UNWOMEN

Study Guide

Enhancing Women's Participation and Empowerment, Eliminating Violence and Ensuring Gender Equality

TABLE OF CONTENTS

b. Navigating Religious Traditions and Gender Equality

9. Health Inequalities
    a. Access to Healthcare Services
    b. Reproductive Rights and Health Education

10. Media Representation
    a. Stereotypes and Misrepresentation of Women
    b. Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception and Attitudes

D. Case Studies
    A. Initiatives from Various Countries

I. Letter from Secretary-General

Distinguished Delegates and Esteemed Advisors,

It is such great honour and anticipation to take this opportunity of welcoming you all to the first ever session of the IDA Model United Nations Conference. Never before has academic knowledge exchange and rememberable diplomacy been more of a necessity, and this event will mark the start of this narrative brought to life on the 8-10 February 2025 hosted by Çanakkale Fen Mat Academy College This has been precisely incorporated to provide a platform for spirited and aspiring youth to come together to deliberate upon pressing issues of the world, find solutions to problems and enhance their knowledge in the field of world relations. "Empowering Visions, Inspiring Futures," is our motto to represent our focus on leadership development, critical thinking, and global citizenship for all of our offerors.

The conference this year will consist of four specially curated committees including junior and senior levels that will consider relations to current global issues. The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) will address the international threat of insurgence and terrorism. Women shall be brought to the forefront of civil society and UN Women will strive to ensure that the women are empowered, violence against them is eliminated and their effective participation in all spheres of life is promoted. The World Health Organization (WHO) will focus on one of the key areas of universal health coverage and equitable access to healthcare. Finally, there will be a session addressing the issue of space debris, ensuring that outer space is used sustainably, by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). Every committee provides an opportunity for delegates to debate intensely, negotiate solutions, and sharpen their diplomatic skills.

On behalf of IDAMUN25 academic and organizational teams, I appreciate and thank you for the great contribution to making this event possible. Months of hard work and detailed planning have gone into making this conference not only an intellectually invigorating experience, but a chance for personal growth and engagement. We are excited to host you here on Çanakkale and see your passion, mind and creativities. If the rest of IDAMUN25 is anything like this, then we can only hope that it will lead to a defining chapter in your journey toward becoming tomorrow's leaders, driving a better and more united future for our world.

Sincerely,

Gökçe Güder
Secretary General of IDA Model United Nations 2025

II. Letter from Under Secretary-General

To the representatives of The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWOMEN),

Serving as the UNWOMEN Under Secretary-General is an immense pleasure for me. I am thrilled to have you all join our committee and truly proud of you.

The world is headed towards an unknowable future filled with injustice and discrimination. The agenda at hand is extensive and complicated, and your mutual participation will be necessary for it to be discussed successfully. You will have the discretion to choose the path you choose to take this committee in going forward.

To have a thorough understanding of the topic that will be covered in the committee, we highly recommend that you go through the study guide that has been prepared for you as part of the conference. Beyond the study guide, there's plenty of additional material available as well. You ought to do research, gather information, make a list of potential conversation topics, questions, and logical answers, and be ready to take advantage of the group's intellectual enthusiasm. Simultaneously, it involves more than just speaking and giving speeches; it also involves listening, comprehending different points of view, and gaining insights from them all. This committee is counting on you to combine your resources and come up with sufficient solutions to enhance the conditions for all.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who put up considerable effort over several months to make this conference possible behind the scenes. Especially, I would like to express my special gratitude towards my Committee Board, Duru Sevgi and Duru Ilgar for their excellent and most helpful contributions, and I send my deepest regards to our honorable Secretary-General, Gökçe Güder for her hard work and always being there for us whenever we need her help. I will be forever grateful for this amazing opportunity.

I hope you have an amazing MUN experience; our team has been and will be working nonstop to make it happen. We can't wait to welcome you all to our committee.
Best regards,

Ezgi Ceren Kaykan
Under Secretary-General of UN WOMEN

III.   Introduction of the Committee : UNWOMEN

The United Nations Department for Gender Equality and The Empowerment of Women, also known as UNWOMEN, was established on July 2, 2010, to support and strengthen the mission and vision of women. UN WOMEN was created by merging four separate UN departments working on women's rights and gender equality:

- ○ DAW (Department for The Advancement of Women): UN department working to promote women's rights.
- ○ INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute): An institute that produces and shares knowledge to empower women.
- ○ OSAGI (Office of The Special Adviser on Gender Issues): Worked to advance gender equality with the UN.
- ○ UNIFEM (United Nations Fund for Women): A fund that carries out projects to improve the economic and social situation of women.

With the merger of these four departments, UN WOMEN began to carry out its work on gender equality with a larger budget and stronger mandate. UNWOMEN supports the establishment of global standards to achieve gender equality and works with governments and civil society to ensure that these standards are effectively implemented, supported by laws and policies, and benefit all women worldwide.

UN Women has devised various programs with which to empower women economically and socially. Apart from this, it is also combating all forms of violence against women and girls in order to safeguard the dignity of these persons. The organization also seeks the establishment and implementation of policies that will lead to gender equality and women's rights across the globe. The end result of all these efforts shall eventually be a more just and inclusive world for all.

IV.   Introduction of the Agenda Item : Enhancing Women's Participation and Empowerment, Eliminating Violence and Ensuring Gender Equality

A. Overview of the Agenda Item

1.   Importance of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

In Western nations, female empowerment is frequently connected with distinct historical stages of the women's rights movement. This movement is often divided into three waves, the first of which began in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with suffrage as a fundamental aspect. The sexual revolution and the position of women in society were part of the 1960s' second wave of change. Third wave feminism is commonly regarded as having begun in the 1990s. Women's empowerment and rights promotion have emerged as key components of a large worldwide movement that has been breaking new ground in recent years. Days like International Women's Empowerment Day are also gaining popularity. Diane Elson, a UN

Women consultant, argues in her submission that "the disproportionate responsibility that women face for carrying out unpaid labor is a key restraint on their capacity to realise their rights. Both men and women require time to care for their families and communities, as well as time to be unburdened." Women's empowerment is a critical component in attaining sustainability. Sustainable development and sustainability have a variety of meanings. Gender equality promotes stronger and more sustainable growth. It is not just an urgent moral and social issue, but also a significant economic challenge.

Equality between genders is an essential human right and is crucial for achieving a peaceful and prosperous world. Nonetheless, girls and women still encounter considerable obstacles globally. Women are usually lacking in representation within positions of power and decision-making. They are paid unequally for the same work, and they frequently encounter legal and other obstacles that impact their job opportunities. In many developing countries, girls and women are frequently regarded as having less worth than boys and men. Rather than attending school, they are frequently compelled to perform household chores or are given in marriage for a dowry before reaching adulthood. Every year, up to 12 million girls under the legal age enter into marriage. Although some advancements are taking place in different regions of the globe, there remains much to accomplish to address the issues of gender inequality. Globally, no country has entirely achieved gender equality. Scandinavian countries such as Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden are leading the global effort to close the gender gap. These nations have a nearly equal distribution of available money, resources, and opportunities for men and women. The Middle East, Africa, and South Asia are the regions with the biggest gender discrepancies. However, certain nations in these areas, such as Lesotho, South Africa, and Sri Lanka, outperform the United States in terms of gender equality.

•In South Sudan, girls who complete all their education are exceptional. Due to the conflict and poverty, only 30 percent of the children who are of school going age are currently studying. Gender inequality is also a factor, and only one in every seven girls (18 per cent) finish primary school in South Sudan.

•According to the UN World Survey (2014) on the "Role of Women in Development 2014", there are proven synergies between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability. Women's active participation in

decision-making facilitates the allocation of public resources to investments in human development priorities, including education, health, nutrition, employment and social protection.

•In 2012, spearheaded by UN Women, the United Nations agreed on the landmark UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW). The Action Plan implements the 2006 United Nations System-wide Policy on GEEW of its highest executive body, the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB), chaired by the UN Secretary-General. For the first time in UN history, the UN-SWAP enabled gender issues to be mainstreamed systematically and measurably into all major institutional functions of the UN system entities.

B. Historical Context

1. Brief History of Women's Rights

From the dawn of ancient civilizations, women's rights have been greatly restricted; many were subjected to servitude and were treated as property. In the Renaissance and Middle Ages, women's roles were mostly limited to household chores, but some women from noble families had more influence and were more accepted by society. In Europe, women's rights were tightly controlled by religious institutions and patriarchal structures.

1848 Seneca Falls Convention (USA) is the biggest movement in first wave feminism and considered as the first womens' rights convention. The idea of the convention began with Seneca Falls and a few friends discussing their lives over tea and resulted in placing an advertisement in local newspapers about "a Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition of women." Consequently, the first foundation of the rise of feminism was laid. By the early 20th century women were granted to vote in many countries. When women gained the right to vote, they began to be despised by men in many societies. With the beginning of World War I, women in many countries joined the workforce in large numbers and proved their

abilities in roles traditionally held by men. This change contributed to the recognition of women's social roles outside their home. Until the mid-20th century, another wave of feminism did not occured. Second Wave Feminism (1960s–1970s) is more focused on issues of equality (sexuality, reproductive rights, equal pay) and discrimination pursuant to the first wave. Second wave feminism focuses not only on the struggle for survival but also on women's active participation in social life and their desire to be treated equally in social life, their abortion rights and challenging traditional gender roles.

2. Key International Agreements and Frameworks

One of the most important acts, The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibited employers from paying women less than men for equal work on the same job. An amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employers from discriminating on the basis of sex. Title VII also established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1965, which provided women with access to additional job opportunities in all areas of the economy.

- In 1966 The National Organisation of Women (NOW) was founded by a group of activists. NOW was created as a response to the lack of a strong national feminist organization that could advocate for women's rights and address systemic issues of gender inequality.
- In 1973 a single woman named Jane Roe led to the Supreme Court in Texas. On January 22, 1973 abortion was seen as a fundamental right.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted on December 10, 1948, by the United Nations General Assembly, is one of the most significant milestones in the history of human rights. Its creation was driven by the aftermath of World War II, the atrocities that occurred during the war, and the need to prevent such violations in the future.

3. Recent Developments and Movements

Today, women's rights have improved significantly compared to the past. With the influence of women's movements and social changes, women were granted the right to vote in many countries and their participation in education and working life increased. Second wave feminism, which began in the 1960s and 1970s, led to the passage of laws advocating gender equality. In recent years, various laws and policies have been enacted to ensure greater representation of women in the social, economic and political spheres. For example, women's participation in the workforce, equal pay rights, and improvements in working conditions have become priority issues in many countries. In addition, gender quota practices have become widespread in order to increase women's political representation, and women have become more involved in parliaments, especially in northern European countries. In addition,

the #MeToo movement and the UN Women''s signature breakthrough achievements which is an important part of the struggle for gender equality, has become an important turning point in the fight against sexual harassment and violence.

Despite the development, women still face many challenges. The progress has been made on women's rights around the world, it is necessary to continue to combat gender-based violence, inequality and discrimination. Problems such as violence, inequality and gender-based discrimination still persist, the struggle for full equality of women's rights continues. Most of the obstacles of the past have been overcome, the struggle for women's rights still continues. UN Women has recently reported a widening gender gap in social protection, the raft of policies including cash benefits, unemployment protection, pensions and healthcare, leaving women and girls more vulnerable to poverty.

C. Challenges and Obstacles to Women's Participation and Empowerment

Women face numerous obstacles and challenges in their march towards an equal presence and empowerment in the political, economic, and social arenas; most of these are intertwined with each other and act as the handicap to women's complete empowerment and active participation in society. Cultural norms and stereotypes regarding gender are barriers to women's entry into new roles and restrict their involvement in traditional work roles, hence affecting their leadership and participation in public life. The harmful types of association align with institutional barriers, discriminatory laws, differential access to resources, limited opportunities for enhancement. Intersectionality complicates these issues; women suffer from the interconnection, as their discrimination levels vary in degrees based on their disempowered backgrounds, defined mostly by race, class, or sexual orientation. Such accumulating systemic barriers at this level repress improvements in gender equality and complicate the previously thought ''simple fight'' for women's rights and empowerment.
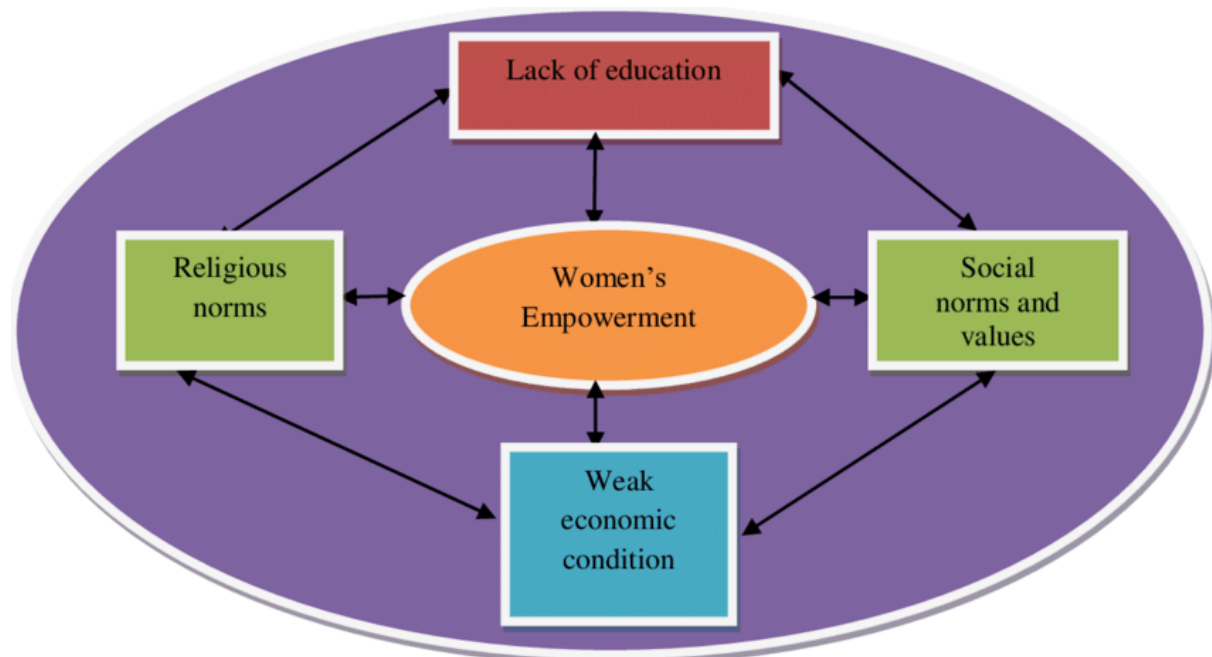
Resistance to change, though, is probably the most profound and persistent barrier and it can take numerous forms including the glass ceiling effect, violence against women, as well as differences in income levels. In fact, historical and cultural reinforcement of societal and gender norms commonly define women's "traditional" roles as subservient to men and by extension limiting them with domestic duties. Those roles together create stereotypes that regard women as caregivers rather than as leaders, limiting their opportunities towards education, career advancement, and political participation. Such norms do limit women's choices and work in an environment where their contributions hardly receive appreciation or acknowledgment. Violence against women, whether domestic, sexual or economic, goes a long way in emasculating their strength, health, and ability to contribute effectively to society. Among these, there are other economic barriers like the gender pay gap and limited opportunities for gaining financial independence that have supported the oppression of women in terms of important contributions toward economic development and sustainability. These barriers do not just represent personal experiences; they are structural issues that require collective action to dismantle.

Education, political representation, and access to health care are crucial areas that are not only identified, but they are also areas within which inequalities abound, and intervention is now urgently required. Education inequalities, such as the high dropout rates of girls in schools, prevent the majority of women from realizing their potential. Cultural and religious barriers even presented challenges; traditional beliefs and practices tend to disagree with the principle of equality between the sexes. As with the health inequalities such as insufficient access to reproductive health care and education, these aspects adversely affect women's well-being and productivity. As if these aspects aren't enough, the media still keeps projecting gender stereotypes, which build the public perception of how women should exist. For these reasons, much of what is involved in addressing these challenges requires reforms from systems as well as policies that include everyone; it's a commitment in general towards building up a world in which women are permitted as much as possible everything they want from life and the whole society existing with them.

1. Resistance to Change

Among the various obstacles that prevent gender equality and women's empowerment, perhaps the biggest is resistance to change. Societal and institutional systems enact and reinforce deeply held traditional structures that disadvantage women and maintain forms of inequality. Although there have been worldwide actions made for women's rights, many societies still resist alteration of their fixed gender roles and norms. And such resistance is not only an attitude of individuals, but it is systemic in the sense that it comes about as a result of cultural, social, and institutional forms dating over centuries. This kind of overcoming resistance is about addressing its causes and bringing a full range of system-wide measures for challenging these barriers.

Resistance in the transformation process is one of the leading blocks against gender equality and women's empowerment. Well-established societal and institutional systems often uphold traditional structures that disadvantage women and maintain inequality. Despite enhancements made on the world stage, most societies resist the removal of traditional gender roles and norm systems. Moreover, such resistance is not just from individual attitudes but is, in fact, a systemic issue of cultural, social, and institutional structures: the underlying cause of resistance, which has existed from long-standing habitude. Breaking the resistance may involve addressing the fundamental causes as well as implementing a whole range of system-wide measures to challenge these barriers.

UN Women has implemented very significant steps to combat change resistance by targeting societal norms and institutional barriers that sustain gender inequality. It organizes global advocacy campaigns, works in collaboration with governmental and organizational partners, as well as targeted community-based programs that will challenge stereotypes towards advocating for systemic reform.

a) Societal Norms and Gender Norms

Norms within society and those referring to gender significantly influence the views regarding the roles and possible duties of women within the whole society. Most cultures have traditional norms that assign women to the roles of being home-makers and caregivers while leaning towards leadership and decision-making roles toward men. As expected, they discourage women from pursuing education, careers, or leadership positions, but instead, create a culture of conformity - making them less ambitious or capable. The society judges, condemns, or shames women who dare to defy the traditional roles, setting firm limits on their rights or actions. Thus, most women are held back in their personal lives and professional careers thereby ensuring equality in a generation.

UN women have pitched a global initiative called HeForShe to alter societal and gender norms. This initiative mainly engages men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality. The campaign aims to mobilize men toward non-discriminatory lifestyles; against stereotypes within their communities and workplaces, an empowering culture would then be developed. Other programs like Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces would also mobilize grassroots collective actions against harassment and violence against women in an urban area.

Women community leaders and women are coming together with the local governments and civil society to create environments that would be seen as safer for women, thus challenging the traditional parts of her role as a woman. UN Women also has an ongoing program in rural communities in partnership with the local organization that will further implement gender-sensitive education in schools and communities. Such efforts involve introducing gender elements in school curriculum, training of teachers on gender biases, and so on mostly in Africa, specifically in the south of the Sahara. This is also an approach to changing perceptions about women's capabilities from an earlier age, paving a generation that could value equal opportunity for all genders. They run awareness campaigns and capacity-building workshops to help communities identify the negative impacts of fixed gender roles and inspire them to develop more equitable practices.

b) Institutional Barriers

Enforcing resistance to change is often further institutionalized through laws, policies and organizational structures codified into discriminatory practices. Women suffer as a consequence of poor pay, inadequate maternity leave, little flexibility in work and such other institutional disadvantages. In political and governance structures, women face discriminatory practices which limit their access to decision-making roles like: inadequate finances for women candidates; unfairness in the electoral process. What may also preserve inequality is a biased curriculum or lack of support to girls in educational institutions. These institutional barriers are not only denying opportunities for women but also maintaining the societal systems that make gender equality a hard target, so they need to reform their policies and structures for inclusive participation. Such strategies should include awareness campaigns, reforms in institutions and leadership programs to understand the meaning of stereotypes and also promote the recognition of more inclusive practices to be implemented in the society. Only when these issues are dealt with can a healthy environment be created in society for women to freely participate and flourish in all aspects of life.

UN Women has taken steps in the elimination of institutional barriers using policy advocacy and legislative reforms. The endorsement of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is one of the highlights. By engaging governments to align national laws with the international standards, UN Women has successfully eliminated discriminatory policies in quite a number of nations. For instance, in Kenya, UN Women partnered with lawmakers to address the constitutional inequalities in the system with respect to inheritance and property rights for women.

Furthermore, UN Women pushes for gender-responsive budgeting so that national and local budgets would allocate money to address the needs of women. In a country like India, they support women's-centric initiatives being included in national development plans, for instance, budgetary intervention for women-led enterprises and vocational training. In terms of politics, UN Women works together with electoral commissions on the increased representation of women in leadership. Their activities in Afghanistan have been around

conducting training for women candidates and funding their campaigns to overcome systemic bias against women in political institutions.

Such examples show the commitment made by UN Women towards transforming societal as well as institutional barriers. By combining international campaigning and localized efforts, the organization ensures that pathways are opened for sustainable change and full access of women to all aspects of society.

2. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an important tool to explain the layered dimensions of women's experiences all-around the world. It rightly positions women's identity as a composition of other factors such as race, class, sexual identity, disability. The idea of intersectionality was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw and is one of the most central ideas for understanding how multiple forms of discrimination and privilege affect the experiences of individuals, most importantly of women. Such identities would not be separable, nor could they be treated in isolation as single issues for women, such as race, class, sexual orientation, and disability.

It is recognized as advancing gender equality for all women, for all that, there need be recognition that the most marginalized often are the ones who suffer most from compounded forms of discrimination, typically overlooked in mainstream discussions of gender. This includes women of color, Indigenous women, LGBTQ women, migrant women, and poorer women, to whom inequality would manifest in terms quite distinct from those privileged groups. Such women are clearly the ones most likely to face unequal barriers such as access to health care, education, and economic opportunity alongside justice systems that do not protect them. It is by including intersectionality in their work that UN Women is able to ensure that all programs, policy initiatives, and advocacy actions are designed to support women at such intersections of multiple identities and address root causes of their marginalization.

Intersecting identities lead to unique challenges for a woman that cannot be understood or addressed solely by gender-based terms. For example, a woman of color may not just face discrimination on the basis of gender but also on the basis of race, creating unique forms of compounded oppression; a Black woman, for example, has to deal with both the effects of discrimination based on her race and gender unique set of challenges different from those faced by a white woman or a man of color. Further, women belonging to more than one marginalized group such as an LGBTQ plus disability or poverty women often

face obstacles entirely different from more privileged women. Meeting gender equality demands an intersectional approach and makes certain that these women are deprived of no rights.

By taking a more intersectional approach to gender equality, organizations such as that of UN Women can better recognize the fact that there is a more nuanced importance to the need for intersectionality. Thus, it seeks to understand how different forms of discrimination overlap so that effective policies can be appropriate to the needs of the most marginalized women. And this approach ensures that women facing multiple oppressions are able to enjoy health care services and educational benefits as well as employment. Pursuing an intersectional approach strengthens the voices of women, especially those who have been historically excluded from decision-making processes. Only by this way of thinking can we make the imaginary society, wherein women flourish according to their own race, class, or otherwise, really equitable; because the gap between all such similar identities with which women coincide cannot even be compared in a single sentence, most of the time.

It is critical, therefore, it is an absolute must to consider intersectional approaches to countries' policies and actions to make sure unique struggles that each woman faces are politically and inclusively considered. In addition, an intersectional lens enables society to raise the voices of the most defenseless women and ensure that their leadership is at the heart of the global agenda for gender equality.

a) Diverse Experiences Based on Race, Class and Sexual Orientation

Distinctive experiences determined by race, class, and sexual orientation tend to take principal place in defining struggles and prospects for women in different parts of the world. The women's rights agenda is often presented with a single voice advocating gender equality; yet it is hardly the same in reality. Most specifically, the intersection of race, class, and sexual identity mostly accounts for the differing hurdles that women encounter and multiplies the discrimination and exclusion. For instance, a woman of color may address the duality of racism and sexism, which, coupled with economic inequality, translates to limited access to health, education, and even employment. The same situation faces an LGBT woman dealing not only with discrimination based on gender but also homophobia or transphobia, which adds another dimension to the struggle. Disparity in economy and resources are seen, especially among women from the working class. Hence, these identities create a condition that requires different strategies to achieve gender equality, not leaving any woman out.

UN Women is at the forefront of lobbying for policies and programs that promote equal rights and inclusion for every-women, fighting for the common battle for the rights of women worldwide regardless of socio-economic background, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity. An example of many in this regard is "HeForShe," which aims to include men and boys in gender advocacy initiatives. One would have expected this campaign to deliberately reach out

to issues of race and class, which are very important in ensuring that society is inclusive and progressive. UN Women has also been designing initiatives that provide space for the voices of marginalized women-for example, indigenous women and disabled women-in terms of ensuring that their needs as well as priorities are included in global development policies.

Another of the steps taken by UN Women is to address violence against females, looking at it from the intersectional framework. The agency has backed quite a number of programs that provide services to women who are subject to multiple discrimination, such as particularly vulnerable migrant women or women from racial or ethnic minorities who tend to have greater rates of domestic abuse. With programs like the "Spotlight Initiative," UN Women engaged governments and civil society organizations to combat gender-based violence, while appreciating that race, class, and sexual orientation play a role in severity and prevalence of such violence. Inclusion of diverse women's particular needs has led UN Women into formulation of policies and programs that, beyond the obvious factors of inclusivity, are effective at ensuring sustainable change for women around the world.

b) Addressing the Needs of Marginalized Woman

One of the critical issues is the needs of marginalized women in order to succeed in achieving gender equality as well as making sure that all women can enjoy their rights and freedoms. These women usually happen to be those of color, migrant, disabled, and from economically backward backgrounds. They have, unfortunately, undergone more grandscale discrimination so that their voices and needs could not be heard in any typical discussion about gender equality. They do not even get adequate access to educational, medical, economic, and justice systems. Such unique cases require specific targeted policy interventions designed for them to ensure that their rights are protected and contribution to society is recognized. Most of the rights of women are considered from a single perspective and do not advocate for the intersectionality of oppression making it compulsory only to meet the needs of marginalized women if a real and fair world is to be aimed for.

UN Women has pioneered all the campaigns to make sure marginalized women would not be excluded from the global agenda for gender equality. The voice of these women is not heard, and policies to address their specific needs are not advocated. In order to strengthen their cause there have been some actions made and one of these initiatives being the Joint Programme on Gender, Sexuality, and Reproductive Rights. It provides support and resources to marginalized women such as those falling under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella and ensures they receive sexual and reproductive health services. Also, it facilitates and launches programs directed at the economic empowerment of women from poor communities. Such are the programs like Global Programme for Women's Economic Empowerment that enable women, especially those with low income backgrounds in rural or conflict affected areas, to become competent in different skill areas and gain access to markets while attaining financial independence.

As a matter of fact, even UN Women has been doing multiple things towards the fight against violence against vulnerable women, for this category has almost always been noted to carry a heavier burden when it comes to gender-based violence. Through the Spotlight Initiative, UN Women works with governments and civil society organizations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls focusing on those that face multiple forms of discrimination. This Initiative has undertaken programs in countries worldwide to take care of the specific needs of women who are in marginalized circumstances. Examples of these programs include the Refugee women's initiative, which provides programming and services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and prevails upon displaced women to lighten their burden when moving through camps and new communities. In making sure that women at risk receive comprehensive support while also stressing upon the predominant need for an intersectional approach, UN Women guarantees that these women would have opportunities to thrive and participate in society in full measure.
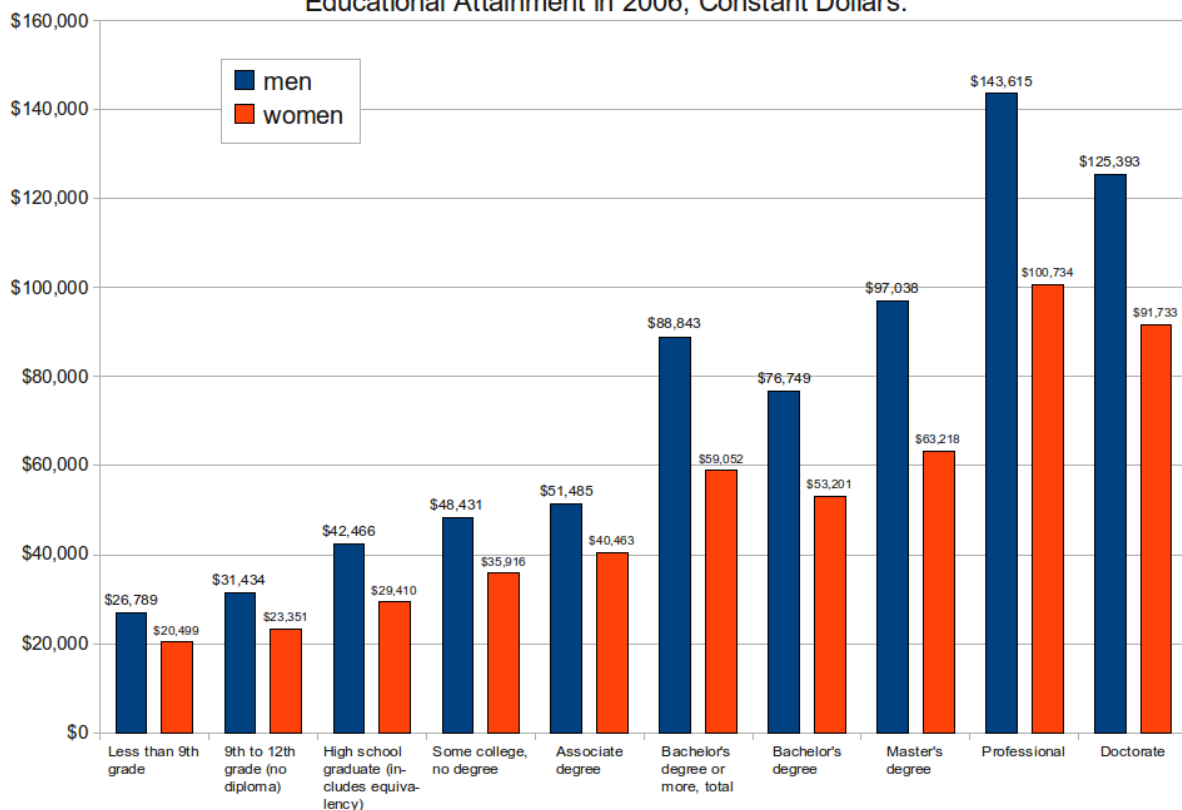
3. The Glass Ceiling Effect

The ideology of "glass ceiling" includes the hidden obstacles that prevent women with full capability from getting to that point of filling the top position or office. It indicates an incident of systematic gender bias and structures of inequality across the world, which are still existent in working environments. They still face various challenges in contrast to males: unequal wages, fewer mentors, narrow networking, and expectations created by society, among others, which put them back in the rat race for climbing the career ladder. Improvements have been made in various industries, but it still leaves out many diversities, notably in terms of politics, corporate leadership, or in academia.

The glass ceiling is generally described as the barrier that prevents women from rising to the top of their fields of employment; however, for millions of women from diverse backgrounds or with disabilities, the glass ceiling is often reinforced by additional layers of harm and is accompanied by other forms of discriminatory treatment.It traps them in a "double bind," where they must face more than gender barriers and other aspects of identity. Such challenges hopelessly cries for a need for integrated and intersectional strategies to diminish such obstacles for achieving their equitable representation.

UN Women has been an incredibly powerful driving force in breaking the glass ceiling: as the unifying global champion for equality and empowerment of women. UN Women has led many initiatives that dismantled actual barriers to women's advancement towards being fully developed individuals. These aspects are successfully included in "Women's Empowerment Principles" (WEPs), developed with the UN Global Compact. These principles provide frameworks for businesses to implement gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and community. As a result, through promoting the interests of equal opportunities, fair pay, and inclusive leadership in workplace organizations, UN Women encouraged this transformation in corporate policy throughout the world.

Average Earnings of Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Educational Attainment in 2006, Constant Dollars.

A bar chart comparing average earnings of men and women by educational attainment level:

Educational Attainment	Men	Women
Less than 9th grade	$26,789	$20,499
9th to 12th grade (no diploma)	$31,434	$23,351
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	$42,466	$29,410
Some college, no degree	$48,431	$35,916
Associate degree	$51,485	$40,463
Bachelor's degree or more, total	$88,843	$59,052
Bachelor's degree	$76,749	$53,201
Master's degree	$97,038	$63,218
Professional	$143,615	$100,734
Doctorate	$125,393	$91,733

Source: Statistical Abstract 2009.

It is important to note that the HeForShe campaign of UN Women engaged men and boys as partners in the quest for gender parity. Male leadership is critical in challenging stereotypes that block people from creating an ecosystem where women can work and flourish. Collaboration with governments to introduce women's part in positions of leadership and policies that promote equal pay for equal work are also other initiatives in UN Women partnership with different governments.

Research and advocacy will also build awareness within the world on the economic and social benefits of such leadership through the claim that "More diverse leadership means better organizational performance". UN Women is still in progress with paving ways for breaking the glass ceiling by creating spaces where women will be freed to achieve their potential in every aspect of life through dialogue, partnerships, and accountability.

a) Definition and Impact on Women's Career Advancement

The Glass Ceiling Effect is the metaphorical expression for barriers, usually invisible, but highly effective at restricting certain groups, especially women, from gaining progressive ranks in acquiring power, leading, and influencing others in organizations or in society. These obstacles are neither formal nor undisguised but systemic biases, organizational practices, and social norms that are clearly causing disadvantage to women.

Such a definition implies that women can see the opportunities available but cannot gain access to them because of these intangible barriers. Some of the variables which lead to glass ceilings are: gender stereotypes, no mentoring, unequal pay, limited access to networks, and a discriminatory workplace culture. Furthermore, women from disadvantaged groups encounter much more difficulty than ordinary women thereby posing an even higher and restricted "ceiling." The Glass Ceiling Effect does not just block individual potentials, but it also does depose organizations and societies that have "aimed for" leadership perspectives that are vital for innovation, equity, and sustainability in development. One critical aspect of this effect is that it is integrated with economic equality. Globally, women earn less than men, and more than so at higher levels of management, widening the gender pay gap. The economic difference comes from the unequal pay for equal work, lower chances of career promotions, and underrepresentation in high-paying industries. The effect also discourages women from pursuing leadership roles because they do not find role models, do not have mentoring opportunities, thus create a cycle where they are underrepresented.

Such effects cannot stop at the level of individual careers but must extend to organizational and even societal outcomes. Research has shown that the companies which have a diverse leadership are likely to be doing much better financially and are expected to be more innovative. However, the glass ceiling does not give organizations the advantage of the diverse perspectives; it leads to monotony and as a result men continue to be the head decision makers. Not only that, it challenges the progress of the entire world towards gender equality and sustainable development as envisioned in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) because of the underutilization of women's talents.

Glass ceiling, however, has to be removed by a range of possible means, such as equal workplace policies, mentorship programs, and an inclusive culture. That would make sure that women get equal opportunities for career advancement to correspondingly give their full contributions to economic growth, innovation, and leadership.

b) Case Studies on Corporate Leadership and Gender Representation

Corporate leadership and gender representation case studies are considered important in creating such learning environments within the corporate sector refers to the glass ceiling effect in companies and their strategies. All industries show the same proportion of representation within senior-level roles among women. In Fortune 500 companies, for example, women occupy quite small percentages of the number of CEO positions, despite portraying almost half of the world's working population. All these indicate some systemic barriers, even with diversity and internal enhancement.

Another case in point is Norway's 2003 corporate gender quota law that ensures that 40% of board members must be women in publicly listed enterprises. As a result, Norway managed an enormous increase in the representation of women at the board level, which

proves that legislative action is a way to directly diminish inequality in leadership. But then critics noted that much as the representation improved on boards by this quota, there hasn't been a marked increase of women at the executive level, suggesting that complementary approaches also be designed to address the pipeline issue.

Some private companies, such as Unilever, have concentrated their efforts on integrating gender parity into their corporate strategy significantly. Unilever had the above gender balance in all management levels through activities such as mentorship, flexible working arrangements, and leadership development for women. This kind of case illustrates how making inclusiveness a keystone and addressing organizational culture can break glass ceilings.

Representation in the Corporate Pipeline by Gender and Race

% OF EMPLOYEES BY LEVEL AT THE START OF 2021

	ENTRY LEVEL	MANAGER	SR. MANAGER/ DIRECTOR	VP	SVP	C-SUITE
WHITE MEN	35%	42%	50%	56%	61%	62%
MEN OF COLOR	17%	17%	15%	13%	12%	13%
WHITE WOMEN	30%	28%	27%	24%	22%	20%
WOMEN OF COLOR	17%	12%	9%	7%	5%	4%
2021 TOTAL WOMEN	48%	41%	35%	30%	27%	24%
% CHANGE FROM 2016-2021	5%	9%	6%	6%	14%	27%
% POINT CHANGE FROM 2016-2021	+2pp	+4pp	+2pp	+1pp	+3pp	+5pp

Source: McKinsey Women in the Workplace 2021

One more instance of a very beneficial experimental study, the principles of women's empowerment as a "WEPS" by UN Women encourage attainment, reasonability of gender equality and gender empowerment within an organization or business. The principles have been set up with the UN Global Compact to advocate and encourage businesses to promote gender equality in the workplace. Companies that have embraced such principles include L'Oréal and IKEA, who already collected measurable improvements at all organizational levels concerning gender representation. Such strategies include the inspections on equal pay, anti-discrimination training, and transparency in recruitment. All these show how effectively corporate accountability frameworks can break the glass ceiling.

Similar initiative is the UN Women's Global Innovation Coalition for Change promotion which exists to build women's leadership in mostly male-dominated areas like technology and innovation. GICC partners like Microsoft and SAP have developed strategic programs including mentorship programs for women innovators and programs for increasing female

user participation in STEM fields among others to ease gender imbalances their organizations have in leadership within the tech industry.

In summary, all these case studies demonstrate that indeed combining policy reforms with corporate initiatives and cultural change is possible. While quotas could be in place as legislative measures to assure representation, those pathways would be given by corporate accountability methodology and innovative partnerships for the long haul.

4. Violence Against Women

Worldwide, one in three women is subjected to physical or sexual abuse, typically at the hands of an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, and the immediate and long-term physical, sexual, and mental consequences for women and girls can be devastating, including death.Violence; hinders women's ability to fully participate in society and it also has a detrimental impact on their general well-being. Women can experience violence in both public and private spaces. It impacts their families, their community, and the country at large.

Of the 165 countries with domestic violence laws, only 104 countries have comprehensive legislation addressing domestic violence.Violence not only has long lasting consequences for women but also their families, the community and the country at large. Additionally, it has enormous consequences that affect national budgets and general development, ranging from increased health care and legal fees to lost productivity. There are laws and regulations prohibiting various forms of violence in an unprecedented number of nations. However, there are still difficulties in putting these measures into practice. In order to guarantee their safety, protection, and rehabilitation, many women still do not have access to free or reasonably priced critical services in fields including health, law enforcement, justice, and social support.

The Beijing Conference created the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights, a defining framework for change. It also put violence against women center stage at the UN. Despite this, in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals failed to address the issue of violence against women and girls. 2013 represents a critical juncture for the future of efforts to end violence against women and girls and for positioning the issue unequivocally in the post-2015 development framework. They are founded on a conviction that the right to a life free of violence is a basic human right that all women and girls should enjoy. However,not enough is done to prevent violence, which is the most challenging but also effective way to eliminate violence in a sustainable way.

a) Types of Violence(Domestic, Sexual, Economic)

Violence against women and girls is defined as any act of gender-based violence, whether in a private or public setting, that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. Any pattern of behavior intended to acquire or keep control over an intimate partner is considered domestic abuse. All physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and psychological acts or threats of acts that sway another individual are included. It is among the most prevalent types of violence that women encounter worldwide.

Sexual violence and rape take place in every society and affect all social classes. Sexual violence includes any sexual act perpetrated against someone's will, including scenarios where consent is not provided or cannot be granted due to factors like age, mental incapacity, severe intoxication, or unconsciousness caused by substances. It encompasses non-physical actions as well, including catcalling, sexual remarks regarding someone's physique or looks, suggestive gazes, and stalking. Rape refers to the non-consensual invasion of another individual using any body part or object.

Any action or conduct that results in financial damage to a person is known as economic violence. Economic violence may manifest as property destruction, limiting access to financial resources, education, or employment opportunities, or failing to meet economic obligations, like alimony.

b) Impact of Violence in Women's Participation in Society

Violence against women can have a wide range of negative effects on their health and well-being, both short and long term. In 2023, every 10 minutes a woman is intentionally killed by her partner or family member. The issue of gender-based violence is critical. Along with the immediate physical and mental consequences of violence, women's general quality of life can be negatively impacted for the rest of their lives, limiting their involvement and engagement in numerous parts of life and society. Violence harms women's overall well-being and stops them from fully participating in society. It affects their families, their neighborhood, and the country as a whole. It has consequences, ranging from increased burden on health-care systems to legal fees and lost production.

Women who have been the victims of violence are more likely to have physical injuries, chronic health issues, and long-term disability. They may experience sadness, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, or suicide ideation.Women who are abused are more likely to miss work or be less productive, resulting in a decrease in productivity. Victims may be compelled to leave their employment or remain unemployed in some situations owing to safety concerns or the necessity for continuous care. Violence against women reduces the potential contributions of half of the population to economic development, education, and social advancement. It inhibits women's capacity to fully engage in society and realize their full potential.Violence against women creates damaging gender stereotypes and maintains

cultural standards that place women beneath males. This imbalance restricts women's social, political, and economic prospects, prohibiting them from participating fully in society. High rates of violence against women can contribute to greater societal instability by instilling fear, eroding faith in institutions, and perhaps leading to the disintegration of social orders.

The effects of violence toward women on society are multi-faceted, resulting in profound and enduring repercussions. It impacts not just the immediate victims but also their families, communities, economies, and the wider society. Addressing violence against women demands collaborative actions across all strata of society (individual, familial, governmental, and global) to confront damaging norms, offer assistance to victims, and ensure offenders are held responsible. In the absence of these efforts, the cycle of violence will endure, and its detrimental impacts will keep eroding the community.

c) Legal Social Barriers to Seeking Justice

The significance of access to justice cannot be emphasized enough. Access to justice is critical to the formation and preservation of the rule of law because it allows individuals to have their voices heard and enjoy their legal rights, whether they are derived from constitutions, laws, common law, or international conventions. Furthermore, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between enhancing, enabling, and increasing individual and communal access to law and justice, and economic and social progress. This relationship is internationally recognised, with access to justice likely to be included when Member States agree on the UN development agenda for 2015-2030. Justice policies and processes must be inclusive and supportive of all women's rights and interests, regardless of circumstance or background. Belonging to a certain group of women may result in structural disadvantages, such as poverty, as well as exposure to specific legal concerns owing to characteristics such as age, geography, or handicap. Personal attributes and situational situations can overlap, and when they do, women are often at a disadvantage on numerous levels.

Unhindered access for women to justice is seen as a critical pathway for achieving gender equality as it ensures the protection of economic assets, bodily integrity, political voice and redress on an equal basis with men. Access to justice bridges the gap between women's rights in law and their rights in real terms. In 2015, the CEDAW Committee in its General Recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice describes in great detail the aspects, characteristics, scope and coverage of women's access to justice and speaks to the scope and coverage in terms of types of legal systems; legal traditions and legal domains, though the term itself is not specifically defined in the document but rather stated broadly the components required to guarantee an extensive and complete understanding of what it means to have access to justice for women. It acknowledges that, while differences in prevailing legal, social, cultural, political, and economic situations will compel a varied application of these aspects in each state party, the core parts of the method are universal and may be

implemented immediately. CEDAW requires state parties to consider the six interconnected and crucial components of women's access to justice. Justiciability, availability, accessibility, high quality, provision of remedies, and accountability.

5. Economic Disparities

Economic inequality between males and females continues to exist globally, stemming from gender disparities that have interpenetrated into the society. The obvious indicator of the gender pay gap is when women earn less than men for the same job. It gets worse as women are only earning about 77 cents on every dollar earned by men. Such a difference will have extensive ramifications concerning financial independence, family welfare, and societal equity. Women also face multiple hurdles when it comes to obtaining decent work; most find themselves in informal or dangerous jobs with no social protection or benefits. In addition to that, women do a proportionately larger share of unpaid care and domestic work, which prevents them from getting equal chances for participation in the formal economy.

U.S. Women Have Significantly Higher Poverty Rates Than Men. Source: U.S. Census Bureau
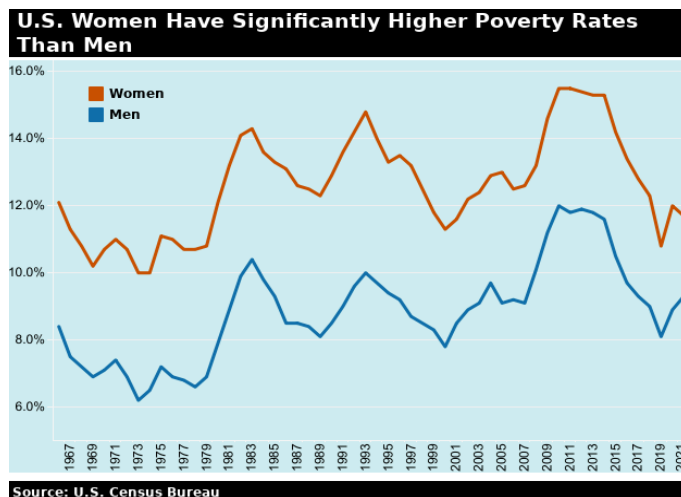
Access to education, financial services, ownership of land, etc. increase economic disparity by structural means. Therefore, women in many developing countries struggle in getting credit or loans to start businesses because of discriminatory lending principles linked with a lack of assurance. Barriers to women's access to finance create a cycle of poverty and exclusion, not only affecting women but also their families and wider communities. As a result, closing economic gaps is clearly a matter of justice but also an economic requirement. Studies show that if gender issues were treated equally in the workplace, the world economy would become much healthier which, now, prevents the world from going onward as a whole.

a) Gender Pay Gap and Employment Inequality

The issue of gender pay gap is an interlinked issue of economic inequality or disparity which mostly affects women across the world. Gender pay gap means the average difference between a man's earnings and a woman's earnings expressed as a percentage of men's earnings. The United Nations Gender Agency stated that the advancement of gender equality, women in the world earn sets out to 77 cents for every dollar achieved by men. In addition this gap is widened for women of color, migrant women, and those who live as low-income or in rural settings. Employment inequality also tends to lead into this gap because women

usually work in low-paid, insecure, or informal sectors, and it gives women a very limited chance of advancing in their careers.
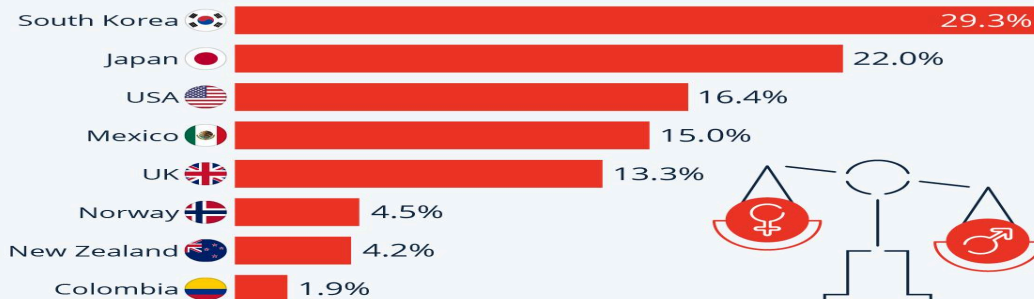
For example, in many well-developed countries, the workplace contains women working in caregiving or hospitality and education, such highly gender secluded industries, which are undervalued and underpaid as compared to males considered sweatshop sectors like technology and engineering. In developing countries, women devote their time to agriculture; however, they do work at lower wages, with limited access to credit and land ownership rights. In Nigeria, women constitute about 60% of the agricultural labor workforce but own less than 20% of the land. In the US, women who do full time in the work front still earn 82 cents per dollar earned by men, with Black and Latina women earning only 63 cents and 55 cents.

Publicly women make up the major part of the world population and workforce. But they form only 25% of the senior management positions in the organizations today. Yet again, there is also an underemployment of women in leadership positions. This glass ceiling blocks women's progression in terms of career and lays down a vicious cycle of unequal opportunities and freedoms. There have been many studies done which has shown that this imbalance has been due to various factors such as: unconscious biases, discriminatory performance policies in workplaces, and unequal distribution of unpaid care work.

UN Women does not only advocate for gender equality in employment, but also presents systems that can make it possible for a given country to achieve such equality. An example is the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), where they partner with governments, employers, and trade unions to realize equal pay for work of equal value. This program is aimed to develop tools, policies, and frameworks to reduce pay gaps, which include wage transparency laws and gender pay audits. UN Women also advocates for initiatives that enable women to penetrate into traditionally male dominated sectors and leadership levels to reduce employment inequalities. For instance, Women's Empowerment Principles happened to be one of the principles on companies who were taking steps toward gender equality in recruitment, retention and promotion and now thousands of businesses around the globe are endorsing the WEPs.

What's the State of the Gender Pay Gap?

Difference in median full-time earnings of men and women in selected OECD nations in 2023*

Country	Gap
South Korea	29.3%
Japan	22.0%
USA	16.4%
Mexico	15.0%
UK	13.3%
Norway	4.5%
New Zealand	4.2%
Colombia	1.9%

* percentage of men's earnings women are lacking
Source: OECD

statista ⟍

UN Women has launched programs such as the Buy from Women Platform in developing countries to ensure women entrepreneurs in agriculture are connected with markets and financial services. This program increases their income and builds the possibility through training and mentorship. Moreover UN Women puts advocacy for gender responsive social protections such as parental leave and affordable childcare, thereby significantly relieving women from the effects of unpaid care work and allowing them to be in the employment market.

In addition, UN Women has been a key player in advocating within the global policy arena. They closely collaborated with the International Labor Organization (ILO) in developing the ILO Convention No. 190, which addresses workplace violence and harassment issues affecting women disproportionately and resulting in inequality at the workplace. In this manner, UN Women is opening up pathways for broader systemic change by ensuring that women have equal opportunities for succeeding in the workforce and earning their rightful living. However, although improvements have been made in this area, it will require a consistent voice, a constantly innovative solution, and collective effort from the various sectors of society to completely eradicate the gender pay gap and achieve employment equality.

b) Access to Resources and Financial Independence

Access to resources and the independence of financial resources are important to empower women yet remain some of the most significant challenges for women across the globe. Systemic barriers, cultural norms, and often discriminatory policies keep women from access to resources such as education, credit, owning land, and financial services less available to them. This eventually prevents financial independence from women, discouraging their economic potential and tying them further into low-income and unequal living environments.

Women in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia often are faced with the prohibitions of legal traditional inheritance for the ownership of property, or loans that are not secured due to lack of assurance. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that women globally make around 43% part of the agricultural labor force, whereas, out of this, women own not more than 20% of the agricultural land. This inequity challenges women's ability to take decisions independently regarding economics, investments into their businesses, or livelihood improvement. Same is true for women when it comes to access to formal financial services: according to the World Bank Global Findex Database, over 1 billion women are not banked around the globe.

Education is a critical asset, granting power, and it is quite unequally shared. For instance, in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the girl child is blocked from schooling due to reasons such as early marriages, poverty, or the norms of gender. This educational gap widens in the ability of the woman to access high-paying jobs, entrepreneurship, or even understanding financial rights. For instance, according to a UNESCO report, women who have received a secondary education are more likely to attain better economic opportunities and earn higher incomes while millions of girls are still out of school.

UN Women has been actively campaigning on all fronts to close the gap, thereby moving beyond advocacy to equal access to resources and financing initiatives that cause economic independence for women. Emerging from joint initiatives, UN Women includes collaboration with these financial institutions to develop financial products and services that take care of gender dimensions in financial challenges. One such example is: "Empower Women, Empower Economies" which is a grant-aid program that provides input for women entrepreneurs in terms of access to credit, training, and mentorship. For example, in Uganda, this initiative has enabled women entrepreneurs to access loans for widening their businesses, thus contributing to local economic growth.
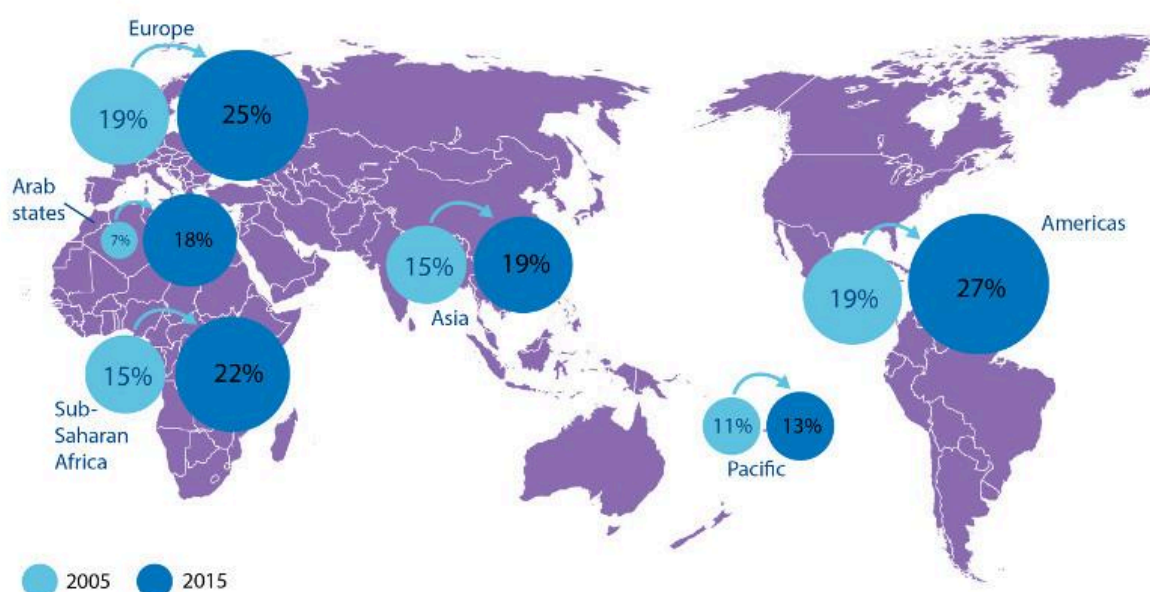
UN Women also presses for policy reforms that include women's land and property rights in economic initiatives. Through cooperation with governments and non-governmental organizations, UN Women has sponsored programs for legal assistance for women claiming ownership of land and other assets. For instance, in India, UN Women worked together with local organizations to assist women for their rights of inheritance, which helped them obtain property and ultimately greater economic independence.

In addition, UN Women embraces education among their indicators for empowerment. It claims that education is one of the most efficient tools that empower a woman financially. Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning programs provide women and girls with the opportunity to learn marketable skills, or to complete their education and join the market. In a country like Afghanistan, the team has been able to draw tens of thousands of women over to its cause and acquire skills in the market, lifting employability and self-sustenance.

6.   Political Representation

Women's political participation is a fundamental must for gender equality and genuine democracy. Women were kept away from politics, regardless of the circumstances, until the very beginning of history as we know. The first times that women have had the right to vote started in the 1920s, but their real participation in politics began in stride in the 1960s. With The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was one of the first movements in history that brought unity and solidarity not only legally but also among women. The biggest reason why women cannot participate in politics in the political tree is gender norms and women's heavy workload in the family. The idea that leadership in society is a trait reserved only for men has been going on for centuries, and for this reason, women have had to submit in politics, as in many other things. At the same time, society's lack of education is also an obstacle to women's participation in politics. According to a new report by Women Political Leaders and the Oliver Wyman Forum, countries with greater female representation at the highest levels remove legal inequality between men and women.

PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS: PROGRESS OVER THE LAST DECADE
(regional averages for 2005 and 2015)

Europe 19% 25%
Arab states 7% 18%
Sub-Saharan Africa 15% 22%
Asia 15% 19%
Pacific 11% 13%
Americas 19% 27%

2005   2015

Today, representation of female politicians in the media, often in a negative or sexist manner, limits their participation in politics and reduces the issue of women's rights in parliament. Women not participating in politics in proportion to their numerical population creates a representation problem in democracies and at the same time data compiled by UN-Women, shows that most of the representatives who speak about women's problems and rights in parliaments are women. If women had not gained such a place in politics today, women's problems would not be included and it was not spoken in parliaments and cabinets.

New Zealand went down in history as the first country where women gained the right to vote. In 1893, women gained the right to vote for the first time across the country. It has become one of the symbols of the women's rights movement worldwide. Some countries followed New Zealand by making important agreements for women's political participation. Some of the important works that have been a turning point in women's participation in politics are as follows;

1. **United Kingdom (1928)**: Women right to vote was granted by the Representation of the People Act, passed in 1918. However, this right was limited only to women aged 30 and over and they had to meet a certain wealth requirement. Full equal voting rights for women were provided by the Equal Franchise Act in 1928.
2. **United States (1920)**: Women in the United States gained the right to vote in 1920 through the entry into force of the 19th Amendment .This amendment inspired women all over the world, especially to increas**e.**
3. **Saudi Arabia (2015)**: After years of advocacy by women's groups, Saudi Arabia granted women the right to vote and run in municipal elections, a historic shift in the country's policies regarding gender.
4. **India (1992)**: Despite having women politicians at low percentages (around 14%) in the national parliament, India has reserved one-third of the seats in local government (Panchayats) for women, giving them political power at the grassroots level through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.
5. **South Africa (1997)**: The South African Constitution contains important articles on gender equality, and today South Africa has managed to have a high proportion of women in political office. The African National Congress (ANC), the most important political party in the country, has adopted a 50% gender quota in its parliamentary candidate lists.
6. **Germany (1949)**: During World War II, Germany adopted the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system with the establishment of Basic Law and decades after Germany had a great role model for women in politics. A German woman named Angela Merkel, served as Germany's Chancellor for 16 years, provided strong representation of women in high political leadership roles to world.
7. **Kenya (2010)**: 2010 Constitution stipulates that no gender should have more than two-thirds representation in the national legislature, but full implementation remains a work in progress. The female representation system that Kenya implements for legislative seats, which helps increase female participation in politics.

a) Underrepresentation In Government and Decision Making Roles

The underrepresentation of women in government and decision-making roles remains a significant and widespread problem worldwide and hinders the development of truly inclusive and equitable governance. Despite significant progress towards gender equality across a variety of sectors, women continue to hold a disproportionately small number of political positions, limiting their ability to influence and shape policies that directly affect their lives, communities, and nations. This underrepresentation is not merely a result of individual choice; it is also deeply rooted in a complex web of cultural norms, gender stereotypes, historical marginalization, and institutional barriers that prevent women from reaching positions of power. These barriers often include discriminatory laws, lack of adequate support for female candidates, inadequate funding for campaigns, and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes that perceive leadership as predominantly the domain of men.

Moreover, the impact of this gender imbalance in political representation is far-reaching. Issues such as health, education, social security and gender-based violence, which disproportionately affect women, are often inadequately addressed on political platforms dominated by male perspectives. As a result, since various perspectives are necessary for the creation of comprehensive and sustainable policies, the absence of women in political spheres perpetuates gender inequality and undermines the overall effectiveness of governance. To address this issue, some countries are implementing systemic changes by governments that promote gender equality in political participation. In addition, political institutions should adopt policies that create a favorable environment for women to enter politics, such as maternity leave for female politicians, equal October funding opportunities for campaigns, and the implementation of quotas in legislative bodies. In conclusion, achieving gender equality in political representation is not just a matter of justice, but a fundamental requirement for building democratic systems that reflect the diversity of society. Ensuring the equal representation of women in political spheres is an important step towards promoting more inclusive, fair and equitable societies around the world.

b) Barriers to Political Participation

Barriers to women participating in politics are based on many cultural and social factors. Economic, social and political factors that systematically prevent women from fully participating in the political process. Societal norms and stereotypes that often view political leadership as a male-dominated field discourage women from pursuing political careers. This perception is reinforced by media representations and traditional roles that limit women to domestic responsibilities, making it difficult for them to access the resources and networks needed to enter politics. But the primary barrier is that women have historically been excluded from political spheres. Women were expected not to take part in politics in most societies, especially in societies shaped by traditional and patriarchal structures. At the same

time, the social definition of women with domestic roles has kept them away from public spaces and politics, and the idea that women can be strong and have leadership qualities has not been reinforced. Another important obstacle is economic and educational inequalities. Women generally try to enter politics due to barriers such as having a lower level of education than men and facing difficulties in accessing sufficient resources and opportunities. Women's entry into politics, especially in developing countries, also faces obstacles such as lack of financial resources, women's family responsibilities and social expectations. Briefly, even though women step into politics, they have to deal with the difficulties they face, such as discrimination due to their gender, being less respected by society, being criticized more than men, and having their leadership capacities questioned by people

Many political systems, such as rigid parliamentary structures, long working hours and the lack of family-friendly policies, are designed in ways that are hostile or inaccessible to women. In countries where gender discrimination is institutionalized, women may also face legal obstacles, such as discriminatory laws that limit their ability to own property, access education, or exercise their voting rights. The underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions exacerbates this issue, as the lack of female role models prevents other women from entering politics, perpetuating a cycle of inequality. This lack of representation means that women's concerns are often not adequately addressed on political agendas, reinforcing policies that neglect or harm women's interests. To overcome these obstacles, it is crucial that governments implement comprehensive strategies, including gender-sensitive policies, legal reforms, quotas and programs that improve women's leadership skills and provide financial support for their political efforts. .

7. Lack of Access to Education

Education is a basic human right, and it is the basis of gender equality and empowerment of women. Nevertheless, millions of women and girls in different parts of the world still suffer from denial of education because of systematic barriers, cultural norms, poverty, and conflicts. Education does not only place personal barriers but also provokes cycles of deprivation, inequality, and social exclusion. Currently, UNESCO reports that globally, 129 million girls are out of school including 32 million girls of primary school age as well as 97 million girls of secondary school age.

Cultural and social characteristics largely cause deprivation of education for women. In many areas, early marriage and gender-based violence push them out of school. For example, in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, almost 40% of girls marry before turning 18, thereby hindering them from their education. Economic limitations further widen the differences between the two genders when families are forced to spend on children, choosing boys instead of daughters. Political instability and rigid norms keep girls out of school in Afghanistan. Reports show that most schools are forced shut down or girls are banned from attending school.

Education has a huge role in employment, as a result lack of education of women causes unemployment of women, lesser earnings, and poverty in general. As the World Bank calculates, every additional year of schooling increases a woman's earnings by as much as 20%. Besides, educated women are more likely to have gathered knowledge on their health, create fewer children, and take part in community and political activities, thus stressing the ripple effects of education as it relates to societal development.

## a) Educational Inequalities and Dropout Rates

In many societies, there are still educational disparities and high dropout rates on women which tell much about the gender perspective in that society. Economic challenges, cultural perceptions, and systemic injustices are factors that have caused women and girls to have barriers in the education system. In fact, these gaps are widest for low-income countries, rural areas, and conflict-affected regions. UNESCO says, "About 129 million girls worldwide are out of school and millions more may drop out, with the causes of poverty, child marriage, and gender-based violence."

Unfortunately economic instability causes the dropout rates to rise. Many families living in poverty tend to weigh education for the sons more than daughters as they are seen as future breadwinners. Like in sub-Saharan Africa, poor families may prefer to take their girls out of school to reduce costs or get them to work for the household income. In some countries like Niger and Chad, less than 20% of girls complete primary education, as discovered by UNESCO. Furthermore, there are many girls forced to miss school even during their periods since menstruation hygiene products aren't affordable or available. Eventually, girls quit school and start their early life as an adult at a childs' age.
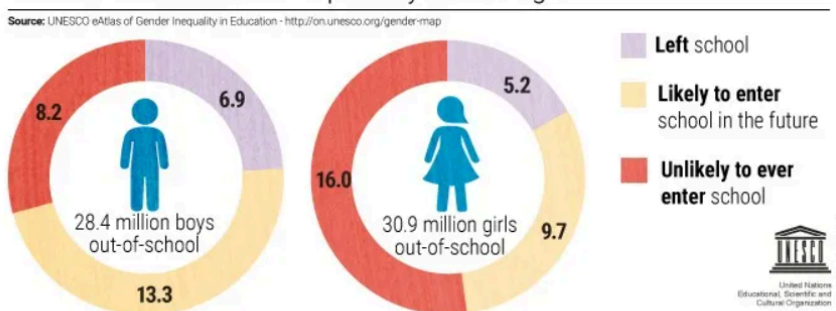
Early marriage is one of the greatest causes of abandonment of education by girls in South Asia. As an example, in Bangladesh, about 60% of girls marry before reaching the age of 18. Most of these marriages result in early pregnancies which, in return, force the young girls to drop out of school to devote themselves to marital and parental obligations. It results in heavy consequences as the society suffers from increased poverty, less economic opportunity, and poor health outcomes. In a study conducted by UNESCO, it was found that

for every extra year in secondary school, the chances of getting a child in marriage is lowered by 5%; hence, the importance of access to education can not be underestimated.

Specific war zones are another indication of the disparity between education for men and that for women. For example, in Afghanistan, when the Taliban regained power in 2021, it was inevitable that they restricted girls from receiving education, mostly shutting down secondary schools, leaving millions of Afghan girls cut off from education and creating many challenges in terms of inequalities and limited future prospects. The case is similar in Syria, where millions of children have been displaced due to a continuous civil war, most affected by lack of safe and consistent schooling being girls.

Education is also affected by the lack of access to sanitary facilities, denying the usage of appliances to girls, which really decreases attendance of girls in schools in different areas of East Africa. UNICEF has announced one of its reports indicates that one out of ten Africans would miss classes every month due to menstruation, thus the continuous absences, leading to dropouts in the long term. No gender-sensitive facilities such as private toilets in schools would additionally discourage girls from attending school.

Education is also denied for unique barriers to indigenous girls and those from marginalized ethnic groups. For example, in Latin America, indigenous girls further separate schooling from that of non-indigenous girls through differences of language, discrimination, and distance. For example, in Guatemala, indigenous girls report only 2.5 years in schooling as opposed to 5.7 years for their non-indigenous peers.

These are one of countless examples of how educational inequalities and dropout rates between girls are complex. Addressing such gaps will require unique specific approaches taking into consideration the economic, cultural, and political contexts affecting women's access to education.

b) Impact of Education on Empowerment and Employment

Education is the most potent weapon for empowerment among women and their economic participation. When women have access to quality education, they become empowered to confront discrimination and demand their rights and eventually work and contribute to society. Education has been shown to influence women's employment opportunities by making their skills more marketable and increasing the scope of jobs they might be qualified for: the income potential from their salaries is also likely to increase to higher salary levels. According to the World Bank, each additional year of education has been reported to increase a woman's income by almost 20%. Through such evidence, education can bridge the gender divide in employment while offering economic independence to less privileged women.

Education also empowers women to advocate for themselves and their communities. Women with higher education seem to be escaping from the traditional salaried jobs of their countries and moving into less stable job categories, earning bigger money, and providing

more encouragement for a career. For example, successful full-education women in India are entering fields like technology, finance, and management, in which the earnings and promotions are much higher than in the average range. Experimental evidence from Rwanda demonstrates that awareness programs for women have led to the greatest number of emerging female entrepreneurs, with women-focused businesses expanding to play their roles in national growth and community development.

Education is also a requirement for making women voice within and outside their communities. Secondary education is a predictor of decision making in the household, in government, and even from personal to broader areas. For example, in a country such as Rwanda with evidence of gender-sensitive education policies, women make up the majority in parliament; this tends to show the greater impact that educating women has on society. More educated mothers are likely to keep up with educating their children, especially girls, thus forming a cycle of empowerment through generations.

c) Actions Taken by UN WOMEN

UN Women consider education a prime mover of gender equality. Initiating various programs aimed at making quality education accessible for girls and women, they have participated in the Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning Program of UN Women, which targets women and girls who missed formal schooling. At present, this program has estimates in countries like Jordan and India where it offers digital literacy training, vocational skills, and mentorship for women to re-enter workforces and strive for economic independence. Such programs also have enabled thousands of women in countries like Kenya and Morocco to obtain vocational training in demand sectors from technology to healthcare and even green energy, which eventually enhance employability through generating greater income. Another example of these programs is "Empower Women, Empower Economies", which provides combined services of job placement, mentorship, and entrepreneurship support to female beneficiaries who are moving from education to work.

Through the establishment of legal reforms and community awareness programs in collaboration with governments and local organizations, the UN Women are said to be working on an initiative that would tackle early marriages and gender-based violence. In sub-Saharan Africa, initiatives like HeForShe engage men and boys as allies in advocating for girls' education, challenging discriminatory norms in education, and creating supportive educational environments. In Malawi, the intervention of the aforementioned initiative has successfully mobilized communities to end child marriages, allowing girls to stay in school.

Safe learning spaces for girls in conflict zones is a project of UN Women in collaboration with UN agencies and local organizations to establish temporary schools in refugee camps. It provides such support as books, psychosocial support, and life skills training. For example, one project supported by UN Women directs its attention to providing young women in refugee camps with educational resources, psychosocial support, and life skills training which aims to promote the education of Syrian girls about coping with the interruption of education

while they are internally displaced in the Za'atari camp in Jordan. Another example is the cases of women who engage in such programs across Afghanistan; which aims for women to acquire literacy and numeracy skills while learning about their legal rights and financial independence, empowering them to control their destiny in their communities. These interventions have enabled girls to continue education and build resilience against crisis situations.

In addition, UN Women gives a global advocacy voice for gender-responsive education systems at a policy level. It collaborates with UNESCO, UNICEF, and other partners to ensure that education policies are created and enforced using a gender responsive lens. This includes advocating investments in girls' education, scholarships, and financial incentives to lessen the economic barriers leading to higher dropout rates, such as boosting investments in global partnership for education, which increases funds needed for girls' education in low-income countries.

UN Women is also addressing institutional barriers by working with governments and educational institutions to develop gender-sensitive curriculum and thereby equalize opportunities between girls and boys. UN Women, for instance, has helped Jordanian schools in establishing STEM programs, an acronym referring to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics-that are basically aimed at wooing girls to join them. In fact, it has succeeded very well in paving the way for young women to take up technology and engineering careers.

With identifying and solving the root causes of educational inequality, UN Women is breaking barriers and creating pathways to the education that women and girls really deserve. Not only this effort empowers women; its effect is also creating ripples that uplift families and communities and later lead to development in society and gender equality. But these require consistent efforts and collective action to eradicate entrenched cultural norms and systemic barriers that still leave millions of women without even an opportunity to learn and grow.

8. Cultural and Religious Barriers

Women are blocked by cultural and religious barriers from gaining access to opportunities, rights, and resources, so that while they are traveling into the world, gender inequality is developed and maintained. Most of these barriers emerge from age-old traditions, social norms, and perceptions of religious teachings reinforcing patriarchal systems. They are reflected in practices such as child marriage and limitation of movement, restricted access to education, and marginalization from decision-making, both within families and in public life.

For example, among all the mobility restrictions applied to women, the most common would be the limitation imposed by "conservative" societies. In Saudi Arabia (before being reformed lately), for instance, women needed a guardian's permission to be able to travel, get

a job, or even seek treatment from a doctor. While these restrictions have been eased a little, the rest is still decided by the culture and the strict obedience of the people to their rules, which makes it difficult for women to be free as an individual and participate in work outside the scope of the home. This has been the case in Afghanistan as well, where cultural and religious conservatism restricts the rights of women, especially education and work, as the Taliban reinstated their regime back in 2021.

Child marriage, again, could be part of the cultural and religious practices. In many countries of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, girls are married before they become adults; often, their schooling comes to an end before they have had much, if any, time to attend classes, and they will be exposed to early pregnancies and many health consequences. For example, in Niger, almost 76% of women get married before age 18, using local customs and religions to justify this. Such practices continue the vicious cycle of poverty and deny women access to financially independent statuses.

In addition, cultural constrictions inhibit participation by women in both political and economic events. Internally, within certain Middle Eastern and North African countries, the norm demands women's functioning primarily as caregivers or homemakers, but not in careers or leadership roles. Men are often seen as natural leaders, and this stereotype continues to alienate women from governance and decision-making processes.

a) Influence of Cultural practices on Women's Rights

Aside from various cultural practices believed to be important influences on women' rights, they often dictate how society expects both men and women to behave in the various scenarios. While some cultural traditions promote solidarity and community, others perpetuate systemic discrimination and gender inequality. They affect women's access to education and employment, health care, and participation in decision-making processes. Harmful cultural practices can be conveniently justified in the name of rich heritage or social order but, in truth, restrain the freedoms and opportunities of women.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is one of the most well-known examples that can be an application of cultural practice in many African and Middle Eastern countries. Girls are mutilated under the pretext of encouraging purity and making them ready for marriage, while in reality, the operation brings severe physical and psychologically damaging effects. UNICEF states that more than 200 million women and girls have undergone FGMs in the world. For example, Somalia has a prevalence rate above 90%. Some communities may see it as a rite of passage; however, it violates women's rights to health, safety, and bodily autonomy.
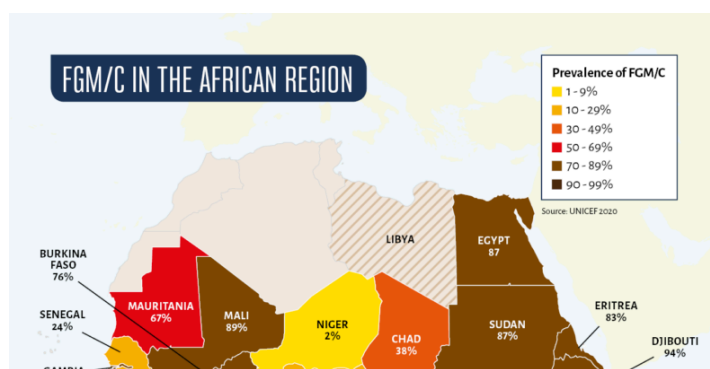
Another example is honor-based violence, which takes place in societies where the conduct of

female family members defines their family's honor. For example, South Asia and the Middle East portray women who act in a way that is considered dishonorable, such as refusing to uphold an arranged marriage or going to school, to punish her. Such acts not just curtail the rights of women but also strike fear and deprive agency. Likewise, some indigenous people in Latin America traditionally do not grant women land inheritance rights, thus restricting their economic independence and reinforcing patriarchy.

Polygamy and child marriage are the other forms of oppression widely practiced in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, both of which deny women equal rights in families formed. Child marriage and early marriage, especially, lead to early pregnancy, shortened schooling opportunities, and increased susceptibility to domestic violence, such as in Niger, where nearly 76% of girls marry before 18 years, that is quite culturally understood as the burden of an economic girl.

UN Women recognizes that culture significantly impacts women's rights and adopts a culturally sensitive transformative approach. Within such collaborative initiatives with local communities and with public and religious actors, UN Women takes a challenge in defining norms while respecting the particular cultures.

UN Women's initiative against FGM involves counseling grassroots organizations to empower the people regarding health and human rights violations posed by such a tradition. Kenya and Sudan have demonstrated successful results such that campaigns undertaken by women and girls against FGM are complemented by alternative rites of passage becoming vital for the health education and human rights teaching of communities away from the practices.

For instance, in Malawi, UN Women partnered with communities and local leaders to raise the minimum marriage age to 18 and develop public campaigns of the importance of educating girls. The initiatives have led to a visible decrease in rates of child marriage in targeted areas. UN Women thus supports legal reforms and community engagement initiatives as measures to combat child marriage.

Another area of engagement of UN Women is to address the economic costs of cultural practices. In Latin America, it is partnering with indigenous communities to promote women's land ownership and improve the inheritance laws that discriminate against them while also providing legal support to women. Gradually, these interventions will help women achieve economic independence and counter patriarchal norms.

Their efforts address cultural practices inhibiting women's rights and enable women to thrive in different societies. Their efforts indicate that they are not just confronting harmful traditions but also creating inclusive societies that respect and uphold the principles of gender equality.

b) Navigating Religious Traditions and Gender Equality

Women's rights and the equality between genders could be heavily subjected to the influence of the conventional religious practices in their respective cultures. While most religions preach equity, justice, and compassion, they can easily be manipulated into narrowing down the definitions and roles of women and opportunities available to them. Such interpretations and practices would also include gender discrimination practices that could deprive women of their education, employment, and leadership opportunities. Dilling between respecting religious traditions and the pursuit of gender equality is a very delicate but necessary task in women's rights advancement.

This is exemplified in the role of women in leading religious practices. In religion, particularly in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, women were not allowed to be priests or hold other such positions by traditional understanding of sacred texts. For instance, only men are ordained priests in the Catholic Church, thus denying the women their share in spiritual and organizational decision-making. Conservative interpretations concerning Shari'a law even hold women back in public ventures in certain Islamic communities when historical records document the powerful figures among early Islam, such as Khadijah and Aisha, who had major business and scholarship contributions.

Dress codes imposed by religious traditions bring in the conjunction between faith and gender equality. For women in countries like Iran and Afghanistan, special dress codes, such as wearing the hijab, mark their modesty as per Islamic teachings. Yet, what makes the majority of these women put on religious attire is the interpretation of it as an expression of faith. However, making law or societal pressure a requirement impedes personal freedom and agency. The same goes for some Orthodox Jewish communities, where women have dressed slightly with all kinds of modesty limits thrown within their boundaries regarding what can or can't be.

There are also other areas where religious traditions overlap with personal laws concerning marriage, divorce, and inheritance-preferential treatments for women in most cases. For instance, much of South Asia is characterized by the fact that religious laws grant men considerably greater powers than women concerning divorce and inheritance, leaving them economically vulnerable. Here in India, for example, Muslim personal law traditionally provided men with lesser divorce restrictions as compared to women, but this is fast changing with reforms in the equity arena.

Through engaging dialogue and coordination with religious leaders and communities, UN Women seeks to balance the complicated relationship between traditions and gender equality. UN Women thus interprets faith in terms of the prevailing cultural norms as regards its close reading of religious texts that it promotes as equal or justice seeking. One of the big programs of UN Women is collaboration with faith-based organizations in combating gender discrimination to encourage equal treatment for women. For instance, in Senegal, UN Women has partnered with Islamic scholars to discourage child marriage by using Quranic verses that

highlight the importance of taking care of girls and educating them. This sort of intervention has modified perceptions and reduced child marriage practices within targeted communities.

In this category, UN Women engages religious leaders to be their partners in the struggle against gender-based violence. In some countries, for instance Uganda, they trained religious leaders on advocating against domestic violence and on promoting family relations that are respectful among family members. These rely on their moral authority to counter poisonous practices and to facilitate change in behavior among their congregants. UN Women advocates reforms in personal laws that will reconcile religion with international standards on human rights. Such is the case in Tunisia, where UN Women supported an attempt at repealing laws that allowed rapists to marry their victims to escape punishment by working with both secular and religious stakeholders.

Education is another very important aspect within UN Women strategies. Such initiatives usually enrich women's voices to advocate for themselves while giving them space within their faith by advocating for rights of women in religious contexts. One such example is supporting women's literacy programs as in Afghanistan, where UN Women attached Islamic texts to their teachings so participants would understand rights in religion. Mapping religious traditions through a gender equality lens, UN Women take initiative to atheist every effort of advancing women's rights and the rights of women themselves. That not only promotes challenges against discrimination but also builds partnership with faith-based communities for such changes to last indefinitely.

9.   Health Inequalities

There are considerable inequalities experienced by women in health, associated with the biological, social, economic, and cultural forces impacting them. Generally, health service access, exposure to risk factors, or health outcomes show gender differences, and these inequalities are more comprehensive in low and middle income countries than in the rest of the world. These inequalities are driven by structural barriers such as poverty, lack of education, cultural norms, and healthcare systems' biases against women.

Maternal health is a classic example. An estimated 800 deaths among women occur each day, preventable because of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, according to the World Health Organization. Of these, 94% of deaths are occurring in under-resourced settings. Again, countries such as Nigeria and India are well known for their share in maternal mortality figures. This is largely due to the fact

that most women have very poor access to decent maternity services along with the fact that there are few skilled birth staff. Such issues become more pronounced when coupled with cultural practices, such as early marriage, which increase the risk of complications during childbirth.

The other area of interest is concerned with sexual and reproductive health. Unfortunately, women in many parts of the world do not have access to contraception and safe abortion services as well as comprehensive sexual education. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, a number of unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions are the results of unmet contraceptive needs and their ratios contribute to a maternal mortality rate that is some of the highest worldwide. Restrictive laws as well as stigma surrounding abortion in countries like El Salvador also severely limit women's reproductive choices and endanger their health.

Chronic Diseases and Mental Health also expands the gendered aspect of health. Autoimmune diseases and osteoporosis are more prevalent among women than among men, yet suffer less research attention and funding. Gender-based violence affects the physical and mental health of women. Domestic violence survivors are more prone to developing depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, physical injuries, or chronic conditions.

a) Access to Healthcare Services

Access to health services is one of the critical determinants of women's overall health and well-being. Yet millions of women across the globe face immense barriers toward receiving desired healthcare. They include barriers such as distance from the centers of care, the ability to finance the health expenses, sociocultural norms, and discriminatory practices in the health systems of different countries. Depriving access to health does not only undermine the physical and mental health of women but rather strengthens poverty development and inequality.

For example, in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, women have to travel a long distance to reach health care facilities. Transport infrastructural challenges add to the burdens they carry. In India, poor maternal health outcomes are largely attributed to the inability of women in remote villages to access skilled birth attendants or emergency obstetric care. In sub-Saharan Africa, again, it increases maternal mortality and worsens general health outcomes because of the antiretroviral therapy for women living with HIV not being accessible.

Economic barriers are further stack-up in the way of women's access to health care. Health care has become unaffordable for women, especially those who are not formally employed, in many low- to middle-income countries. For instance, in Bangladesh, the high costs of prenatal care make it inaccessible to many women, increasing pregnancy and childbirth complications. Even in high-income countries, such as the United States, health care affordability remains an issue for most women, especially in marginalized communities.

Cultural and gender biases existing within health care systems also complicate this access to health. Women, in some conservative societies, will need the permission of a male guardian to seek health, which greatly limits their autonomy. Some self-limit access to health services for cultural reasons. In fact, it is also said that male-oriented health care needs are more prioritized than women's. Later on, symptoms develop that delay the timely diagnosis or treatment. For instance, several studies in the U.K. and the U.S. have demonstrated that the pain of women has been underestimated because of a certain great stereotype of the gender.

b) Reproductive Rights and Health Education

Reproductive rights and broad health education are essential to the development of women's health in all parts of the globe. Reproductive rights provide women the autonomy to make decisions about their bodies with respect to their reproductive health services, including access to contraception, safe abortion, fertility treatments, and high-quality maternal health services. However, their rights are often compromised by socioeconomic conditions, cultural, religious, and legal barriers. Women from underdeveloped communities, rural households, and minor ethnic groups are disproportionately affected in such cases; they often lack access to essential health care services. This inequity eventually leads to higher rates of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and easily preventable maternal and infant mortality within these populations.

Developing comprehensive knowledge so that women can make informed decisions for themselves on reproductive health is one of the major interventions addressing these disparities. Learning about contraception, the menstrual cycle, sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention, and safe pregnancy practice would empower not only the woman but the family and the community. Research shows that women with accurate and actionable-reproductive health-related information are likely to seek timely medical attention, decrease the likelihood of unsafe abortion, and formulate their family planning immensely. Health education, even as it teaches reproductive health, opens up harmful cultural and gender stereotypes by facilitating conversation about reproductive health and encouraging the equal burden of responsibility among men and women.

GENDER INEQUALITY - THE FACTS

1 in 5 girls is married before turning 18

1 in 4 girls is out of secondary school

Over 800 women and girls die in childbirth every day

The total number of women and girls subjected to harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage is still growing

The total number of women with an unmet need for contraception is still growing

Half of women in low-mid income countries have no decision making power over their own bodies

Source: UNFPA, 2020

Reproductive health education has appeared in almost all parts of the world and is still lacking. The reasons are mostly political resistance, insufficient funding, and social stigma. Unfortunately, the absence of education contributes to maintaining the circles of inequalities, making every woman susceptible to false information, exploitation, and avoidable health crises. On the other hand, the work must be done together with the governments, health providers, and international organizations. The governments should come up with reasonable and effective policies to ensure and make accessible reproductive healthcare services and inclusive educational programs.

Gender-sensitive health education should be prioritized to eradicate systemic barriers ingrained in destinations, including gender equity and health disparities. Knowing that addressing reproductive rights and health education are brought in for gender justice, they are that of a social-economic imperative very much wider in scope. It ensures all women, whatever their lot in life, have the knowledge and resources to achieve their reproductive rights and health managed; that would ensure healthier societies with smaller poverty and a completive set for sustainable development. By investing in these critical domains, future policymakers and stakeholders will work toward a more hopeful world where the value and protection of every woman's health and well-being come first.

10. Media Representation

While the effect of media representation helps shape societal norms, it still does not reflect women adequately and in a variety of ways. In most cases, women are consigned to positions that are secondary or given roles that reinforce stereotypes about the gender, such as being viewed as highly emotional and dependent, or judged by what it looks like at a given moment, that is, value perceived on the basis of one's physical appearance. Such misrepresentation reduces the scope of intersectionality within the lives and accomplishments of women and, hence, reinforces institutional inequalities. In addition, marginalised women, particularly those from different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, are further underrepresented, or even poorly stereotyped. Thus, accurate, diverse, and empowering representations of women can help the media challenge the existing masculine paradigms through which ordinary people view the world. Resolution of this issue requires collective internal changes in content production, representation of women in decision-making roles of media industry, and attachment to a model of equity in storytelling about the complexities of women's lives.

a) Stereotypes and Misrepresentation of Women

Such repercussions are going to impact social perceptions as well as personal self-impressions. Media has portrayed women in a stereotypical and misrepresentational manner; women have never been beyond the one-dimensional stereotype, such as the so-called caregiver, seductress, or damsel in distress: they fall short of epitomizing their roles

and possibilities. This will not just normalize gender inequity but also uphold deadly cultural practices which further create opportunity constraints for women and possibly reinforce power imbalance. Misrepresentation seems more detrimental to marginalized groups since it goes further to invisibilize them and sustain multiple oppressions. It is a conscious building effort challenging these stereotypes by blowing up narratives, unearthing unheard voices, and reshaping inclusive structures for media production. Breaking away from traditional tropes is a must towards creating a media landscape promoting gender equity while celebrating different women's lives and contributions.

b) Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception and Attitudes

It is the media through which the minds of people actually get shaped about opinions and attitudes towards the different gender roles and expectations. Media can reach at such a level that it either upholds the norms or even upends them. Media is a spate tool by all means when it comes to altering a society. When the portrayal of women is not just empowering but also shows them in different roles, such as leaders, innovators, and even change agents, it begins to chip away at the internalized bias and widens the public imagination regarding gender potentials. On the contrary, if the media only focuses on reinforcing old stereotypes or if women are solely viewed in roles where they had no representation, inequities in the system are compounded and become hurdles for the attainments of gender equality. The media thus could play a very important role in terms of developing narratives that are inclusive, truthful, and reflective of diverse realities. Ethical storytelling, coupled with media literacy, would make society home to transformational media advocates of gender equality against harmful stereotypes.

D. Case Studies

1. Initiatives from Various Countries

UN Women has worked with countries around the world to address gender inequality through localized initiatives on such major issues like violence, economic inequalities, political exclusion, health inequalities, and cultural barriers.

In Turkey, the "HeForShe" campaign enlisted men into the movement against domestic violence, and Mexico's "Spotlight Initiative" fights against femicide and empowers victims. Rwanda's efforts for economic empowerment are focusing on microlending and entrepreneurship, whereas India's WeEmpowerAsia is working toward removal of gender pay gap.

Tunisia's gender-parity laws and Afghanistan's training programs for women in leadership are among initiatives that have made strides toward the political inclusion of women. Educational interventions in Pakistan and Malawi seek to reduce dropout rates and early marriage in favor of girls. In Uganda, UN Women increases access to reproductive health care, while in Brazil, it concentrates on the health care of marginalized women, especially Afro-Brazilians and indigenous populations.

Media initiatives in Kenya and South Korea challenge stereotypes, promoting balanced portrayals of women. There are also some programs in Morocco and Indonesia that deal with harmful cultural practices by involving religious leaders to normalize such practices with gender equality. This shows the power of localized multi-sectoral approaches in promoting women's empowerment across the world.

V.   Points a Resolution Should Cover

- ○ What specific legal frameworks and policy measures are able to contribute to the prevention of domestic, sexual, and economic violence against women?
- ○ What awareness creation strategies can be deployed to change societal acceptance of violence against women?
- ○ What initiatives will be proposed to resolve the issue of equal payment for equal work among genders?
- ○ How can countries give further access to finance for women in terms of loans, credits, and entrepreneurship programs?
- ○ What training and mentorships can enable women to penetrate high-demand industries and leadership positions?
- ○ What mechanisms, such as gender quotas, can increase women's representation in government and decision-making?
- ○ How can member states address harassment and discrimination against women in political and public spheres?
- ○ Which initiatives could provide training in leadership and resources for women aspiring to political roles?

- In which ways can a country make its education system better accessible to girls, especially those who drop out?
- What policies would address all barriers such as child marriage, gender-based violence, and poverty from girls' education completion?
- How can STEM education be enhanced to promote young female development in emerging fields?
- What can be done to provide targeted interventions at all levels for universal access to reproductive healthcare services, including family planning and safe abortion?
- How can maternal health services be improved in a country in order to reduce the rates of preventable maternal deaths?
- What are the specific programs addressing health care disparities faced by marginalized women, such as indigenous and refugee women?
- What strategies can engage cultural and religious leaders to promote gender equality and combat harmful practices like child marriage?
- What initiatives can encourage balanced and gender-sensitive portrayals of women in media?
- How can member states support campaigns that counter stereotypes and amplify women's voices?
- What role can media literacy programs play in fostering public understanding of gender equity?
- How to strengthen legal systems in protecting rights of women and ensuring accountability for rights violations?
- What gender-sensitive training programs can be implemented for law enforcement and judicial personnel?
- What are some of the diplomatic initiatives that could enhance cooperation between countries in the field of women's empowerment?
- What are some successful examples of the implementation of gender-sensitive policies from the member states that may serve as a model for other countries?

VI.   Further Readings

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