



EKIN SNY JMUN BACKGROUND GUIDE

COMMITTEE: UNDP

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND GUIDE: WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (UNDP)

Description of the Committee

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the United Nations' network for global development. It was established in 1965 when the General Assembly of the United Nations merged the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the United Nations Special Fund.

UNDP advocates for change and focuses on connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources so that they can create better lives. Operating in 166 countries, UNDP works with these nations on forming solutions to global and national development challenges. It helps them to create a local capacity, with the country's specific needs in mind, so that they can begin to build upon the resources they have and create something more.

UNDP helps to highlight cooperative action on development in forums like the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Throughout the years it has held an important role by encouraging coordination in summits like the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002.¹



Terms & Concepts

Cooperative action:

working together in a coordinated way.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is bringing the world closer together by making resources, education and job opportunities that were once hard to access available to people around the world. Although great strides have been made, gender inequality and women's empowerment are still major issues hold back greater progress in development. Despite improvements that have been made, women are often left out of playing major roles in the development of their communities. Women are kept from accessing resources and getting an education. They are denied formal employment opportunities and have to turn to informal employment to support themselves and their families. There are a number of reasons why women are left out of the development process today. Because these reasons differ from country to country, achieving women's empowerment has proved a difficult task. Still, women's empowerment is necessary to achieve greater development in the world's poorest countries.



Source: UNICEF | LeMoyné

BACKGROUND

Gender inequality has many causes. Longstanding stereotypes about women and their abilities, lack of education for girls and women and discrimination against women in the workforce are some of the many reasons for inequality across the globe.

Terms & Concepts

Globalization: the process by which regional features become linked globally.

Resource: something useful and of limited availability.

Inequality: unfair differences.

Empowerment: increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities.

Development: planning and building to help improve communities and lives.

Formal employment: work regulated by laws and government.

Informal: not strictly regulated.

Stereotype: a commonly held belief about a group or type of people.

Discrimination: unfair treatment of a group based on a certain characteristic.

Workforce: the people working in an economy.

Traditional: an old pattern of thought, behavior or belief.

Background

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Source: Guardian | Martin Godwin

Stereotypes about Women

Stereotypes about women prove to be major obstacles in gaining equality. Traditional ideas, such as the idea that women are less intelligent or must be restricted to the home for cultural reasons, prevent women from being in schools or finding work to help them get out of poverty. Often women are thought to be less capable than men. These ideas have been proved false by research and study, but they still remain obstacles to achieving gender equality.

The most dangerous of these ideas is the belief that women are simply not smart enough to do jobs traditionally occupied by men. Some argue that women don't often rise to positions of power in politics, business or the sciences, even when they have the same access to education as men, and that this demonstrates their inability to take an active role in society. A panel convened by the United States National Academy of Sciences determined that any intellectual differences between women and men were insignificant.² The reason so few women are able to rise to levels of power is because employers wrongly view women as less capable, less competitive or more distracted by family life than men.

Another obstacle to gender equality is the belief that women's role in society must be limited to caring for children and the elderly, or that women belong in the home. This leads the availability of more resources for men, especially in poor communities, where differences between men's and women's rights are clearer. Women are prevented from finding employment in many ways. For example, in Iran, husbands are allowed to prevent their wives from holding certain job positions.³ In Afghanistan, the Taliban militia group has acted to stop women's employment outside of home, saying that it is immoral and an act of immodesty.

The Education Gap for Girls and Women

In many societies, it is believed that educating male children is more important and useful than educating girls. Because of this, boys are given more resources than girls from an early age. When there is limited money to pay for school, families often choose to educate sons instead of daughters. As a result, sons are expected to find employment and daughters are expected to care for their families. This creates a system in which women depend on men for money and support. Sometimes, women are unable to find work to add to their husband's income or to support their family if they do not have a husband.

CRITICAL THINKING:
How does educating boys but not girls lead to gender inequality in the labor market?
How will this affect boys and girls in the future?

ADULT LITERACY RATES BY SEX:

(% literate adults in the population aged 15 or over)	1990			2000		
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
Sub-Saharan Africa	47.3	59.8	36.1	59.7	70.2	49.6
Arab States	51.3	64.3	38.0	62.0	73.1	50.6
Latin America & Caribbean	84.7	86.4	83.0	88.5	89.7	87.3
East Asia	76.2	85.7	66.4	82.8	90.0	75.4
South Asia	46.1	59.1	32.2	54.1	66.2	41.2
Developed countries	96.7	97.4	96.1	98.5	99.0	98.0

Source: "UNESCO, 1991: p. 26"
<http://www.unu.edu/press/>

In many places, girls are simply not allowed to be educated after a certain age. There may also be other reasons beside policies of discrimination that women are not educated. Early marriages and pregnancies common in many countries, and some even have laws say that pregnant girls can't attend or return to school after birth. Studies have shown, however, that education leads to lower fertility rates. Research in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Western Asia has shown that women with a high school education or higher have an average of three fewer children than those women who have had no education.⁴ Lower birth rates lead to stable populations and make development easier.

Terms & Concepts

Fertility: the natural ability to have a child.

Inconsistent: not always the same.

Discrimination against Women in the Workforce

Women trying to enter the workforce experience many hardships, and discrimination is one of the most difficult to overcome. Traditions and beliefs will often keep women out of the formal economy because jobs usually go to men before women and many women will not be hired for jobs they are more than qualified to do simply because of their sex. Women who can't obtain formal employment are forced to turn to the informal workforce. These informal jobs are not protected by government regulations and offer very little pay that is often inconsistent. Sometimes there is no pay at all.



*Women working at a call center in India.
Source: Bloomberg News*

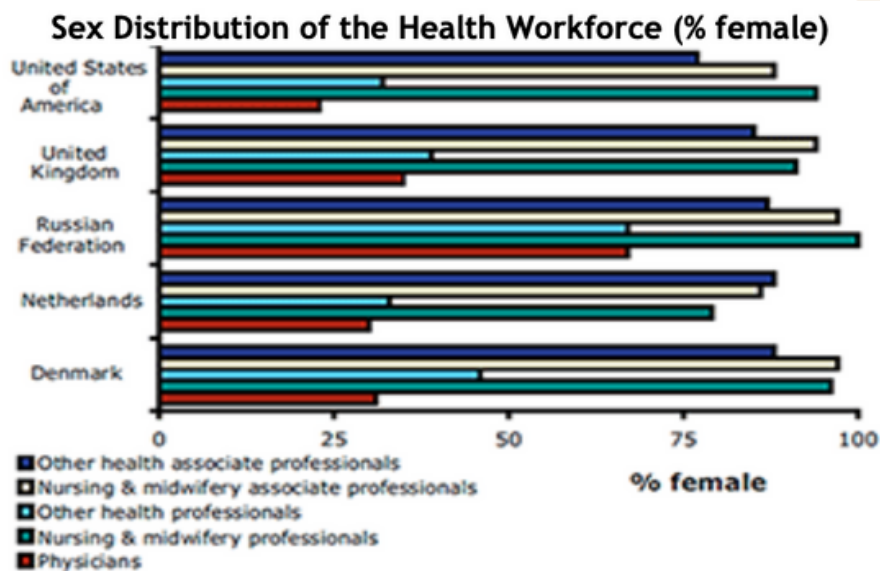
When women do obtain formal employment, they are less likely to advance in their field. It is sometimes because they are prevented from doing so. Iranian law says that women can work in the judicial system, but are not permitted to become judges.⁵ Other times it is not law holding women back, but something unspoken. This is called a glass ceiling. In 2002, there were only six female CEOs, the top position, in the Fortune 500 companies and a total of just eleven in the Fortune 1000.⁶ This is true in many parts of the economy. For example, women in the health workforce do not often become physicians, but hold lower jobs in the field. While there are many female nurses and technicians, there are not as many female doctors.

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CRITICAL THINKING:

What do you think could be done to make sure women have a greater role in the development of their countries? What changes can be made to the way women are treated that will help empower them?

For example, women in the health workforce do not often become physicians, but hold lower jobs in the field. While there are many female nurses and technicians, there are not as many female doctors.



Source: "Gender and Health Workforce Statistics"
www.hrhresourcecenter.org

Terms & Concepts

Glass ceiling: when a qualified person can only advance to a certain level due to discrimination.

Fortune 500: the top 500 companies in the USA.

Parliamentarian: a member of the legislature.

All of these elements of inequality lead to overall poor performance by women and girls. It is reported that six out of ten of world's poorest people are female. Less than sixteen percent of parliamentarians around the world are women. Two thirds of all children who are prevented from attending school are girls. Women are still subjected to violence, both in their homes and in times of war.⁷

These things all have an effect on women and their role in development. Because of stereotypes, they are not allowed to help their countries progress and develop. Because they are kept out of the formal workforce, they are faced with the choice of staying at home or turning to an unstable informal workforce. Because they are uneducated, they aren't equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to assert themselves and offer ideas and suggestions that could help their countries develop more quickly.

CURRENT SITUATION

As the current economic and financial crisis continues, its impact on equal rights for women and girls is becoming visible. Poor and low-income families are struggling and gender differences are gaining less attention as a result. “Women and children stand to bear the brunt of the global economic crisis,” claimed one report from the UN Development Programme.⁸ Gender inequality was already a concern before the global financial crisis, and today these challenges are even greater in the face of changing conditions.



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“And now, at a time of great financial and economic crisis, we must strengthen our efforts collectively to reduce the social impact on the most vulnerable in society who will be disproportionately affected. As the ILO Director-General Mr. Somavia has stated, before the current financial crisis there was already a job crisis. The challenges to gender equality in the wake of globalization, such as insecure employment status, precarious work arrangements, poor working conditions and massive growth of the informal economy, especially in developing countries, are now exacerbated even more by the global economic crisis.”

Jane Hodges, Director of the Bureau for Gender Equality – ILO Geneva Source: Opening of the 53rd Session for the CSW, www.un.org/womenwatch

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Steps have been taken to obtain equality and empowerment for women. However slowly, progress has been made and is continuing to be made. Women are fighting hard for their rights and enabling themselves with the tools they need to gain those rights.



Major International Treaties

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. It is described as being an international bill of rights for women. It carefully defines what discrimination against women is and also sets an agenda to end this discrimination through national action.

Upon signing the Convention, states commit to work towards ending discrimination against women in every form. This includes getting rid of old laws that discriminate against women and creating new laws that ensure equality, creating public institutions that ensure women are protected from discrimination and ensuring that people, organizations and companies do not discriminate against women in any way. States also agree to take action against the trafficking and exploitation of women.

CEDAW is the only human rights treaty that ensures the reproductive rights of women. It highlights culture and tradition, which play a huge part in forming gender roles. It highlights not only women's rights, but also the rights of their children. Countries that are party to the Convention are legally required to take action towards making change happen. They must give national reports of their progress every four years. 9

Established in 1982, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an expert body. It is made up of twenty-three experts on women's issues from all over the world. The committee watches over the states parties to CEDAW and observes the changes made in these countries.

Terms & Concepts

Human rights: rights and freedoms that every person has just by existing.

Reproductive rights: rights related to women's ability to have children.

Expert body: a group of people considered to be experts on a particular subject.

Other UN Action

In 1995 in Beijing, the UN held its fourth annual World Conference on Women, where delegates created the “Platform for Action,” a document promoting women’s equality around the world. The Platform defined the “12 Areas of Concern,” areas that most need reform in order to promote women’s rights and equality: poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, decision making, laws and regulations, human rights, media, environment, girls’ health and safety, and the economy. At the end of the Conference, 189 member states voted to adopt the Platform for Action. However, at follow-up conferences, Beijing+5 in 2000 and Beijing+10 in 2005, analyses show that not enough progress had been made to reform the 12 Areas of Concern and promote women’s equality.¹⁰

CRITICAL THINKING:
“Women were adapting to environmental change long before scientists gave it a name.”
- Winnie Byanyima,
Director of UNDP Gender Team
What do you think the meaning is behind this quote?

On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted the Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325). This resolution, which focuses on women, peace, and security, is the first of its kind. With this resolution, the Security Council addressed the effects of many women’s issues for the first time. It also highlighted the importance of women’s equality and their roles in peace and security. All UN Member States are bound by SCR1325. This resolution marks the important political recognition of women’s relevance to international peace and security. ¹¹

Among other international actions, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has called for countries to ensure that the governments protect informal workers, especially women. Other recommendations also include reforming of trade laws to allow poor women to compete effectively in the global market, enacting laws recognizing the contributions of informal workers, and giving informal workers the ability to organize into unions so they can lobby for labor rights. UNIFEM has also called for governments to create policies prohibiting discrimination against women in both formal and informal forms of employment.¹²

In July of 2010, after years of debate, a new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) was created in an effort to coordinate the work being done on women’s issues by a vast number of existing UN agencies.

Non-Governmental Organizations

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One example of this is The Barefoot College, which was established in 1972. It is an NGO that provides basic services and solutions to problems in rural communities. The objective is to help these communities become self-sufficient. "Barefoot solutions" are generally put into these categories: solar energy, water, education, healthcare, rural handicrafts, people's action, communication, women's empowerment and wasteland development.

Terms & Concepts

Self-sufficient: not needing any outside help, able to function on one's own.



Over the last thirty-eight years, the College has trained more than 15,000 women for jobs that range from construction, education, toy making and solar engineering, to mechanical repair, health care, water testing, and social activism. Barefoot College has observed and helped create social change in the way that women are viewed in their communities. The "Barefoot approach" aims to help women who are most disadvantaged in overcoming the social system in which they are forced to live.¹³

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A RESOLUTION

There are many issues that need to be addressed when creating a resolution about this topic. Debate should not focus on whether or not women should be allowed a hand in the development of their countries. Delegates should focus instead on ways to empower women and attain gender equality. In focusing on these things, delegates will be able to find ways for women to play a more active role in development.

The following should be addressed:

- What effect does not educating women have on their role in the development process in their countries?
- Does the inaccessibility of employment for women have an affect on how much they contribute to development?
- How have women played a part in development thus far?
- What changes can be made to the way women are regarded that will allow them to aide in the development process?



Questions to Consider:

1. What are your country's policies and customs regarding women? Do they help to empower women, or are they holding them back?
2. What percentage of women in your country are educated? To what level or extent are these women educated?
3. Does your country have anti-discrimination laws in place for women? How often are they enforced?
4. Has your country adopted CEDAW? Why or why not?
5. What have women contributed to the development of your country? Have their contributions proven valuable?

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RESEARCH AID

This is the main website for the United Nations Development Programme, which will give you excellent information on the how it works and what it is doing to address the issues.

- UN Development Programme: <http://www.undp.org/>

The World Factbook by the United States Central Intelligence Agency will provide you will basic information about your country and hundreds of other countries around the world.

- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Similar to the CIA World Factbook, the British Broadcasting Company Country Profiles will also give you a historical, political, and economic background on your country and other UN member states.

- BBC Country Profiles: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm

This is the website for the new UN Women. It also includes links to the other bodies and work overseen by UN Women.

- UN Women: <http://www.unwomen.org/>

This is the page for the UN Platform for Action that emerged from the Beijing Conference.

- UN Platform for Action: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm>

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