

Forum: Youth Assembly

Issue: The question of ensuring greater gender equality

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Introduction

Gender inequality has been a widespread issue around the world, dating back to centuries. It can be seen everywhere, starting from homes where sexist mentalities and gender stereotypes are instilled in children by their families, to the unfair rights and opportunities given to women in terms of economic, legal, and humanitarian rights, and even safety.

Both men and women are affected by gender inequality, and this situation has been exacerbated by the media and portrayal of both genders in society, coupled with the expectations, standards, and stereotypes presented to all. While discrimination towards women can be seen more prominently in all aspects, men tend to face social pressures which is detrimental to their mental health.

Although laws, organisations, and movements have been in place to fight against and aim to eradicate gender inequality, this issue is extremely prevalent in today's society. Women and girls all around the world suffer because of a notion that they are weaker, or lesser than men; men and boys suffer because of the idea that they are stronger and superior, and must appear so. The question of how to ensure greater gender equality has been grappled with immensely, by a large variety of people and organisations such as the United Nations.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender equality

Gender equality is defined as the state when people of any gender are given equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It is when there is no discrimination against a person based on their gender. This involves economic and political participation, legal decision making, and treatment in the workplace, among others.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap, also known as the gender wage gap, refers to the disparity in incomes between men and women for doing the same work.

Fundamentalism

A strict attitude towards firm beliefs and adherence to principals. Could include political and religious fundamentalism.

Gender based violence

Violence directed against a person because of their gender is called gender-based violence. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of the victims are women.

Misogyny

Bias against women.

OECD Countries

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, abbreviated as OECD, is an international organisation of 38 countries committed to democracy and the market economy.

Key Issues

Unequal rights

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which serves as the guiding principle of international human rights standards till date. It calls for equality and human rights for all members of society regardless of gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, ability, and it ensures the right to life, liberty and security. While many international conventions such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been ratified by more than 136 countries worldwide, the issue of women's rights and safety still remains increasingly prevalent.

Access to education

There is an unfair access to education for girls, for a number of reasons. The barriers to girls' education differs for various communities and countries, but worldwide, 129 million girls are out of school. According to UNICEF, only 49% of countries have achieved gender equality in primary education, and at the secondary level, the equality decreases - only 42% of countries have achieved gender equality in lower secondary education, and 24% in upper secondary education.

One of the reasons for this inequality in access is poverty and communities' mentality towards female education. People in poverty cannot afford education, and those with lower income tend to favour and prioritise the education of boys over girls, with the mentality that girls need to stay home and do the housework. Furthermore, gender based violence prevents many girls from going to school, and they are forced to stay home so they are not exposed or vulnerable.

Unequal Opportunities

“Gender inequality is a key driver of poverty. And a fundamental denial of women's rights.”

According to the World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law 2022 report, 2.4 billion women of working age do not have access to equitable economic opportunities, and 178 nations have legislative restrictions that limit their ability to fully participate in economic life. 95 countries do not guarantee equal pay for equal work, and women are subject to some type of job restriction in 86 of those nations.

Further, while many individuals in the developing world lack stable property rights and enough resources, women all around the world have less access to land and resources than men. For example, 43% of the agricultural workforce is made up of women. Despite this, they rarely have ownership of, tenure security over, or control over the land they work on. Women frequently have little power to decide how the property is used or what activities are carried out on a particular piece of land. Improving women's access to economic resources benefits a variety of development objectives, including poverty reduction and economic growth.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is a worldwide issue, and the gap is more apparent in some countries as compared to others. There are two types of gender pay gaps: the unadjusted and adjusted gender pay gap.

The unadjusted gap refers to the average difference in pay for all working men and women, and provides 'raw figures' of said difference, while the adjusted pay gap measures the pay gap after considering various factors (such as occupation, education, and experience) which might influence the pay gap. Both measurements show a rather distinct disparity in the incomes made by women versus that made by men. The main reasons behind having such a gap are occupational and vertical segregation, along with the different education levels.

Occupational segregation occurs due to male dominated industries being those that are higher paying, such as the medical and engineering fields, while lower paying industries like child care and social services are primarily female dominated. Vertical segregation refers to the difference in seniority of positions; men typically are in higher positions and therefore receive higher pay, as compared to women who get stuck in lower positions of power. As previously discussed, there is a large unfairness in terms of access to education for girls, and as females are less likely to receive the top levels of education, they are hindered in their ability to climb the hierarchies of power. While this discrimination in payment based on gender has been made illegal in many countries, the gender pay gap is still present because enough measures have not been taken to bridge the gap.

Gender Stereotypes and Sexism

Gender equality is severely hindered by gender stereotyping, which also fuels prejudice against women. Gender stereotypes are preconceived notions that assign roles and qualities to men and women based only on their sex. Deeply ingrained attitudes, values, conventions, and biases against women are the root of and the origin of stereotypes about women.

Gendered discrimination has become critically widespread, allowing women's equality in terms of freedom of expression to remain a distant objective as member states continue to disregard and fail to protect women's basic human rights. Young women and gender non-conforming people are being policed by fundamentalists in some nations, including Afghanistan, and are being banned and criminalized by governments under the excuse of safeguarding "public morals."

Human rights, media diversity, and an inclusive democracy are all threatened by this.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States

The US has had many major issues in terms of women's rights, as all countries did at some point. A lot of significant events occurred, such as the Women's Suffrage Movement and multiple amendments being made to the US Constitution, some of which supported women's rights while others did not.

The Women's Suffrage movement was a decades-long fight involving dozens of campaigns and protests, all advocating the right for women to vote. The idea arose in the early 1820s and 30s, but it was only on August 18 of 1920 that the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was finally ratified and women could legally vote in national and/or local elections. Similarly, there have been rulings by the US Supreme Court over time, such as those which took away women's rights or affected their work situations.

Korea

Korea has one of the highest gender gaps in the labour market among OECD countries, in terms of both earning and labour force participation. In 2020, Korea's gender pay gap stood at 32%, almost 20% higher than the OECD average. Additionally, in 2017, women were only in 16% of managerial positions, half of what the comparable countries had. A gender labour participation gap of 18% was seen in Korea, compared to a gap of 15% among the OECD countries.

In response to these statistics, the Korean government has made some changes and progress by lengthening parental leave, reducing working hours for pregnant women, encouraging more balanced sharing of childcare duties between spouses, improving work-life balance, and providing more employment services suited for women.

Peoples' Republic of China

Striving for gender equality remains a cause deeply cared about by the Communist Party of Xi Jinping. Since 1954, the Constitution of China has stated that men and

women are equal. More than one hundred laws and regulations, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, have been drafted or amended to provide fundamental safeguards for protecting women's rights and interests and advancing women's development.

The fundamental legal mechanisms for preventing and prohibiting domestic violence against family members, particularly women, are provided by the 2016 China Anti-Domestic Violence Law. However, gender-biased sex selection has resulted in a persistently high unbalanced sex ratio at birth in China due to strong son preference, modern technology use, and the drop in the total fertility rate.

Development of Issue/Timeline

| Date | Event | Outcome |
|-------------|--|--|
| 1948 | Universal Declaration of Human Rights | The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which outlines fundamental principles and establishes all people's rights and freedoms. |
| 1979 | Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women | Calls upon member nations to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all regions, and advocates equal rights for all females, and is possibly the most important human rights treaty for women |

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|--------------------|---|---|
| <p>1995</p> | <p>Beijing Platform for Action</p> | <p>The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, also known as the BPfA, is a revolutionary global agreement that advances women's rights and gender equality.</p> |
| <p>2014</p> | <p>HeForShe Campaign</p> | <p>Emma Watson, a United Nations Women Goodwill Ambassador, launched the HeForShe initiative, a social movement campaign aimed to promote women's rights. It provides a platform for people of all genders to create a united front for the advancement of gender equality.</p> |
| <p>2021</p> | <p>Taliban Takeover Afghanistan</p> | <p>Due to the Taliban's all-male cabinet and lack of a Ministry of Women's Affairs, Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls are practically banned from attending high school and from participating in politics. Afghan women are currently entirely prohibited from working outside the home, are required to cover their faces in public, and must travel with a male supervision. They are still the victims of numerous sorts of gender-based violence.</p> |

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

CEDAW, 1979

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is an international treaty that was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. It calls upon member nations to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all regions, and advocates equal rights for all females, and is possibly the most important human rights treaty for women. Currently, 189 nations have ratified this convention, and at least 130 countries have made around 270 gender-related reforms to laws and legislations over the past decade.

CEDAW has been successful in its efforts against discrimination, including poverty, violence, lack of legal protection, along with the denial of inheritance, property rights, and access to credit.

Some successes of the treaty include:

- The development of citizenship rights in Botswana and Japan
- The development of property rights and political participation in Costa Rica.
- Adoption of a law in Rwanda prohibiting sex-based discrimination in access to land
- A legislation criminalizing all forms of violence against women in Burkina Faso and femicide in Panama
- A national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada
- The development of anti-trafficking laws in Ukraine and Moldova

Sustainable Development Goal 5

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a list of 17 goals set up by the United Nations in 2015, and were aimed to be achieved by 2030. SDG 5 states “*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*”. The UN explains that “*providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and*

representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large”.

There are 9 trackers and 14 indicators defined for SDG 5, which will help identify the goals and metrics for their success. Recent reports show that while SDG 5 is making headway in certain areas, recent issues and the consequent backslides have put gender equality further out of reach. At the current rate, the goal will not be achieved by 2030, and if more investments and commitments are not made, this SDG may never be achieved.

Possible Solutions

Financing, Advocacy, Implementation and Coordination

- Embrace gender equality throughout the duration of the humanitarian program.
- Encourage local women's organisations, specialist organisations, NGOs, and other actors working on equality to get involved, form alliances with them, and take the lead in these efforts.
- Assure all advocacy and communications are gender-responsive.
- Promote gender equality in disaster response, disaster mitigation, and women's involvement in humanitarian decision-making.
- Guarantee that the finance for humanitarian causes is still gender-responsive and handled by OCHA.
- Establishing and maintaining close ties between humanitarian policies and other important global policy initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the agenda for women, peace, and security.

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