

# GENDER EQUALITY

Study Guide - IMPACT 3



Impact Summit 2019 - Prague



### **Topics of Impact 3 Committee**

- Ensure women's full and equal participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public institutions
- Ensure universal access to sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

### **5th Sustainable Development Goal:**

The 5th Sustainable Development Goal (Gender Equality) has been selected as the topic of the 2019 Summit held in Prague. Every single continent, every single nation, every single industry, and every single individual suffers from being treated differently than others—this is especially when considering the issue of gender. In recent years, gender equality has made a huge leap forward, however, the question is, are we at the level at which we would like to be? Simply, NO.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a vital value of a peaceful and sustainable society. According to research which has been conducted by the United Nations, currently 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 experienced physical or sexual violence by a trustful partner within a 12-month period. At the moment, almost 50 countries have no laws which would protect women and young girls from constantly suffering abuse and in many countries, when a woman reports that she has been raped, she is the one who carries the blame. Why? Because there is no law or authority to protect her from harm. When raped, women are banished from their society rather than offered help. This is the reason why we, the future generations, must act.

### **Topic #1: Ensure women's full and equal participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public institutions**

#### **Introduction to the topic**

In the past it was not acceptable for women to acquire leadership positions due to the fact that they were considered to be inferior to men and thus not capable of leading and managing corporations and businesses. Unfortunately, this stereotypical thought about women has still not been dismissed and women still do not receive equal opportunities for leadership. Women are underrepresented at senior levels within the international organizations that shape much of international negotiations and global markets. According to data from the World Bank, women comprise 47 percent of entry-level professionals and this number decreases with middle and high-level management positions. Women make up 20 percent of mid-level management positions, and only 5 percent of CEOs and board members are women. Moreover, this issue of a lack of women leaders also reflects in the participation of women in political and economic institutions. In many countries, especially less economically developed countries, women are not allowed to vote and are not allowed to decide on the rules of their society and country. The biggest improvement can be seen on the continent that has the biggest gender gap between women and men: Africa. More than

20 African countries have already implemented a women quota in parliament (local government), ranging from 15 to 50 percent. Women in Africa have fair opportunities to campaign as they are receiving training to be effective candidates. On the other hand, there is a need for internal regulation in political parties to promote gender sensitivity and women's leadership. A lot has to be done in order to promote the role of women as leaders. Women can no longer be viewed as inferior and incapable.

### **Facts and figures presented by UN Women**

- Only 22.8 percent of all national parliamentarians were women as of June 2016, a slow increase from 11.3 percent in 1995
- As of October 2017, 11 women are serving as Head of State and 12 are serving as Head of Government
- Globally, there are 38 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, as of June 2016, including 4 chambers with no women at all
- As of January 2017, only 18.3 percent of government ministers were women; the most commonly held portfolio by women ministers is environment, natural resources, and energy, followed by social sectors, such as social affairs, education and the family
- Wide variations remain in the average percentages of women parliamentarians in each region. As of June 2017, these were (single, lower and upper houses combined): Nordic countries, 41.7 percent; Americas, 28.1 percent; Europe including Nordic countries, 26.5 percent; Europe excluding Nordic countries, 25.3 percent; sub-Saharan Africa, 23.6 percent; Asia, 19.4 percent; Arab States, 17.4 percent; and the Pacific, 17.4 percent.

From the data taken from the official UN Women report, we can see the severity of the issue. Despite the fact that many believe women do not have leadership roles only in less economically developed countries, we can see that it is also a common phenomenon in more economically developed countries.

### **Education and raise of awareness**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in the General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. It ensures that everybody is to be treated equally and that the law should be the same for everyone regardless of religion, social ranks, or gender. Furthermore, it secures freedom of thought, and the same degree of social security for everyone. Nevertheless, in more than twenty countries in the world international law is not equal. Men receive greater opportunities in education and financial management, women, when persecuted, cannot defend themselves in court, and they occupy a lower social rank than that of men. One of the biggest factors that denies women the right to run for leadership roles or participate in important political or economic decision-making is a lack of education. In more than 60 percent of countries in the world, women are not aware of the fact that they have equal rights with men. They have been raised since birth as those who belong in the house and have no right to pursue their careers or seek better living standards. One of the most fundamental human right is the right to adequate education; however, this is often

ignored by many cultures all around the world due to the fact that education of men is prioritized over education of women.

### **Lack of promotion of the rule of law on national and international level**

In order for countries to deem themselves as equal observers of human rights across the world, certain common denominators are an inherent prerequisite for all. For this the guidelines of international law such as UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights are instructive. However, problems arise when people in positions of authority unwittingly fail to observe these guidelines and disregard the rule of law after which serious ethical, legal, and humanitarian transgressions of international law ensue. Hence, it is logical to think in terms of culture and standards of acceptance as a vehicle for societal change given the inherent difficulties with constitutional amendments.

With the passing of time, however, small incremental steps have been taken by some regimes to manipulate and wrongly expand the boundaries between what is acknowledged as acceptable and what is acknowledged as objectively wrong. International standards of fundamental liberties for all must be observed and adhered to. It is safe to say that prolonged periods of lack of progress not only harm the affected people but also undermine the integrity of the legislation in question. We must firmly stress that cultural traditions and history are not a justification to disregard the dictum of equality and treat people as second-class citizens. It is evident that national legislation of many countries must change in order to ensure that all discrimination against women is dismissed. In the majority of African and Asian countries women are portrayed as second-class citizens and this stereotypical thought must change.

### **Examples of women leaders in political, economic and public institutions**

Rwanda and South Africa have seen historic improvements in the ratio of women and men in parliament after their national constitutions were changed and reshaped with quotas for women's representation. In other countries, such as Kyrgyzstan in 2007, 30-percent quotas have been adopted as part of election reform. In Kuwait in 2005, the all-male parliament granted women full political rights, which meant that women could participate in elections. This was a small but significant step in the Arab world due to the fact that Arab culture often creates stereotypes about women and their leadership capabilities. In recent years, Nordic countries have presented gender quotas which secure higher representation of women in parliaments and political bodies. Norway was the first country in the world to pass a gender quota in 2007 that required all business to have least 40 percent of the board comprised of women. In 2015, Germany passed a significant gender quota which required some of Europe's biggest companies to give 30 percent of supervisory seats to women. This quota was very important due to the fact that it ensured a much greater role for women in boardrooms in many big corporations all over Europe.

### **Recommended questions to be discussed**

- How can we ensure that women and men receive equal opportunities in leadership training and education?
- How can we ensure that national laws do not infringe on the right of women to vote and to run for a seat in parliament or other political body?
- How can equal treatment in corporate leadership be achieved and secured?
- How can leadership opportunities awareness be spread into countries which are influenced by stereotypes that do not allow women to occupy higher ranked positions
- How can NGOs help to foster leadership abilities in girls and women in less economically developed countries?

**Topic #2: Ensure universal access to sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences**

**Introduction to the topic**

Freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of religion are just a few examples of what is meant by the phrase “fundamental freedoms”. Everyone should share the same human rights and fundamental freedoms, to which reproductive rights have belonged since the International Conference on Population and Human Rights (ICPD) held in 1994. Nevertheless, in many countries of the world, there are certain laws and practices which violate these basic human rights. In many less economically developed countries women do not get equal reproductive rights as their peers in more economically developed countries. Education about these rights is clearly lacking in many societies and that has to be changed in order to solve this urgent issue. Lack of funding is often the cause why sexual reproductive health and rights are violated in many countries. Despite the controversial and often not debated nature of the topic and the many challenges to address, universal access to contraception and sexual education is one of the main targets of the Sustainable Development Goals that the UN hopes to achieve by 2030, and therefore it is important to carefully address and debate this topic.

**Timeline of important events**

- In 1979, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) stressed under Article 16(e) that women, on an equal basis with men, should have the right to: “decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights”.
- In 1994, 179 countries gathered at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), approving a Program of Action which explicitly recognized reproductive rights as a fundamental subset of human rights, deriving from the right to health as articulated in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

- In 2000, the provision of universal access to reproductive health was set as one of the goals to achieve by 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals (5.B) United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the world's largest multilateral source of funding for population and reproductive health programs, is created. The purpose of this Fund is that of assisting governments and NGOs in promoting family planning and avoiding the spread of STI/STDs
- In 2010, the UNFPA Centre for Reproductive Rights examined 65 countries and estimated that the unsatisfied demand for contraceptives exceeds actual use in at least 30 countries, leaving 215 million women relying on traditional methods only.

### **Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development**

Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was passed in 1994 in Cairo. Reproductive health was defined by this conference as a state when both women and men can have safe sex and possibility to reproduce under the condition of freedom to decide when and how often to do so. Moreover, the clearly manifests that it is necessary to smite the right of both men and women to be informed and to have access to safe methods of family planning. According to the action plan all women should have the right of access to appropriate health care services that will allow women safe pregnancy.

The objectives of the program of action adopted by International Conference on Population and Development Cairo, 5–13 September 1994 were as follows:

1. To ensure that comprehensive and factual information and a full range of reproductive health-care services, including family planning, are accessible, affordable, acceptable and convenient to all users
2. To enable and support responsible voluntary decisions about child-bearing and methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law and to have the information, education and means to do so;
3. To meet changing reproductive health needs over the life cycle and to do so in ways sensitive to the diversity of circumstances of local communities

The action plan which was adopted at the conference asked all countries to ensure that primary health-care system, reproductive health to all individuals of appropriate ages will be secured for all urban and rural societies. This comprises of education about family planning and reproductive health care services. Moreover, the conference wanted to establish programs in all countries to serve the needs of women and to incorporate them in leadership and health care system positions. Also, according to the action plan *“governments should promote much greater community participation in reproductive health-care services by decentralizing the management of public health programs and by forming partnerships in*

*cooperation with local non-governmental organizations and private health-care providers. all types of non- governmental organizations, including local women’s groups, trade unions, cooperatives, youth programs and religious groups, should be encouraged to become involved in the promotion of better reproductive health.”*

## **Example of the lack of universal access to sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights**

### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh ranks 8th in the list of most densely populated countries in the world. The current population is 166 913 774, which is equivalent to 2. 18% of the world population. The Total Fertility rate according to the estimation of 2018 is 2.19 children per one woman. Contraceptive prevalence is 62%. Adolescent birth rate is 113 per 1000 women and the largest reproductive segment is 15-24 years of age. Adolescent and young constitute 19% of the total population. There is a significant need for sexual education in Bangladesh as the population without it is more vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies, STIs and HIV/AIDS. In Bangladesh there has always been a cultural and religious stigma to sexual education, such topics are not being discussed publicly. The information provided to students from grade VI to VIII contain no information on the access to the Sexual Reproductive Health services.

Although the national education policy of Bangladesh does not contain any points concerning comprehensive sexuality education, the country has several policies concerning the needs for sexual education such as the National Youth Policy of 2003 which focuses on raising awareness about STIs, HIV, and AIDS. It also focuses on expanding facilities for the education of young women and for reproductive health services for young people. The population Policy of 2012 raises awareness among adolescents on family planning and reproductive health. It ensures that the young generation is being informed about the importance of marriage registration.

The biggest issue of Bangladesh concerning sexual education and measures of contraception is the lack of access to correct information about both physical and mental changes that adolescents are going through. The use of contraceptives is very low in Bangladesh. Their use is significantly affected by cultural context and the religious background of citizens.

## **Example of a country which improved their access to sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights recently**

### **Albania**

Albania was among those who did not have sufficient reproductive education and a lack of contraceptives was in many cities and communities. Nevertheless, in the last 15 years Albania has made a great leap forward in the family planning due to the fact that the Ministry of Health in Albania has taken direct measures in strengthening contraceptive security. In 2003, a National Contraceptive Security Strategy (ANCSS 2003) was established and launched for the period 2003- 2010 to ensure that an adequate supply of contraceptives

is accessible for every Albanian who needs them, in accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development goal of universal access. The entire government of Albania, has poured a lot of money into universal access of contraceptives and has developed a program related to sexual education, which was implemented in many schools and educational facilities all across the nation

In order to extend the National Contraceptive and Security Strategy, Albania launched a new program and Health Reproductive Strategic Document covering the period of 2017-2021. The goal of this document is to ensure that free contraceptive measures can be accessed by every citizen of Albania and that sexual education extends to even more schools all around the country.

### **Beijing Platform for Action**

The fourth world conference on women was held in 1995 in Beijing, China. The action plan debates about the right of women to receive the highest attainable health services and ask for improvement of reproductive health facilities all over the world especially in countries where health services do not reach high standards and many rural women do not have access to it. The definition of reproductive health set by the Beijing platform for action is:

*“Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.”*

The plan for action calls for providing more accessible primary health care for all women, more accessible reproductive education for women due to the fact that this is a serious issue in the world and moreover it asks for establishment of new programs all around the world that would incorporate women into health service as it would create a more equal and confidential environment. While discussing the clauses that are in the Beijing plan for Action it is important to notice that the plan produced a lot of not entirely specific statements that target all societal issues and conflict which girls and women face. The delegates of the Impact 4 Committee are expected to debate the clauses which are in the call for action section and extend them and make them more specific. Furthermore, this committee is expected to revise and ensure that all clauses which are in the plan are effective and well used in societies in less economically developed countries.

**Clauses from the Beijing plan for Action that should be discussed by delegates.**

- 1) *Design and implement, in cooperation with women and community-based organizations, gender-sensitive health programs, including decentralized health services, that address the needs of women throughout their lives and take into account their multiple roles and responsibilities, the demands on their time, the special needs of rural women and women with disabilities and the diversity of women's needs arising from age and socio-economic and cultural differences, among others; include women, especially local and indigenous women, in the identification and planning of health-care priorities and programs; remove all barriers to women's health services and provide a broad range of health-care services;*
- 2) *Provide more accessible, available and affordable primary health-care services of high quality, including sexual and reproductive health care, which includes family planning information and services, and giving particular attention to maternal and emergency obstetric care, as agreed to in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;*
- 3) *Strengthen and reorient health services, particularly primary health care, in order to ensure universal access to quality health services for women and girls; reduce ill health and maternal morbidity and achieve world wide the agreed-upon goal of reducing maternal mortality by at least 50 per cent of the 1990 levels by the year 2000 and a further one half by the year 2015; ensure that the necessary services are available at each level of the health system and make reproductive health care accessible, through the primary health-care system, to all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015;*
- 4) *Recognize and deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern, as agreed in paragraph 8.25 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;*

All clauses of the Beijing plan of action can be accessed through <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

### **Recommended questions to be discussed**

1. How can targets of the Beijing plan for Action be extended and secured in every country of the world?
2. How can we ensure that contraceptive and right to use them is spread in every culture and both urban and rural women have access to it?
3. How can we extend the number of women in public health services?
4. How can we raise awareness about sexual education in countries which are less economically developed?
5. Which human rights underpin the obligation to provide universal access to contraception and comprehensive sexual education?
6. What aspects of the ICPD Plan of Action have failed to be implemented in particular? How can previous failures pave the way to future success?

## Sources

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<https://www.thedailystar.net/health/use-of-modern-contraception-in-bangladesh-women-slow-report-1659877>

## Recommended further reading

Beijing platform for Action

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>