



Centre for Health Ethics Law and Development

**Celebrating Displaced
Girls on International Day
of the Girl Child 2024**

1. Introduction

Every year on October 11, the world unites to observe the International Day of the Girl Child, a day dedicated to amplifying the voice of girls and highlighting the unique challenges they face globally. This year's theme, *"Girls' Vision for the Future"* challenges us to look beyond the hardships girls face and to amplify their hopes and dreams for a brighter tomorrow. It is a theme that resonates deeply, especially with displaced girls in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps who despite overwhelming challenges, still nurture powerful visions for their future.

"Girls' Vision for the Future" is a theme that motivates CHELD to pursue Project REACH for IDPs without relenting. Through Project REACH for IDPs, CHELD has assisted displaced girls through its IDP Menstrual project, a focus area of Project REACH, which aims to address healthcare and sanitation interventions for internally displaced women and girls living in IDP camps. CHELD conducts medical outreaches which prioritise sexual reproductive health so that displaced girls receive health care at no cost. Most recently, CHELD has been pivotal in enrolling IDPs into the FCT health insurance scheme so that IDPs, girls inclusive, can enjoy universal health coverage.

2. The Unseen Battles of Displaced Girls

For the girls in IDP camps, the future can seem uncertain. Conflict, displacement, and the loss of homes and communities have disrupted their lives. They face barriers that no child should have to endure: limited access to education, inadequate healthcare, poor sanitation and WASH facilities, child marriage, and the daily risk of gender-based violence which predisposes them to sexual reproductive health issues. Many are separated from their families, while others must either get married to have protection at the camps or assume the burden of caring for younger siblings in the absence of parents or guardians. The effects of trauma and instability leave scars, but these girls remain undeterred, finding ways to move forward.

In these challenging environments, it is easy to overlook their potential, but displaced girls are not merely victims of circumstance. They are brave young individuals who continue to dream and push for a better future irrespective of their current realities.

3. Girls' Vision for the Future

Despite the struggles of daily life in IDP camps, the displaced girls we have been privileged to support have visions for the future that are as vibrant and inspiring as any. When asked about their dreams, these girls speak of becoming doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, leaders and advocates. They dream of a future where they can return to their communities, regain their lives, rebuild what was lost, and help others avoid the hardships they have faced.

This year's theme, "Girls' Vision for the Future," speaks directly to these aspirations. Displaced girls envision a world where they are no longer defined by their circumstances but empowered by their resilience and supported by the opportunities they need to thrive. They see a future where their rights are respected, where education is accessible, where they feel seen and heard, and where they can pursue their dreams without fear.

4. Supporting Displaced Girls to Realise Their Vision

For these visions to become reality, displaced girls need more than just hope. They need tangible support, empowerment and opportunities to rise above their circumstances:

- **Education:** It is critical to ensure that displaced girls receive quality education, even in the most challenging environments. Access to learning materials, digital education platforms, and safe spaces where they can study without fear is essential to helping them build the future they envision.
- **Healthcare:** Displaced girls face increased vulnerability to illness and malnutrition. Ensuring access to adequate healthcare, sanitation and WASH facilities, including mental health support to address trauma, is vital for their growth and well-being.
- **Protection from Violence:** Displaced girls are often exposed to heightened risks of gender-based violence. Establishing protective measures, such as better housing and accommodation for them, and community awareness programs, can reduce these risks and create environments where girls feel secure.
- **Skills Training and Livelihood Opportunities:** Beyond education, displaced girls need vocational training and skills development to help them build a sustainable future. These girls can learn trades or develop entrepreneurial skills that would help them gain economic independence and contribute to their communities.

5. Celebrating Resilience and Hope

On this International Day of the Girl Child, CHELD celebrates displaced girls not as victims, but as powerful agents of change with dreams and visions that extend far beyond the boundaries of the IDP camps. We acknowledge that these girls are determined to break through the barriers imposed by their circumstances, to reclaim their dignity, and to chart a course for a future filled with opportunity.

These girls are living proof that even in the most difficult of situations, hope and ambition can thrive. They remind us that the future is not just about surviving today's challenges but about envisioning and working towards a world where every girl has the opportunity to reach her full potential.

6. Conclusion

As we celebrate, we ask that you join us in standing alongside these girls, amplifying their voices, actively supporting their aspirations and ensuring they have the resources and support they need to turn their visions into reality. Their dreams are not just for themselves but for a better world for us all.

Let us listen to their voices, celebrate their dreams, and help bring their vision for the future to life. When displaced girls are empowered, they can shape a future that is bright, inclusive, and break the barriers that hold girls back. We believe that it is up to us— individuals, communities, governments, CSOs and international organizations—to remove the barriers that stand in their way and provide them with the tools to shape the future they dream of. Empowering the girl child is not just an ethical responsibility but a powerful investment in a more equitable, prosperous, and peaceful future... Because when girls thrive, the world thrives.

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