensuring that no one is left behind.

Solution: Carry out regular population censuses that include information on the situation of minorities and use the data to increase accessibility of service.

- Minority women in need of support are often not aware of public services that are available.

Solution: Publish information in minority languages and strengthen social and child protection infrastructure in rural areas and informal settlements.

- National minorities often lack personal documentation, which is a pre-condition for seeking medical and legal aid when the rights of girls are violated.

Solution: Include minority representatives in social services and law enforcement structures so that the specific concerns of minorities can be addressed effectively. Ensure that birth registration and other administrative services are accessible to minorities.



- Traditional gender roles and expectations for girls to marry young and take care of their families are among the main reasons why minority girls drop out of school.

Solution: Promoting equality and ending early marriages, child trafficking, and protecting girls from hazardous work, fosters the physical and mental well-being of girls.

- Concerns over the safety of girls on their way to school and at school can lead to girls dropping out of school.

Solution: Analyse gender-specific trends among school dropouts and take measures to ensure that schools are safe spaces for all students.

- Because of age stratification among many ethnic groups, girls are often not heard.

Solution: Transform harmful gender stereotypes among men, women, girls and boys, and implement targeted activities to empower girls to speak up.



- Weak national tax bases and corruption disproportionately affect minority women living in poverty.

Solution: Efficient revenue re-distribution combined with targeted and accessible social protection for the most marginalized minority women increases social stability and economic prosperity.

- Unemployment and precarious work are common among minority women, who are often disproportionately affected by legal barriers in job markets because of their more limited education opportunities.

Solution: Ensure legal worker status combined with targeted support for skills development and employability

- Minority women may have difficulties accessing public health care because of language barriers and negative attitudes among medical workers.

Solution: Sensitize public servants and medical professionals about different cultures and provide accessible services to minority women.



- Elderly minority women have a greater risk of falling into poverty than other age groups.

Solution: Promote financial autonomy, strengthen their financial skills, and develop affordable and accessible savings and pension schemes for minority women to increase their economic resilience.

Minority girls' and women's right to political / public participation



- Minority women are often not considered as political actors in their communities and therefore girls are excluded from decision-making at home and in their communities. Their access to voting rights might be restricted.

Solution: Teaching citizen skills and political skills in schools builds confidence among young minority women, helps them to navigate the public administration systems in later life and encourages them to become agents of change, both locally and in national politics.

- Minority and female politicians are often a target for hate speech and political intimidation.

Solution: Training women and girls in online safety and data protection, holding perpetrators of hate speech to account and working closely with them for positive change, will increase tolerance for diversity and a pluralist democracy.

Minority girls and women in peace and security processes



- Minority women tend to be disproportionately affected during conflicts and are often left to take care of their families during the aftermath, yet they are severely underrepresented in conflict resolution and peace-building processes.

Solution: Including minority women in peace negotiations helps us to understand the effects of conflicts on them, and on their families and communities.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS to OSCE participating States to promote equal opportunities for minority women

Economic and social rights of minority girls and women



2-6
(early
childhood)

- Ensure that gender disaggregated data on minorities' access to education, social services and employment is collected and made available to service providers.
- Decentralize basic social services and enable access to health care, especially maternal care and early childhood education, for rural minority communities.



7-18
(mid-childhood
and
adolescence)

- Create opportunities for minority children to learn the country's official language.
 - Ensure the right to guardianship and personal identity documents, particularly for minority girls.
- Guarantee access to quality education for minority girls and girls from rural and marginalized communities.
 - Engage local civil society and minority networks and advocate for the protection of minority girls from early marriages.
 - Train teachers to facilitate gender-sensitive inter-cultural dialogues to break stigmas and taboos on minority cultures and gender roles.
 - Ensure safe school environments for minorities by tackling ethnicity-based bullying and gender-based violence.
 - Empower minority girls to speak up in and outside their own communities.



18-25
(young
adulthood)

- Make civic education part of the primary and secondary school curricula, and increase awareness about gender equality and minority rights.
- Build political, communication and language skills and promote the participation of especially underrepresented minority women.
- Launch national advocacy campaigns to break cultural stereotypes and gender-based barriers for minority women's public participation.
- Create opportunities especially for young minority women to influence public decision-making and to participate in students' associations, community affairs and youth wings of political parties.



26-65
(adulthood)



65
(senior
citizens)

- Initiate reconciliation processes that include girls and women affected by ethnic conflicts and tensions in order to restore mutual trust and to share good practices by building exchange and peer support networks for minority women.
- Support minority women's networks at the local and national level and include them in governmental peace processes.



- Increase efficiency in public financial management and develop targeted protection for minority women to save them from poverty and neglect.
 - Empower and build the confidence of minority women, encourage employment and self-development.
 - Strengthen access to quality tertiary and vocational education in minority languages and provide flexible learning methods to increase outreach.
 - Remove legal and attitude barriers for women in job markets and ensure the legal status of female minority workers.
 - Train healthcare and social workers to recognize and respond to the needs of minority women.
- Reduce poverty by enhancing access to social protection schemes, especially for minority women in rural areas.
 - Foster inter-cultural relations and inclusive dialogue between different age groups and social groups to ensure that the care needs of minority senior citizens are met.

Minority girls' and women's right to political / public participation



- Tackle gender and ethnicity-based harassment of female decision-makers.
- Create positive and safe physical and online environments to participate in public decision-making.
- Encourage peer support networks to encourage the public participation of minority women.
- Promote positive role models from marginalized minority communities in public fora.

Minority girls and women in peace and security processes



- Tackle ethnicity-based hate crimes and violence against women by providing support and access to justice.
- Empower minority women to report any violations to their rights and provide targeted legal aid.
- Maintain and expand space for civil society and free and reliable media.
- Raise the profile of minority women as agents of change by highlighting stories about female empowerment.