

Forum: *Advisory Panel (APQ)*

Issue: *The question of gender equality*

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Introduction

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also serves as the foundation for a peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous global society. In accordance to the United Nations charter, women should be “equal actors, partners and beneficiaries of sustainable development, human rights, peace, and security.” Although significant progress has been made in the front of gender equality over past decades, with an increase in women’s participation in education and leadership positions, fewer girls having to take part in early marriage, and worldwide systematic reforms in efforts to advance gender equality, many challenges remain. Discriminatory social norms and laws remain pervasive across the globe, as does the underrepresentation of women in all fronts of political leadership. Moreover, the fact that 1 in 5 women between the ages of 15 and 49 are victims of some form of sexual or physical violence against them further indicates the magnitude of the existing inequalities in our world today.

The manifold effects of the recent COVID-19 pandemic may reverse the limited progress made with regard to women’s rights and gender equality. It acts as an exacerbating factor toward the pre-existing inequalities that plague our global society, including those related to health, the economy, social protection, and security. Women are suffering a disproportionate burden in response to the virus, as it not only significantly increases the amount of unpaid care work they do, but also makes them more vulnerable to financial insecurity as nearly 60% of women work in the informal economy. A considerable increase in violence, particularly domestic violence against women has been another result of the pandemic. Although women are one of the most affected groups by the pandemic, they are also the backbone to the recovery of society — if governments strive to put them in the center of economies, this will drive more sustainable development outcomes and support a more rapid recovery of communities, according to the United Nations. The pandemic provides an opportunity for notable action to correct these long-standing inequalities in women’s lives, and to build a more equal, resilient society. However, global cooperation is crucial for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5, to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

Definition of Key Terms

Gender

Gender is a broad term that refers to the economic, social, and cultural attributes and norms assigned to being male or female. These ideas about gender are different for each society and are constantly changing. However, for most societies, being male or female is not just about biological differences, with men and women having to tackle different expectations concerning just about everything. From job opportunities and behavior and how they dress, men and women are expected to be different. Gender is thereby different from sex in that it is more related to one's culture and society rather than being biological.

Gender Equality

The term gender equality describes the idea that one's rights, opportunities, responsibilities, interests, and perceptions should not depend on one's gender. It is the idea that all genders are able to pursue whatever is best for them without being discriminated against.

Gender Equity

Gender equity is different from gender equality in that while gender equality's main goal is to treat all genders equally, gender equity is making sure that all gender's get the same outcome. Treating women and men equally might not actually be fair as women typically have a different "starting position" than men. If you were to just treat them equally, they still would not achieve the same things as men as the gap in their "starting position" would be maintained. Gender equity compensates for that and essentially means putting women and men on a level playing ground. This usually means compensating for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from being on a "level playing field". Gender equity seeks to change these deeper societal issues in order to achieve true equality.

Women's empowerment

Women's empowerment is the process of giving women and girls control over their lives. This means that they should be given both equal opportunities and equal access to services and resources. However, it is also important that cultural norms are changed that give women and girls the confidence to pursue their dreams whether or not it conforms with societal norms. This is usually achieved by using initiatives that try to change these aspects on a societal level.

Discrimination

Discrimination and specifically gender discrimination is the action of treating someone differently based on their gender. Usually it impairs women from achieving their goals and could stem from both the laws of a country such as not allowing women to pursue certain jobs or could be more subtle and stem from the practices of specific companies. This could include not being paid equally for doing the same job.

Occupational segregation

Occupational segregation is the unequal distribution of people in careers based on gender. This can be both due to and cause social stereotypes about different professions and about what men or women should do. This usually manifests itself in some professions being overwhelmingly a single gender and thus being very uninviting for the opposite gender to join.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a way of integrating gender concerns in the creation and monitoring of projects, institutions, plans, and programs among other things. It is a process meant to empower men and women and promote gender equality through a variety of means. Gender mainstreaming aims to address gender gaps in a variety of areas and situations including but not limited to the division of labour; compensation for work; educational differences; access to resources and services; and access to information and opportunities.

Sexual Violence

The World Health Organization defines sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.” Sexual violence can take many different forms, such as rape, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and so forth.

Background Information

History

Gender inequality first took root around 8000 years ago, according to a study published in the European Journal of Archaeology which analyzed graves from the Neolithic period found on the Iberian

Peninsula¹. A report written by Gerda Lerner, a renowned historian, further found that gender inequalities were already deeply rooted in Middle Eastern civilizations by the second century BCE². The long history of gender inequality within our global society serves as an illustration as to why the eradication of these disparities is such a difficult task which can only be achieved over long-term cooperative efforts across all nations.

With regard to more contemporary developments in gender equality, one of the first significant breakthroughs in relation to gender equality was the Seneca Falls Convention, a women's rights convention with over 300 attendees, organized by women, and held from July 19-20, 1848 in New York. The Declaration of Sentiments was proposed and signed, which sparked decades of activism and eventually led to the passage of the 19th amendment in 1919. On May 15, 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National Woman's Suffrage Association, which coordinated the national suffrage movement. The territory of Wyoming became the first state to grant women the right to vote and hold office on December 10, 1869. The 19th Amendment, which declared that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," was officially ratified on August 18th, 1920. The world's first commercially produced birth control pill was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960, giving women the right to choose whether and when they have children. The Equal Pay Act was signed into law by President John F. Kennedy in 1963, which prevented sex-based wage discrimination, and the Civil Rights Act, which banned employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, or national origin, was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson a year later in 1964. In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments, which stated that "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance," was signed into law by President Richard Nixon. The landmark Supreme Court decision made in Roe v. Wade declared that a woman's legal right to abortion is protected by the Constitution. Many more significant advances in women's rights, most notably political and educational, were made over the next few decades.

The United Nations' support for women's rights was first established in the United Nations Charter. Article 1 of the Charter states that one of the main purposes is to "achieve international co-operation ... in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." Within the first year of the UN's establishment, the

¹ Cintas-Peña, Marta, and Leonardo García Sanjuán. "Gender Inequalities in Neolithic Iberia: A Multi-Proxy Approach: European Journal of Archaeology." *Cambridge Core*, Cambridge University Press, 20 Mar. 2019, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-archaeology/article/gender-inequalities-in-neolithic-iberia-a-multiproxy-approach/7CA3A7DB7D56AFF67784371206E1D86C

² Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford University Press, 1986, 1986, www.books.google.com.tw/books/about/The_Creation_of_Patriarchy.html?id=szm-8WgGjWgC&redir_esc=y

Commission on the Status of Women was created as a global policy-making policy with the sole purpose of working on gender equality and the advancement of women. In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which set up an agenda for action to eradicate discrimination against women as well as explicitly defined discrimination against women in its Articles. After the Second World Conference on Women was held in 1980, the Programme of Action was established, which called for stronger national measures and improvements generally relating to women's property rights. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, merged four agencies and offices and became the single UN body in charge of accelerating progress towards achieving global gender equality. In September of 2017, the United Nations joined forces with the European Union to establish the Spotlight Initiative, which focuses on eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls.

143 countries guaranteed gender equality in their Constitutions by 2014, however, there were another 52 countries which had not pledged to do so. Today, economic and political realms are still characterized by unmitigated gender disparities - on average, women still earn 20% less than men in the market globally, and in 2018, only 24% of national parliamentarians were female. It is, despite this, important to note that significant improvements have been made over the past few decades, with a global decrease in the wage gap as well as an increase in women's participation in politics. There is still a long path toward comprehensive gender equality; deep legislative and legal changes are crucial for the achievement of this goal.

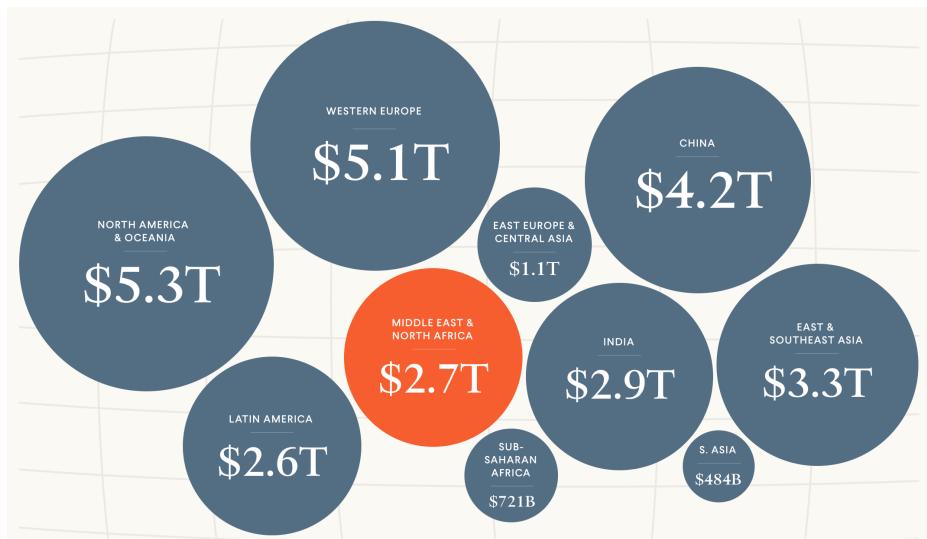
Economic Implications

The economic empowerment of women will increase economic diversification, boost productivity, as well as allow for several other positive effects on the global economy. According to research conducted by UN Women, it is estimated that gender disparities cost the economy around 15%. Moreover, the Council of Foreign Relations has found that closing the gender gap may add over \$28 trillion to the global GDP.

In terms of businesses, increasing leadership opportunities and employment for women has been shown to increase organizational growth and effectiveness. The UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment has estimated that companies with over two women in senior management positions score higher in every dimension of organizational performance.³ Moreover, rigid divisions of labor and gender roles cause a significant decrease in economic efficiency, which limit

³ A CALL TO ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT. United Nations, 2016, www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf?la=en

poverty reduction and growth efforts. The empowerment of women in education increases a society's human capital and allows for a more productive allocation of resources, as the disparity in education restricts the pool of talent from which individuals can be chosen for certain roles in society. The eradication of gender disparities provides the opportunity for significant economic growth and more efficient, productive societies across the globe.



Caption #1: Potential GDP Growth by 2025 with Gender Parity in the Workforce

Key Issues

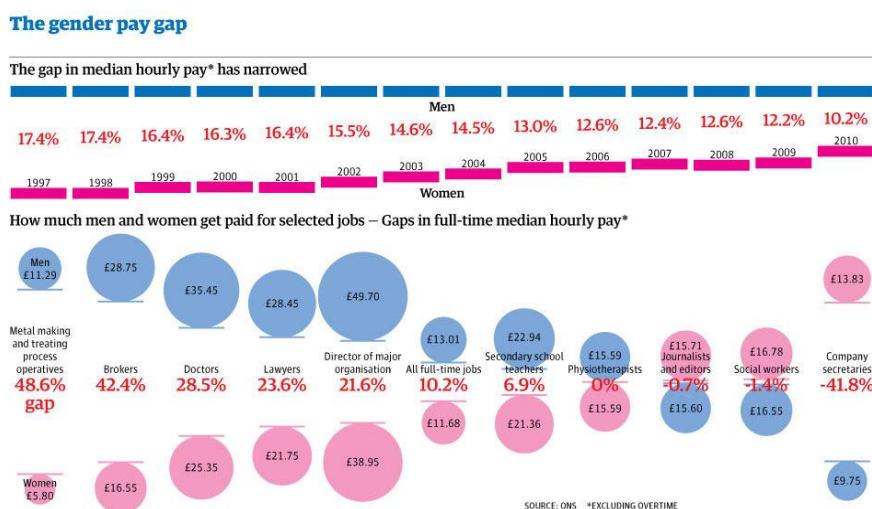
Violence Against Women / Sexual Harrassment

Violence against women has been described by the United Nations as a “pandemic affecting all countries, even those that have made laudable progress in other areas.” An estimated 35% of all women worldwide have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence — it is important to note that this figure does not include those who have been victim to sexual harrassment. These acts of gender-based violence not only have detrimental effects on the survivors and their families, but have also been shown to cost countries up to 3.7% of their GDP. If governments fail to adequately address this issue, this cycle of violence and consequent economic and social costs may perpetuate; various studies have found that those who grow up with violence are far more likely to become either perpetrators or survivors of violence in the future. Gender-based violence is an issue that knows no socio-economic boundaries, and can affect all women, meaning it must be addressed in both MEDCs and LEDCs. In order to effectively decrease said violence, multifaceted, cooperative, and sustainable

efforts must be made. The most practical approaches address underlying risk factors for violence, such as the acceptability of violence and gender roles in society.

Wage Gap

The gender pay gap stands at 16% globally today — for women with children, immigrant women, and women of color, this gap is even greater. These discrepancies add up and significantly affect women and their families; moreover, the pandemic has exacerbated these adverse effects. It is estimated that COVID-19 could cause over 96 million individuals to fall into poverty, consequently increasing the number of women who live on \$1.90 USD per day to over 435 million. While the concept of equal pay itself is straightforward — that all workers receive equal remuneration for work on equal value — what it entails when put into practice has proven difficult to establish.



Caption #2: The Gender Pay Gap

This disparity in wages is rooted in systematic inequalities — women are overrepresented in the informal economy across the globe. These informal jobs often fall outside the domain of labor laws and restrictions, causing many women to be trapped in unsafe, low-paying working environments that lack social benefits. Moreover, women do three times as much domestic work and care in comparison to men, including tasks such as cleaning, fetching water, and taking care of children and the elderly. Care work is generally unrecognized and undervalued despite the indisputable fact that it is the backbone of thriving communities. On average, working mothers are also paid significantly less than non-mothers, a phenomenon that has been coined the ‘motherhood penalty.’ The deep-rooted impacts of traditional gender roles also play a part in perpetuating the wage gap; stereotypes tend to turn women away from pursuing careers that have been dominated by men in the past and steer them toward care work, which, in general, is lower-paying. Discriminatory promotion and hiring practices further prevent women from gaining leadership roles and higher paying positions, which continues to sustain the gender gap. With

women making up the majority of workers on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more urgent than ever to put women on equal footing with men in this regard.

Education

More girls than ever before are not attending school in today's world. As many as 48.1% of girls remain out of school in some regions, with almost 15 million girls not in primary school as compared to 10 million boys, according to UN Women. Furthermore, higher numbers of girls are expected to drop out during adolescence, most commonly due to early pregnancy and the need to contribute to household work in LEDCs. Without the ability to read or write, many underprivileged women are unable to make use of the limited legal rights they have. Gender gaps in education, as a result, is a direct cause of insecurity through distancing the deprived from the means and ways of fighting against said deprivation. Gender-based violence in schools negatively impacts girls' retention and participation in school, consequently serving as a large obstacle to achieving gender equality in schooling. Ineffective sexual health education not only contributes to more dropouts as it inhibits access to crucial information, but also plays a role in the high infant mortality and fertility rates in many rural regions.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Gender inequality is an issue that touches every part of the world and is not specific to any country or region. However, there are countries where the tackling of gender inequality has been better/worse than others. The two countries below are examples of this. NGOs have also been instrumental in bringing about gender equality and an example is also seen below.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is an example of a country where gender inequality has not been tackled effectively. In Saudi Arabia, laws and their interpretations as well as social norms have had a negative impact on the health and well-being of women. This is specifically seen in the education of women in Saudi Arabia. For example, about 30% of Saudi women are still illiterate due mainly to social rejection of the opening of schools for girls in many parts of the country. Also, coeducation is not allowed and schools for girls usually have a much less comprehensive curriculum with less resources than schools for boys. There is also no sports education in girls schools and it is prohibited by social norms for females to practise physical activities in public. This leads to much higher obesity rates for women when compared to men, also contributing to a higher mortality rate. Also, Saudi women cannot study engineering, law or journalism due to social norms forcing them into fields related to teaching and medicine. Marriage is also an important factor to look at in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabian law, an unmarried woman is the ward of

her father, a married woman is the ward of her husband, and a widowed woman is the ward of her sons. This creates a society that is dominated by men with almost no power given to women. These same concepts apply to medical care where a law prevents women from being admitted to a government hospital unless she is accompanied by her male guardian. Furthermore, an adult woman cannot herself sign the consent for an invasive medical procedure which might be urgently required. Besides these facts, there are also deep societal issues relating to the interpretation of Islamic law and the adherence to Islamic practices. This includes the fact that women are not allowed to drive and how it is hard for them to obtain an identification card with a photo on it leading to rampant abuse and unreliable records.

Sweden

On the other end of the spectrum there is Sweden which is rated among the most equal countries in the world. This is seen in women's representation in government, where 12 of the 22 government ministers are women and nearly half of the members of the parliament are also women. Employment, financial access, and education among other things also demonstrate the equality that has been reached by Sweden. All of these as well as more deep seeded societal and governmental facts have led Sweden to be very equal. However, it is not perfect and there is still inequality in many places. The success seen in Sweden is due in part to the overwhelming support for the importance of gender equality. This creates immense support for governmental changes as well as societal ones concerning gender and the achievement of gender equality. Sweden has also been a great example of a country that has pushed for gender equality around the world. Gender equality has been a focus area in Swedish government for a long time, in the 1990s it was made a development goal and in the 2000s, a central component element and recently as a thematic priority. These facts along with the Swedish government describing itself as a "feminist government, devoted to a feminist foreign policy" have made Sweden a leader in bringing about gender equality both at home and abroad. This "feminist foreign policy" has been a focus of the Swedish government since 2014 and has seen improvements in many sectors including the economy and education.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

AWID is a "global, feminist, membership, movement-support organization working to achieve gender justice and women's human rights worldwide". The organization supports gender justice movements around the world and has become a driving force in resisting oppression. The AWID is immensely important as it works with activists and policy makers worldwide to influence gender policies and practices. It also helps to start dialogue on key issues in areas such as government and in the workplace. It helps to connect people in order to allow them to share ideas about these important topics and has helped to start and maintain gender equality movements. It also works with activists to try to

build networks of people that can support each other and their causes and contains over 6,000 members, from over 180 countries. The AWID is also very vocal in their support for corporate accountability and tax justice and has been instrumental in getting legislation passed in many countries to achieve this goal.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
July 20 th , 1848	First Women's Rights convention The first women's rights convention, Seneca Falls Convention, was held in New York with 300 attendees in which they launched the women's suffrage movement.
May 15 th , 1869	National woman suffrage association was founded Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton founded the national woman suffrage association, which coordinated the national suffrage movement.
August 18 th 1920	The 19th amendment to the U.S. constitution was ratified Ratification of the 19 th amendment to the U.S. constitution was completed, declaring “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”
June 10 th 1963	Equal Pay Act President John F. Kennedy signs into law the Equal Pay Act, prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination between men and women performing the same job in the same workplace.
September 4 th , 1995	Fourth World Conference on Women The fourth world conference on women was hosted in Beijing, China, and served as a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality.
July 26 th , 2016	First woman to receive presidential nomination

Hillary Clinton became the first woman to receive a presidential nomination from a major political party.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 17 December 1979 (**A/RES/34/180**)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 15 October 1999 (**A/RES/54/4**)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, 31 October 2000 (**S/RES/1325**)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There were many previous attempts to resolve the issue of gender inequality. Governments have implemented laws and regulations, the UN has passed resolutions, and NGOs have put tremendous efforts into achieving gender equality.

One attempt by the government was to implement laws to reduce inequality in the workplace. In particular, President John F. Kennedy of the United States signed the Equal Pay Act on June 10th, 1963. The Equal Pay Act strove to prohibit sex-based wage discrimination between men and women who performed the same job. In other words, same job, same pay. There were both advantages and disadvantages to this attempt. One major advantage was that it became illegal to pay women for the same work as men, so women benefited from higher and equal pay. However, a drawback, or a loophole, of this legislation was that employers were incentivized to dismiss women workers because equal pay for women meant higher labor costs for them. This meant that a lot of women lost their jobs and sources of income, leading to more inequality in real life. Hence, this attempt was effective only for those women who were able to keep their jobs after this legislation was implemented.

Another attempt by the United Nations was the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on December 17th, 1979. The resolution listed several ways to achieve gender equality. However, the actual implementation of these methods are not effective. Possible reasons include insufficient funding for all nations to implement these methods and severe government corruption which opposes gender equality. Hence, even though this resolution was signed by several

nations back in 1979, the majority of the nations are still in the process of working towards achieving gender equality.

Possible Solutions

Gender equality is an extremely multifaceted, nuanced issue that cannot be tackled without global involvement and cooperation. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) has 9 targets - to end discrimination against women and girls, end all violence against and exploitation of women and girls, eliminate forced marriages and genital mutation, value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibilities, ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making, achieve universal access to reproductive health and rights, achieve equal rights to economic resources, property ownership, and financial services, promote empowerment of women through technology, and adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality.

The implementation of higher penalties for violence against women is a preventative measure that will help mitigate the problem of gender-based violence that is prevalent in countries in all stages of development. Furthermore, by systematically reforming education and making it more accessible, women can learn more about their power and be better equipped to stand up for their rights, as well as teach them to recognize and report abuse. Accessible education and postsecondary schooling is the biggest issue in LEDCs, most significantly for countries in the sub-Saharan African region. The deep-rooted, inherent gender norms that characterize many regions simply perpetuates the gender gap. Although eradicating these preexisting notions may be difficult, there are a few factors that could be considered. Women are commonly objectified and hypersexualized in the media, and education systems often fail to address pressing issues that relate to gender equality. Moreover, encouraging women to speak up is essential to empowerment.

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