

Research report

Forum: Commission on the Status of Women

Issue: Addressing the consequences of societal division on the economic advancement of women, and advocating for equal opportunities for education, training and employment for women

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Introduction

As much as the world is recovering from a pandemic, there are some persistent gaps that urgently need addressed to, to reduce inequality and ensure a robust recovery. Bridging the gender gap may be more critical than ever. Developing and developed countries alike have more work to do to eradicate gender barriers and achieve gender equality.

Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, by the school closures, many girls were not expected back and women by job losses and business closures. Many also needed to stay home and suffered domestic violence and abuse. Essential reproductive health services were put on hold, causing many unwanted pregnancies, maternal death, and stillbirths. The list goes on.

Definition of Key terms

SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals)

Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations to reach by 2030. Which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

General overview

Around 54 per cent of countries still lack laws in key area of gender equal rights to enter a marriage or initiate a divorce¹. In 2023, up to 129 million girls and young women may be out of school globally. And globally, less than two thirds (61.4 per cent) of prime work-age women (aged 25 to 54) were in the labour force in 2022 compared to 90.6 per cent of prime work-age men. In 2019, for each dollar a man earned labour income, women earned only 51 cents.

“Worldwide, nearly 1 in 4 girls between the ages of 14 and 19 are neither employed nor in education or training – compared to 1 in 10 boys” (UNICEF, sd).

Next to that, 1 in 5 girls are in a marriage or in a union before the age of 18. 140,000 girls between 10 and 19 are diagnosed with new HIV infections. 1 in 20 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have experienced sexual violence. Even though child marriage and female genital mutilation are both violations of the human rights, hundreds of millions of girls still experience this worldwide. Males and females have never had the same rights but we're closer than ever. But unfortunately females do not have exactly the same rights as men have. They still don't same pay, the same training and education and the same job opportunities.

¹ Progress on the sustainable development goals: The gender snapshot 2023.

Major parties involved

Many countries and organisations are involved in this issue as it is significant to approximately half of the world population. However, some organisations have played and bigger or more active role regarding this issue.

The first organisation is the **UN women**, it was established by the United Nation by merging 4 different UN bodies that were all tasked with issues regarding gender equality and women empowerment. The 4 main priorities of the UN women are:

1. Women lead, participate in and benefit from governance systems
2. Women have secure income, economic autonomy and decent work
3. All women and girls can live free of any form of violence
4. Women and girls contribute to and have a greater influence on building sustainable peace and resilience²

The second organisation is **UNESCO**, as this organisation is an United Nations body that is tasked with issues regarding education, science and culture. UNESCO has created multiple strategies to promote gender equality in education:

- The Gender Equality Action Plan
- The UNESCO Strategy for gender equality in and through education (2019 – 2025)

UNESCO also support countries through a platform: Global Platform for Gender Equality and Girls' and Women's Empowerment in and through Education³.

Timeline of Key Events

United Nations Charter, signed upon June 26th 1945, came into force on October 25th 1945 – Article 1 states: ‘To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, **sex**, language, or religion; and’⁴.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 – It states that: “*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*” and that “*everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, ... birth or other status.*”.

The International Women's Year, 1975 – The UN General Assembly declared 1975 as the International Women's Year as a result of the increasing international feminist movements during the 1970's.

World Conference on Women, 1975 in Mexico City – The UN General Assembly created the first World Conference on Women as a result of the increasing international feminist movements during the 1970's.

UN Decade for Women, 1976 – 1985 – The UN General Assembly declared the UN Decade for Women during the first World Conference on Women.

² <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/magazine/organizations-gender-equality/>

³ <https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education/need-know>

⁴ <https://legal.un.org/repertory/art1.shtml>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or International Bill of Rights for Women, 1979 – The UN General Assembly adopted the CEDAW, it targets culture and tradition and is the first human right treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women.

World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, 1985 in Nairobi – Gender equality had gained global recognition and 15.000 NGO's participated in a parallel NGO-forum. The goals of the first Conference hadn't been met, so the 157 participating governments adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies to the Year 2000. It declared all issues to be women's issues.

Fourth World Conference on Women, 1990 in Beijing – the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stated and asserted that women's rights were human rights and specific actions were created to ensure respect for those rights.

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993 – The declaration states: *'a clear and comprehensive definition of violence against women.'* and *'a clear statement of the rights to be applied to ensure the elimination of violence against women in all its forms.'*

UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women or UN Women, July 2nd 2010 – The UN General Assembly unanimously voted to create one UN body specifically tasked with issues regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. The body merged 4 bodies: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

Spotlight Initiative, September 2017 – An initiative launched by a cooperation of the United Nations and European Union, it is a multi-year and global initiative to eliminate all kinds of violence against women and girls.

International Women's Day, March 8th – emerged to recognize women's achievements without regard to division.

Several other International Days focused on raising awareness for the different struggles for gender equality and women's empowerment established by the United Nations⁵:

- The International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation, February 6th
- The International Day of Women and Girls in Science, February 11th
- The International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 19th
- The International Widows' Day, June 23th
- The International Day of the Girl Child, October 11th
- The International Day of Rural Women, October 15th

UNESCO Strategy for gender equality in and through education, 2019 – 2025 – The strategy focuses on three main keypoints: better data to inform action, better legal and policy frameworks to advance rights and better teaching and learning practices to empower⁶.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality#:~:text=In%201979%2C%20the%20General%20Assembly,Bill%20of%20Rights%20for%20Women>.

⁶ <https://unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education>

Previous attempts to solve the issue

To resolve the issue of inequality between men and women, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) made the Commission on the Status of the Women (CSW) in ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946 and expanded the CSW in resolution 1996/6 (see p. 20).

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic, and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up.

The Commission adopts multi-year programmes of work to appraise progress and make further recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action. These recommendations take the form of negotiated agreed conclusions on a priority theme. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Under its current methods of work, established by ECOSOC resolution 2022/4, at each session the Commission:

- Convenes a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights, and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, including through ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and good practices;
- Engages in general discussion on the status of gender equality, identifying goals attained, achievements made, and efforts under way to close gaps and meet challenges;
- Convenes interactive expert panel discussions and other interactive dialogues on steps and initiatives to accelerate implementation and measures to build capacities for mainstreaming gender equality across policies and programmes;
- Considers one priority theme, based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly and linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Evaluates progress in implementing agreed conclusions from previous sessions as a review theme;
- Discusses emerging issues, trends, focus areas, and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men, that require timely consideration;
- Considers in closed meeting the report of its Working Group on Communications;
- Agrees on further actions for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by adopting agreed conclusions and resolutions;
- Contributes gender perspectives to the work of other intergovernmental bodies and processes;
- Reports on the aspects relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women of the agreed main theme of the Economic and Social Council, in order to contribute to its work; and

- Celebrates International Women’s Day on 8 March, when it falls within its session.⁷

Possible solutions

Addressing the consequences of societal division and advocating for equal opportunities for women in education, training and employment is a challenge that requires a comprehensive approach. Here are some possible solutions to tackle this issue.

Gender-inclusive education policies

The societal division between genders starts at a young age, which is why implementing and enforcing policies that promote gender-inclusive education from early childhood through higher education can go a long way to tackle this issue. Schools and universities should be encouraged to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, irrespective of their gender. This can be done through, for example, curriculum and teaching materials, teacher training and the promotion of STEM education for girls.

Public awareness campaigns

A lot of the gender division we are experiencing as a society stems from what people perceive through the internet, especially through social media. By launching public awareness campaigns to challenge gender biases and stereotypes, you can foster a culture of gender equality. Media, social media, and community events can be used to, for example, empower women. Provide information on women’s rights, opportunities, and available resources. This encourages women to take charge of their lives and careers. Additionally, effective campaigning should recognize that achieving gender equality is not just a women’s issue, but requires the involvement of men and boys, too. Engaging men and boys through this campaigning can show their role in societal divisions, break down stereotypes and accelerate the much-needed change.

⁷ [Commission on the Status of Women | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

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