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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

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**International
Community**

**Memorable
Experience**

**Challenges
Skills**



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INTRODUCTION

Women, throughout history, have been subordinate to men. In particular, they were always responsible only for household matters and for raising their children, whereas men were accountable for the economic welfare of the family. They couldn't be part of any decision-making and thus couldn't contribute to a country's, society's nor family's growth and development.

The past couple of years, women, with the help of new approaches and organizations such as those of the Women in Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD) and United Nations and Women, have managed to improve their role and position in society and thus contribute to its development. Though, women's "integration" has not been completely achieved as women, mostly in developing countries, come across discriminatory and unjust behaviours every day.



DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

- **Gender Equality:**

Gender Equality is the state in which both men and women have the same rights and opportunities in all sectors of the society, for example social and political participations, equal employment opportunities etc.

- **Discrimination:**

Discrimination is the intended unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or a group of people due to their traits, for example skin color, race, sex etc.

- **Sustainable Development Goals:**

The SDGs are a set of 17 international goals that were put into effect by the United Nations in 2015 and are set to be achieved by 2030. In general these goals aim at eliminating poverty, promote global peace and prosperity and protect the environment.¹

- **Empowerment:**

The process by which a person can gain power and confidence in what they do or want to do. In the context of the topic “The Role of Women”, by empowering women, we enable them to try to improve their role in society.²

¹ “About ∴ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.” *United Nations*, United Nations, sustainabledevelopment.un.org/about.

² “Empowerment Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” *Gender Pay Gap Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/empowerment.



TIMELINE

Date	Event
1975	During 1975 or in other words during the “Women’s Year”, the United Nations officially recognized March 8 as the International Women’s Day
1980	The International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade paper recognized some of the Women in Development issues and called for women to have an active role in all aspects of society.
1995	The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which aimed at achieving equality, development and peace for women was adopted.
2000	The adoption of the Millenium Development Goals which included the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment along with other goals that were related to women.
2014	During the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the member states discussed and addresses some of the most crucial issues of gender equality and women’s rights
2015	The publication of the Sustainable Development Goals which included gender equality and reduction of inequalities



TOPIC DISCUSSION

Women in Development (WID)

During the 1970s, a Washington-based network of female development professionals coined the Women in Development (WID) term, an approach that called for greater attention to women and emphasized the need to integrate them into the development process. In particular its main objectives were: a) enhance women's productivity and income earnings, b) improve women's social status and welfare, c) reinforce governments so as to help them deal better with women's issues and d) help the society shift their perspective on women's role. In addition to the WID, other liberal feminists were fighting for equal rights, employment, equity and citizenship in the United States of America. These resulted in the Washington-based networks to be introduced in some United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and with research organizations that tried to find out more about women's productive work, the sexual division of labour and the impact of development processes on women.

The Women in Development program though, instead of improving women's rights and status, it actually deteriorated their position in society. This was caused by the fact that this approach focused more about analyzing the subordination of women rather than trying to figure out where it stemmed from. It also didn't take into account the relations of women and men. Lastly, it drew its attention mostly to the fact that women had little access to resources and once again it did not raise questions about how gender relations affected women's access to resources.

Gender and Development (GAD)

After the failure of WID, an new approach named Gender and Development (GAD) appeared. Unlike WID, Gender and Development focuses on explaining the social differences of men and women and the need to redefine the roles and relations of both sexes. Specifically, this approach is concerned with understanding how society has "assigned" roles, responsibilities and expectations, and how men and women work together. The main aim is to "redefine traditional gender role expectations"³.

GAD's two main frameworks are 'Gender roles' and 'Social Relations Analysis'. In the first framework, this approach addresses the different expectations of male and female. In particular, it emphasizes the fact that women most of the times are asked to attain household work, whereas men are mainly responsible in bringing in money for the family.

³ "Gender and Development." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_and_development.



GAD has been criticized for highlighting the social differences of men and women, but failing to elaborate on the bonds between them. It also doesn't uncover the sacrifices women have to make for motherhood. Lastly, many agencies have adopted the gender-based approaches, but their primary perspective still focused on the WID approach.

Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals with the aim of calling for action so as to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity. One of the 17 goals, and in particular the fifth goal, is that of gender equality. The aim of this goal is to ensure women's rights worldwide and end all forms of discrimination.

Since 2000, with the work of the United Nations Development Programme and other partners, there has been a significant progress. Specifically, more girls have the opportunity of being educated and women, nowadays, makeup 41% of paid worker (outside of agriculture). Though, there are still some very crucial obstacle that women have to face, and thus the SDGs aim on building on the aforementioned achievements so as to eliminate such inequalities.

Apart from that, by enhancing women's role in society, more of the SDGs will be able to be achieved. Particularly, only with equality (which is also goal 10) there can be justice, inclusion, economies that work for all etc.

Moving on from the theoretical to the more practical part, legal and legislative changes must be implemented so as to ensure women's rights worldwide. Apart from that social standards, norms and in general society's beliefs and stereotypes need to be rejected.

Transgender Women

Transgender women are women who were born male. These women face some of the most violent and crude discrimination and in general are treated very badly. For example, It is quite common for them to be denied a job opportunity because of their gender/identity. This results in many of them being very frustrated, to say the least, and thus they often resort to suicide.

For example, a survey was conducted in the United States of America in which about 3000 trans women were asked some questions and some of the findings are listed below:

- Those who expressed a transgender identity or gender nonconformity while in grades K-12 reported alarming rates of harassment (78%), physical assault (35%) and sexual violence (12%).
- Thirty-one percent (31%) of the sample reported harassment by teachers or staff, 5% reported physical assault by teachers or staff and 3% reported sexual assault by teachers or staff.



- Forty-seven percent (47%) said they had experienced an adverse job outcome, such as being fired, not hired or denied a promotion because of being transgender/gender non-conforming; 26% of respondents said that they had lost a job due to being transgender or gender non-conforming.
- Respondents faced serious hurdles to accessing health care, including:
 - Refusal of care: 19% of our sample reported being refused care due to their transgender or gender non-conforming status, with even higher numbers among people of color in the survey.
 - Harassment and violence in medical settings: 28% of respondents were subjected to harassment in medical settings and 2% were victims of violence in doctor's office.
 - Lack of provider knowledge: 50% of the sample reported having to teach their medical providers about transgender care.
- Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents experienced family rejection.
- The various forms of direct housing discrimination faced by respondents included 19% being denied a home or apartment and 11% being evicted because they were transgender or gender non-conforming.
- Over half (53%) of respondents reported being verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation.⁴

General Statistics

- Women in labour on average earn 24% less than men
- Only 22% of all parliamentarians are females
- 35% of women have experience some kind of physical/sexual violence
- In sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia, girls face barriers when it comes to entering the primary years of schools
- In Northern Africa less than 1 in 5 paid jobs outside of the agricultural sector are women, and in the agricultural sector the number of women in paid employment from 35% increased to 41%
- As of 2014, 143 countries had achieved gender equality and in 52 countries discrimination was still noticeable in their legal and social norms.

⁴ Grant, Jaime M., et al. "Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey." *The Task Force*, www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf.



POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Finding a way to combat these issues is quite difficult as countries view the role and abilities of women differently, and thus each delegate must take into consideration the country's beliefs.

In order to combat this problem, first of all, all girls should have access to proper education. It is only through education that they will gain knowledge and experience and will learn to listen actively and be vocal about their ideas and opinion. Apart from that, all forms of violence against girls and women must be eliminated so that equality, justice, development and peace is also achieved. Moreover, it is of high importance that governments and individuals understand that women are as capable as men, and by helping women improve their role in society productivity levels will increase and each sector will be developed as more hands and ideas will be accessible. As previously mentioned, governments should also enact legal and legislative changes that will provide women with more rights and will promote equality. For example, the past couple of months Saudi Arabia allowed women to drive, this is right that might be considered ordinary in some countries but progressive or even revolutionary in others. Lastly, countries should embrace difference and so should protect the rights of transgender women.



MAJOR COUNTRIES & ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC)

In more economically developed countries, there is little discrimination between men and women. In most cases, women face little to zero obstacles and unjust behaviors as they have the same rights, and thus the same opportunities in many social aspects. This encourages and enables women and girls to contribute more to development both at a national and international level.

For example, in the United States of America and Europe, women have strengthened their role throughout history. Nowadays, women have as many rights as men and they are represented in almost all sectors of society. Though, sometime the “traditional” roles of both sexes are present. For example, it is more common for women to give up their jobs so that they can take care of their children, and especially their newborns.

Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC)

Less economically developed countries rely mostly on agriculture, so women have a vital role in the country’s economic growth as the agricultural workforce globally mainly consist of women. Though, women are subordinate to men and thus lack some of their rights, for example that of education.

For example, African women are not expected to attend school, but if they do then they don’t aspire as high as men because their role include the household management. Therefore, women face legal, economic and social constraints on a daily basis. This can also be seen in the fact that, even though women consist 80% of the food production in Africa, they are now permitted to own land and in order to open a bank account they must have their husband’s consent.

United Nations and Women

A United Nations organization created with the aim of helping women meet their needs worldwide. The organization focuses on gender equality and women empowerment.



Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)

A non-governmental organization consisting of more than 150 organizations that focus on women and the environment. Its aim is to empower women so that they have a stronger say in the sustainable development and environmental field.

Oxfam International

An organization consisting of 20 independent charitable organizations, whose one of its main objectives is gender justice. In other words, it tries to empower women, their leadership and education, and end gender-based violence.



UN INVOLVEMENT: Relevant Resolutions & Treaties

- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with the aim of ensuring the participation of women in UNDP projects established a special Division for Women in Development
- The Beijing Platform for Action was adopted in September of 1995. This platform commenced political changes worldwide. The agenda, has helped countries improve women's lives as they are now protected by law that guarantee them gender equality and protection against violence. The goals and missions presented in this platform are yet to be achieved and so it still remains only one the most crucial documents till today.
- [Here](#) you can see more resolutions and reports related to Gender Mainstreaming.



Research Questions

When delegates start their research they should first learn about their country's attitude towards women. More specifically, they should learn about the role of women, their status and the way they are treated. Based on these findings, delegates should be able to understand whether women contribute to their society, country and in general development, and thus start drafting resolution based on these findings.



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