

GENDER EQUALITY

Study Guide - IMPACT 1



Impact Summit 2019 - Prague

Topics of Impact 1 Committee

- Eliminating institutional discrimination against women and girls: improving access to education and public health services
- Eliminate gender-based violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres

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: Eliminating institutional discrimination against women and girls: improving access to education and public health services

Key Terms:

Institutional discrimination – unjust and discriminatory mistreatment of an individual or group of individuals by society and its institutions as a whole, through unequal selection or bias, intentional or unintentional; as opposed to individuals making a conscious choice to discriminate

Primary education – Initial stage of education and has as its basic aim to create, establish and offer opportunities to all children, regardless of age, gender or country of origin, to achieve a balanced cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development

Secondary education – the stage of education following primary education. Except in countries where only primary or basic education is compulsory, secondary education includes the final stage of compulsory education, and in many countries it is entirely compulsory

Contraceptives – a device or drug serving to prevent pregnancy

Maternal mortality rate – the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy

Introduction

Since the beginning of humankind women have faced considerable limitations in both their professional and daily lives. They have not received equal treatment from their peers and parents. Until the beginning of the First World War women could not aid the national industry of major western powers because they were perceived as weak and not sufficiently educated. After 1915 women started to take over the jobs in the heavy industry as they had to make up for the major labor shortages that had occurred. The year 1915 tremendously changed the way women were perceived by the society due to the fact that their work started to be essential for the success of the entire country. They started pursuing jobs in journalism, social work, teaching, medicine, and law. Such change also ignited the increase in the number of women participating in national affairs by campaigning for better working conditions, improved housing, health inspection, and protection for female workers¹. Since the Second World War, the women's liberation movement and feminism have contributed to the general recognition of the importance of women's rights. International agencies, including the United Nations, adopted several conventions promoting gender equality. This was the first huge step towards achieving the equality within genders as the majority of the states recognized that equality between male and female gender is vital for the sustainability of a society

Important historical agreements

In the second half of the 20th century, most countries adopted laws which involved the right to vote and expansion of the access to education at all levels. The basic concepts of gender equality were set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Since then, the question of gender equality has been questioned and debated numerous of times during international conferences. The pillars for gender equality which h have to be taken into account while debating include Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979, the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 on women, peace and security and most recently the 5th Sustainable Development Goal “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” of 2015. When all 17 Sustainable Development Goals were introduced, 143 countries constitutionally ensured the equality between men and women, 132 countries have set the minimum age of marriage without parental consent to 18 or older, 119 countries have outlawed domestic violence and 125 countries have passed laws to prohibit sexual harassment in workplaces and public spaces.

Although the establishment of these international declarations ensured the equality between the rights of men and women to access services and professional aid. Women still face disadvantages when it comes to access to reproductive healthcare, which is not only connected with multiple human rights such as: the right to be free from torture, the right to education, the right to health, the prohibition of discrimination and lastly the right to life⁴. The CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) ensured the obligation to respect and protect the rights related to sexual and reproductive health by national governments all around the world.

Limitations in health care services

Despite all of the preventions listed above, women still face violations of their sexual and reproductive health rights. Women do not have equal access to reproductive services such as professional health care. Rural women cannot access institutions such as hospitals because they simply cannot travel to cities when required. In some patriarchal societies, people still base their perception of women on their ability to reproduce, thus leading to the denial of women’s health and sexual rights in a form of early marriages, and pregnancy as they are trying to produce male offspring because of the preference of sons. Such violations have a devastating impact on women’s health⁴.

Women are facing discrimination in access to health services due to a combination of biological and social factors. Limited access to healthcare leads to increased mortality. Maternal conditions and HIV/AIDS are the leading causes why mortality of young women is so high in less economically developed countries. According to an estimation of 2016, over 200 million women been subjected to female genital mutations. Abortion rights are still unequally distributed and are being changed frequently³.

Statistical difference between male and female gender

According to a recent investigation conducted by Euro Health, the impact of gender inequality on health is tremendous. For instance, although women live longer, they spend fewer years in good health. Considering the difference between the gender pay and pension gaps, (16.3% and 38%), older women are more likely to find themselves on the edge of social exclusion, which creates a significant barrier to quality health services⁶.

Although during the past decade reproductive health of women and girls has improved, over 214 million women all around the world still don't have access to a modern method of contraceptives. 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.

Education

Considerable progress has been made in the field of enrolment of both girls and boys in primary and secondary schools worldwide. Nevertheless, it was estimated that in the year 2014, approximately 54% of countries had not achieved gender parity in lower secondary education and 77% in upper secondary education. Even nowadays girls are affected by the lack of policies supporting them to remain in schools. In some places of the world, communities are incapable of ensuring the safe road to school, especially for girls, as those who travel alone to distant schools risk being harassed and kidnapped by extremist groups.

In developing parts of the world women are often denied education due to the cultural, traditional and social issues such as: early and forced marriages, early pregnancies, cultural prejudice towards women, especially in paternal societies, long distances to school, school fees, lack of gender-sensitive approaches and materials in classrooms.

OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)

Claim that there have been multiple attacks on schools all across the world between years 2009-2014 targeting girls, parents, and teachers advocating for gender equality in education. Approximately two-thirds of illiterate adults are women. Lack of access to quality education causes lost opportunities when it comes to the enrolment into work positions as women are being underrepresented in most governments and decision-making bodies

Conclusion

In conclusion, although numerous treaties and declarations have been established during the past 70 years, women are still facing discrimination when it comes to the access of sexual education and reproductive healthcare, which leads to the increased maternal mortality rate, due to the lack of use of contraceptives. Women are more likely to acquire HIV/AIDS than men due to many factors which are against them. Moreover, the lack of education, in some parts of the world, is caused by the traditional, cultural and social issues such as: child marriages and sexual abuse. Some girls are denied education due to forced marriages and early pregnancies.

Suggested solutions for eliminating institutional discrimination against women and girls:

- improving access to education and public health services by creating a working group on measurement methodology
- producing regular reports on progress on monitoring at the global level
- coordination of national-level efforts to collect new data, in partnership with governments and education ministries
- involving regular reporting, conferences and workshops, building a transnational network for women's education groups, sharing strategies on advocating for engaging with global progress on measurement³.

Questions to be discussed by delegates:

1. In a process of accepting students into the universities, should be gender taken under consideration?
2. How can we ensure access to quality education to students in less developed countries?
3. Should children with early pregnancies be able to decide whether to continue their studies on their own?
4. How can we ensure proper access to healthcare to women in less developed countries?
5. To what extent should the culture play role in deciding whether abortion is appropriate when it comes to the unwanted early pregnancies?

Topic 2: Eliminate gender-based violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres

Key Terms:

Gender-based violence - violence directed against a person because of their gender

Domestic violence - violent or aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner

Human trafficking - the action or practice of illegally transporting people from one country or area to another, typically for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation

Child marriages - a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 and refers to both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married

Forced marriages - one or more of the parties is **married** without his or her consent or against his or her will

Arranged marriages - a marriage planned and agreed by the families or guardians of the couple concerned

Femicide - the killing of a woman or girl, in particular by a man and on account of her gender

Introduction

Gender-based violence torments every single nation of the world. It is one of the most common violations of human rights, as it is estimated that one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence during her lifetime. It undermines the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its victims, who subsequently suffer trauma, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, infections such as but not limited to HIV, and even death. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), victims of sexual or physical abuse are 16 percent more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby, and they are twice as likely to have an abortion. In some areas of the world, victims are 50 percent more likely to acquire HIV¹.

Forms of domestic violence

Although violence against women could be seen in all corners of the planet, it often goes unrecognized and unreported as in many cultures it is still seen as acceptable and normal. Most of the violence against women takes place within the family or from the side of intimate former or current partners.

1. Physical abuse

Physical abuse is defined as an abuse that involves contact intended to cause fear, pain, injury, and other physical suffering or bodily harm. The main purpose of the physical abuse is to intimidate and gain full control over the victim. It usually goes side by side with threats, isolation of the victim, manipulation, limitations of personal freedom such as access to medical care, sleep deprivation, forced drug or alcohol use. In recent years US states have enacted specific laws against strangulation, which was recently recognized

as one of the forms of domestic violence. Almost 40 percent of women were continuously harassed by their former or current intimate partner while temporarily separated.

In the US, over 50% of female homicides are committed by the former or current intimate partner. In the UK, 37 percent of murders of women were committed by their intimate partner and only 6 percent of men were killed by their intimate partner. The WHO states that over 38% of female murders are committed by their intimate partner. On average, one woman a week is murdered by her former or current intimate partner.

2. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse by definition is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advantages, or acts of traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality without their consent. If a person is pressured into consenting occurrence of any sexual act, without understanding the nature, terms or conditions is also considered as sexual abuse. Some cultures perceive victims of rape as the ones bringing shame to their family, which has severe consequences for the victims as they are facing familial violence, including the murder of the homicide. Statistically, one in 5 women has experienced sexual abuse since the age of 15.

Emotional abuse, also known as psychological abuse, involves threats, intimidation, dehumanization or systematic undermining of self-worth, public humiliation, unrelenting criticism. Another form of psychological abuse is stalking, which is most commonly perpetrated by former or current intimate partners. Due to the emotional abuse, perpetrators are gaining full control over the victims, which leads to depression, greater risk of eating disorders, suicides, drug and/or alcohol abuse. According to statistics, one in 4 women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former intimate partner and 1 in 6 women have experienced stalking since the age of 15.

3. Economic abuse

Economic abuse is defined as the form of the abuse in which one intimate partner has full control over the other partner's access to economic resources. Such form of the abuse increases dependence of the victim on their perpetrator and moreover it also reduces their access to education, employment, career advancement, and assets acquirements. Unfortunately, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces occur every day worldwide. Men are more likely to become an abuser if they have low education, were previously harassed, have a history of child maltreatment or/and history of violence against their mother, abuse of alcohol and

drugs. Women with low education or with a history of previous exposure to violence against them or their mother are more likely to become victims of any type of abuse from the side of their intimate partner.

Trafficking of women

Trafficking in women and girls is also a part of the gender-based violence. Its purpose is sexual and economic exploitation, especially prostitution and pornography, forced labor, work in commercial agriculture and domestic work, arranged marriages as a number of them are going to be sold as brides. Even though both genders may be victims of the human trafficking, women, and girls are the main target due to the disproportional effects of poverty and discrimination, and other factors that diminish their access to employment and educational opportunities.

Femicide

Femicide is defined as the killing of women and girls because of their gender. According to UNFPA, it is an extreme form of gender-based violence that could be seen in a form of murder including torture, mutilation, cruelty, and sexual violence. Such violence occurs in the areas of the world where violence is perceived as a normal human behavior.

Forced marriage

Forced and Child Marriage is a constantly debated issue that targets women and girls and traps them in relationships that deprives them of basic human rights. According to the Article One of the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration “*No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person after due publicity and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage and of witnesses, as prescribed by law*”. In the Article 2 of Convention is stated: “*States Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses.*”

There is a big difference between forced and arranged marriages. Forced marriages are defined as marriages in which one or both partners cannot give free or valid consent to the marriage. Forced marriage involves emotional pressure from the side of the family (both persuading the victim to go into marriage due to the family's social standing and reputation or isolation of the victim or refusing to speak to them) or community members, abduction and imprisonment. Arrange marriage is defined by the fact that the marriage is mostly arranged by the family and the victim cannot refuse to choose whether to marry or not. In many communities, such type of marriage is supported by the culture and traditions.

Exclusion of women from their society based on their type of sexuality

Women who do not share traditional sexuality or gender identity are more likely to become victims of violence. *Violence against LGBT women* includes women who are sexually and/or romantically interested in other women, transgender men, transgender women, and non-binary people. Violence and harassment of LGBT women may come from the side of strangers or family members and it can range from street harassment to murder. In some cases, sexual harassment of queer or transgender women/men come from the idea of curing homosexuality by the heterosexual sexual intercourse. In recent years such violence became more visible and many efforts have been made both legislatively and culturally to prevent attacks.

Violence against women with disabilities is more vulnerable to violence and other human rights abuses. According to the estimations conducted by the Human Rights Watch (HRW), over 300 million women worldwide are mentally or physically disabled. HRW also states that women with disabilities are facing the same range of human rights violations as non-disabled women, but their social isolation and dependence aggravates the consequences of the abuses. Women with disabilities have low education, financial, professional and social success. Perpetrators of abuse could be family members, intimate former or current partners, caregivers. Disability Awareness in Action stated that women with disabilities suffer sexual abuse, forced sterilization, and female genital mutilation.

The decrease in the gender-based violence could be achieved through legislation and practical measures on victim's rights. Ensuring appropriate access to shelter for domestic violence victims and emergency support for victims of sexual violence. The establishment of special measurements which would be able to determine whether the special measures

are necessary to protect vulnerable victims. EU is currently working on raising awareness of gender-based violence by co-funding campaigns run by national governments and supports transnational projects run by non-governmental organizations combating violence against children, women and young people.

Conclusion

Gender-based violence is one of the most common types of violence against women as it could be seen in every corner of the planet. It is often ignored as it is considered a part of a culture of less developed societies. Gender-based violence has a lot of forms such as: human trafficking (usually for sexual exploitation or forced labor), Femicide, Forced and Child Marriage, and violence against LGBT women. In order to achieve a decrease in gender-based violence, we must use legislation as a tool for the protection of victims' rights. Moreover, appropriate access to the shelter for victims of domestic violence must be ensured. It is important to establish special measurements to be able to determine whether the special measures are necessary to protect vulnerable victims.

Questions to be discussed by delegates:

1. How can the safe access to a help line for children facing domestic abuse be ensured?
2. How can the safe inclusion of LGBT women into traditional societies be ensured?
3. How can we ensure the anonymity of victims of domestic abuse if being housed in the shelters?
4. Is there a way to prevent forced and arranged marriages when it comes to less developed societies?
5. How can we ensure a decrease in the number of people experiencing economic abuse?

Sources

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