

Committee: SPECPOL

Topic: The question of the advancement of women

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Summary

The aim of the advancement of women is to work towards gender equality and the empowerment of women – as equal partners in and beneficiaries of sustainable development, human rights, and peace and security. Gender equality is and should be a human right, but even today misogyny and sexism are prevalent within both developed and developing countries.

In many parts of the world, women and girls are denied access to education or basic health care and are also subject to suffering from violence and discrimination based on their gender.

Some effects of gender inequality are less visible or apparent than others, but this does not make them less important. Women are faced with gender pay gaps, unequal labour opportunities, as well as segregation. Their role in society is predetermined by gender-based roles rather than skill.

There are many methods by which this can be achieved, such as positive discrimination and affirmative action.

Whilst these will help fix the problem in the short term, there are also some more long-term factors to consider, such as community views and deep-rooted stereotypes and sexism. This can be addressed and changed through campaigns and education.

Definition of Key Terms

Advancement: The action of moving forward in progress. The advancement of women would include promoting equality in the form of equal rights and opportunities.

Misogyny: Hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women

Gender equality: When people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Everyone is affected by gender inequality - women, men, trans and gender diverse people, children and families.

Background Information

There are many statistics to show the still prevalent sexism in today's society. An example of this is the discrepancy between men and women in politics and decision making roles. Of all national parliaments around the world, only 22.8 percent are women. This number has only increased 11.5 percent since the year 1995.

However, UN Women finds that the presence of female representatives in local government makes a difference in the quality of life in those regions; for example, in India, those local councils led by women had a number of drinking water projects that was 62% higher, on average, than the numbers in regions led by male councils. UN Women reiterates that "there is established and growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes improves them.

Another way in which disparity due to gender is visible in the gender pay gap. On average, women earn a mere 60 to 75 percent of men's wages. There are several factors behind this disparity in wages; women are more likely to be wage workers and unpaid family workers than men.

The World Bank reports that women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid care work; they devote 1 to 3 hours a day more to housework than men, 2 to 10 times the amount of time a day to care, and 1 to 4 hours less a day to market activities, which negatively impacts their participation in the labour force. This is usually due to cultural norms and stereotypes about women.

A report by UN Women finds that "when paid and unpaid work are combined, women in developing countries work more than men, with less time for education, leisure, political participation and self-care."

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that women make up 43 percent of the global agricultural workforce in developing countries, yet they control less land

than their male counterparts, and they have “limited access to inputs, seeds, credits, and extension services”; differences in access to land and credit between males and females also affect the ability of female farmers to invest, operate to scale, and benefit from new economic opportunities.

These gender gaps are exacerbated in times of economic crisis, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and inadequate infrastructure and services.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

USA – In 2019, women made up 50.04% of the workforce. However, job losses related to the COVID-19 pandemic have hit women harder than men, with roughly 2.3 million women missing from the U.S. workforce as of February 2021, compared with about 1.8 million men. This may be due to many factors, such as the types of jobs women tend to have were disproportionately affected by the economic slowdown and shutdowns of the past year compared with the types of jobs men tend to have, or greater family demands on women than on men, related to child care and school closures.

India – The World Bank estimates that the female labor participation rate in India fell to 20.3 percent in 2019. This may be due to various factors like obligations towards the performance of domestic duties, conservative social norms, and the lack of flexible work models. It is also observed that household constraints trump financial need and individual preferences for job choice among women, demonstrating a need for change in attitudes towards women in the workforce in India.

Brazil - Although the average rate of schooling among women is one year more than men, women experience fewer employment opportunities and lower wages than men. Women tend to earn 30% less than men for performing the same tasks. The gender wage gap in Brazil is one of the largest in Latin America, and could end up deterring women from entering the workforce or aiming for higher education, harmfully impacting the advancement of women.

Nigeria - Although 41 percent of women work, only 8 percent hold administrative or managerial positions, and they account for only 8 percent of professional and technical workers. In a survey conducted in Nigeria in 2020, around 30 percent of the women declared to be housewives. Other common occupations of Nigerian women were trader, hawker, vendor, agricultural profession, artisan, or skilled manual worker. Domestic violence rates are also worryingly high, with 70% of respondents reported abuse in their family with 92% of the victims being female partners and the remaining 8% being male. As well as this only 42 % of girls are enrolled in basic education, leading to girls being more likely to marry young and choosing not to participate in the workforce.

Afghanistan – According to the World Bank data, women comprised nearly 22% of the Afghan work force, with numbers on track to steadily grow. However the International Labour Organization found that in the third quarter of 2021, Afghan women employment levels fell by an estimated 16%, with the Taliban decree encouraging women to not leave their homes at all, discouraging women from joining the workforce. The Taliban have banned women and girls from secondary and higher education, minimising the chances of the advancement of women.

Rwanda – Rwanda has become one of the leading nations in terms of women's equality, with 61% of those in parliament are women. In 2018, Rwandan women made eighty-eight cents to a man's dollar, which puts Rwanda as number 25 for economic equality among genders. However, most other the majority of African women “work in insecure, poorly paid jobs, with few opportunities for advancement”

Sweden: Even though Sweden was ranked by the OECD as the 3rd best country for gender equality, having ended with 82% of the gender gap in the last couple of years, Sweden is also the 3rd country with the highest rape rates. In fact, according to the FRA's study there's a strong correlation between higher levels of gender equality and disclosure of sexual violence.

Association for Women's Rights in Development - The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international organization working to achieve gender equality and women's human rights across the world. The AWID closely works with activists and policy makers worldwide to influence gender policies and practice. It works with activists to build support networks of solidarity on protection and wellbeing and works with historically oppressed communities. Last, but not least, the AWID advocates for corporate accountability and tax justice to achieve equitable distribution of wealth.

Womankind Worldwide - Womankind Worldwide is an international organization for women's rights that works in solidarity and equal partnership with women's rights organizations and movements with a goal to transform the lives of women. Currently, the Womankind Worldwide works with women's rights organizations and movements in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda and Zimbabwe, advocating for international agencies and governments to promote and protect women's rights. Together with its local partners, the Womankind Worldwide helps women and girls transform their lives by providing them with shelters to escape violence and implements projects with community leaders to help women join to talk about what they want to change in their communities and how to achieve that.

The Center for Reproductive Rights - The Center for Reproductive Rights was established in 1992 with a goal to use the power of law to advance reproductive rights as fundamental human rights around the world. So far, the organization has strengthened laws and policies in more than 50 countries and won ground-breaking cases before national courts and the UN committees about reproductive healthcare, including birth control, safe abortion, prenatal and obstetric care.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
1893	New Zealand becomes the first country in the world to grant national voting rights to women. The bill was the outcome of years of suffragette meetings, petitions, lectures and speeches. The United States granted women the right to vote in 1920, and Great Britain granted full voting rights for women in 1928.
1963	The Equal Pay Act in the USA makes it explicitly illegal to pay women a lower wage than men simply based on sex. Today only 88 countries have mandated equal remuneration for work of value.
1964	Married Women's Property Act revision. First introduced in 1870, this act allowed women to be the legal owners of money they earned, and to inherit property rather than everything a woman owned and earned becoming her husband's property. The 1964 decision allowed married women to keep half of any savings they'd made from the allowance paid to them by their husbands, giving women more financial independence.
1967	The 1967 Abortion act legalised abortion for women in the UK who were up to 24 weeks pregnant. Two consenting doctors had to agree that continuing the pregnancy would be harmful to the woman or child's physical or mental health.
1980	A new Marriage Law is passed in China that granted certain rights to women during marriage. Women needed to be 18 years or older to marry, both parties had to consent, and the courts could reject marriages with ulterior motives (such as human trafficking and arranged marriages). Divorce proceedings started to consider women's rights, including child custody and division of property.
2012	The United Nations passed a resolution banning female genital mutilation. The United Nations called on citizens worldwide to stop the practice, which has been most common in

countries throughout Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, affecting as many as 200 million girls and women.

2018 - Iceland became the first country in the world to make it illegal—resulting in a fine—to pay men and women in the same job differently. One major difference between this law, and the Equal Pay Act in the United States is that the burden is no longer on the employee to make this claim—the onus is on the companies to prove that they are paying men and women equally as a matter of general review.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, stated that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”

In 1975 the first world conference on women took place in Mexico City. The conference defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women’s Year, which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women through 1985.

In 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly

At the third World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women, Governments adopted the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, which outlined measures for achieving gender equality at the national level and for promoting women’s participation in peace and development efforts.

In 1995, following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing three conferences were held on women and gender equality, leading to the ‘Beijing Declaration and the platform for action’, an agenda for women’s empowerment, being adopted unanimously by 189 countries.

The Beijing platform for Action has been reviewed and updated every 5 years, bar 2020 due to COVID-19

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It works to promote women’s rights and document the reality of women’s lives throughout the world. In July

2010 the United Nations General Assembly combined the UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

The Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) was the first resolution that recognized the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls, acknowledged the contributions women and girls make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and highlighted the importance of their equal and full participation, as active agents in peace and security.

To combat the suspected increase in violence against women due to the pandemic, the UN Women launched the Shadow Pandemic public awareness campaign, focusing on the global increase in domestic violence amid the COVID-19 health crisis.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

On 27th march 2019, the committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe created a catalogue of measures to both prevent and condemn sexism by calling for specific action in areas such as language and communication; internet and social media; media, advertising and other communication methods; workplace; public sector; justice sector; education institutions; culture and sport and the private sphere. It also calls for countries to pass legislation that condemns sexism and criminalises sexist hate speech, and monitor the implementation of anti-sexist policies.

Beijing Platform for Action: In September 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing, where anyone from anywhere attended with just one thing in their mind: gender equality and the empowerment of all women, everywhere. Still, “this pivotal document continues to guide the global struggle against constraints and obstacles to the empowerment of women around the world” (Ki-Moon, BAN)

Possible Solutions

Encouraging the implementation of positive discrimination in order to place more women in positions of power and change the bias towards men.

Providing adequate support for working mothers to encourage women in academia. This may involve increasing the amount of paid time off and creating more accessible and affordable childcare.

Implementing laws that ensure girls and women have access to both primary and secondary education, as girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy, productive lives, earning higher incomes and being able to build better futures for themselves and their families. This may involve creating new schools in rural areas or creating single-sex schools for safety.

Starting campaigns in developing and undeveloped countries to challenge sexist ideology in order to create a safer environment for women and encourage equality.

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