

Forum: The Economic and Social Council

Issue: Promoting women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels

Student Officer: Abhi Desai

Position: Head Chair

Introduction

We live in a world that is more equal than ever before. We have better civil rights, better education, and less disparity than any moment in history. More human rights are respected that have ever been considered in the past. Insofar as this is true, however, it does not mean that our world is equal. To achieve true equality, equal opportunity for all people, we still have a long way to travel.

In a world that has historically been dominated by the patriarchy, it is vital that we recognize the contributions that women can bring to companies, governments, and organizations of every kind. According to the Investment Banking Company *Morgan Stanley*, “More gender diversity, particularly in corporate settings, can translate to increased productivity, greater innovation, better decision-making, and higher employee retention and satisfaction (“An Investor’s”).” Providing equal opportunity is not an advancement that benefits one gender, or one race, or one country. In the words of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, “This is not simply about the fight for gender equality. From peace and security to development to human rights, greater inclusion is the key to our success – bringing new perspectives, different leadership styles, greater innovation and ultimately a more effective organization (Guterres).”

Today, we are faced with the task of promoting women’s opportunity and ability to participate in leadership positions; the task of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 of Gender Equality, Goal 10 of Reduced Inequality, and Goal 16 of Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, which can only be attained by ensuring that women across the globe have access to proper education and the ability to make use of that education. In a world where civil and sociopolitical rights are advancing at a greater rate than ever before, this is not an issue that can be overlooked; if we are to reach equal representation, then the world’s population should be equally present in every echelon in our society. Referring back to António Guterres, “We need more women in all areas of our work if we are to meet the challenges we currently face. And we need greater efforts to recognize the contributions that women make.”

Definition of Key Terms

Equality of Opportunity

The idea that people should be able to compete with equal terms and conditions for an advantaged position. In a world with perfect equality of opportunity, no person with equal competency as another would be given an advantage, or at a disadvantage, in applying for that position.

Gender Inequality

Differences in the access to resources, educations, and the statuses of people as a result of their genders or their gender identification. Henceforth, this will refer to the inequality faced by women relative to men and the discrimination that occurs as a result of their gender.

Leadership Positions

Any position that is considered significant to the function of an organization, country, or corporation, and is allocated significant decision-making ability, is considered a leadership position. This report will primarily be focusing on prominent leadership positions such as those of governments or senior positions at large corporations.

Institutionalized Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination caused by societal institutions and society as a whole. This type of discrimination is not subtle or unconscious; rather, it is a product of the laws and norms of a society. For instance, a country that legalizes or encourages gender-influenced selection in the workplace falls under the category of a country with institutionalized discrimination.

Unconscious Biases

Biases, or discrimination, by any person that are not intended to be discriminatory. Unconscious biases are caused by society or social conditioning; they often result in a person favoring one group of people over another, viewing them as more competent or capable, for instance, without intending to be discriminatory. In this situation, unconscious bias would be seen in a person unintentionally thinks a male to be more capable than a female despite equal competence levels.

Background Information

As of 2018, women hold only 24% of senior leadership roles across the world ("Women In Management"). Moreover, 25% of corporations have *no women in senior management positions*. In a group of 234 companies examined by the equality database LedBetter which own a combined 2000 of the world's most popular consumer brands, only 14 of the 234 companies have female CEOs (Power). This is followed by an even more severe statistic: out of the 500 major corporations on the Standard and Poor's 500 List (S&P 500), only 24 corporations are led by female CEOs ("Women CEOs"). This accounts for 4.8% of the total S&P corporations led by women. Furthermore, inequality in leadership positions is prominent among women as well: in the United States, 83% of women in leadership positions were caucasian females, while the next largest population was Latina females at 11%.

Institutionalized Sexism

There are numerous countries around the world today where societal norms and governmental regulations play a large part in encouraging gender disparity. This form of sexism is especially common in theocracies and other extremely conservative regions across the globe.

Middle Eastern North African Nations

One of the largest regions in the world with institutionalized sexism is the Middle Eastern North African (MENA) region.* Women in the MENA region "are more likely to be in 'vulnerable employment' than men." Vulnerable employment is a term used to describe own-account workers (self-employed) or workers contributing to family businesses. Vulnerable employees generally have significantly poorer conditions and working arrangements in terms of safety, access to hygiene, and wages, and often have their fundamental workers' rights undermined ("Definitions and Metadata"). Furthermore, female unemployment is extremely high throughout the MENA region as compared to the rest of the globe, especially in the 15-24 age group. The World Bank describe this to be due to multiple "social, cultural, and legal barriers." Referring to social barriers, "the general scarcity in job opportunities creates an impression that employing women will inevitably reduce opportunities for men, who are considered the primary breadwinners." Moreover, 15% of employers in Syria and 33% in Jordan openly admitted to choosing men over women due to their gender. Finally, the report addresses legal issues, stating that "most MENA countries have labor laws that, while designed to protect women, result in higher costs for employers who hire women." These sociocultural and legal biases result in females getting minimal opportunity to be integrated into the workforce and therefore being unable to advance the hierarchy to leadership positions (*The Status* 6, 7).

*This does not apply to all countries in the MENA region.

Unconscious Discrimination (Implicit discrimination)

Unconscious bias is defined as “social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness (Unconscious Bias).” This transforms into discrimination when these biases result in a person believing in the merit or credibility of one group of people over others because of the biases. For instance, if a manager in a corporation holds an unconscious prejudice that males are more productive workers than females, and therefore chooses to hire a man even if a woman has more merit, this would be unconscious discrimination on the part of the manager. Moreover, unconscious discrimination can be caused by biases in the societal structure which may, albeit unintentionally, give advantages to males over females.

One reason for the lower number of women in leadership positions, according to the ILO, is that “Men and women rarely have equal access to participation in leadership development programmes, even though this is critical for progression up the corporate hierarchy.” This means that in training programs, intended for developing leaders, women are often overlooked. As a result, they have less leadership experience and training and therefore are less likely to be promoted in a corporate setting. Furthermore, senior leaders are more likely to meet with men than they are with women, denying women the same exposure of higher company positions that men are granted. Quoting an ILO report from August 2016, “Women reported far fewer interactions with a senior leader than their male counterparts and this gap widens with career advancement.”

Another question to consider is the perpetuity of social norms. If a male is in a senior leadership position, as is the case for most corporations/executive bodies today, the workplace environment is more likely to be suited for other males. As a result, men are more likely to advance into higher positions over women. In a corporate setting where males form the majority of management and leaders, the ratio of male to female leaders is likely to perpetuate, thereby lowering chances of women to be promoted to leadership positions.

Corporate Discrimination/Disadvantage

One of the central issues in the leadership participation of women is inevitable corporate disadvantages. The central aim of any company or business is to maximize profits; naturally, this means minimizing costs, especially costs which do not earn them profits. This line of thinking leads to one of the most vital problems in the corporate world: an unintended alienation of nearly half the working population, a situation which must be avoided.

Across the world, one extremely beneficial step taken towards Women’s Equality has been the implementation of paid maternity leave by law. Over fifteen countries around the world have implemented paid maternity leave legislation, granting women the freedom to take upto six months off work while still retaining wages. This, however, leads to a dilemma for corporations: while women are on maternity leave, they cost employers but are not required to work, and thus do not earn the employers profits. As a

result of this, exceedingly large numbers of corporations are choosing to hire fewer women, especially those who are married or engaged. Furthermore, managers choose to be more hesitant when granting promotions to these women, as a woman in a leadership position temporarily leaving for six months could significantly harm the team.

Another example of corporate bias, discrimination in this case, is the unconscious discrimination of managers. In a company where the majority of existing leaders are male, male employees are more likely to feel comfortable in such an environment. Thus, they gain advantages in that men would find it easier to get accustomed to the environment and the norms in the workplace, potentially granting them higher productivity and efficiency because of this comfort. Therefore, men in such an environment would be more likely to gain a promotion. This leads to an unending cycle of male promotion and management, discouraging female involvement in the leadership of the company.

Access and Practicality of Education

In nations across the world, there is unequal access to education between the genders. In South Sudan, over 75% of girls are not able to attend primary school. Partly, this is due to lack of access of nearby schools and thus lack transportation to schools. In LEDCs especially, there are nations where the majority of the population lives scattered across rural areas of the country; these parts of the population constitute a large percentage of women and girls who are illiterate, as families often cannot afford to transport multiple family members to school. As a result, and due to prominent patriarchal hereditary cultures, the education of men is often prioritized.

Furthermore, in many societies women and girls face an additional challenge that men do not: the responsibility of the household. In numerous cultures, it is customary practice that while men work for their families resources and well-being, women tend to children and household responsibilities. As a result, girls are often not given a literary education as it is deemed unnecessary for them to have such an education to complete household tasks or to take care of a child. Therefore, the education of men is once again prioritized, and if a family does not have the ability to place both in a good institution they often pay more for males and ignore the education of female children and adolescents.

The aforementioned cultural practices result in women and girls often being overlooked when applying for jobs due to not having the appropriate credentials. Most occupations require some level technical skill and literacy, which as a result of an institutionalized lack of education, women often do not have. Even if these women do gain a position in a reputable company or job, they may be overlooked for leadership positions or shut out from political representation as a result of the lack of academic credentials. This plays a large part in influencing the lack of female participation in leadership at our society.

Political Participation / Representation

In June 2016, 22.8% of all members of parliament in the world were women; 77.2% were men. Out of 194 nations, only 15 nations have women as heads of state. Over 100 countries worldwide have never had a female leader in their history, including in some of the most developed regions in the world: Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, the United States, and numerous more.

Even among the nations that have had female heads of state, many of them have been interim leaders; few have been voted in by the populace. This is largely due to inherent gender biases that are prominent. Women are often not regarded to be strong or stoic enough to take a leadership position or to make tough decisions. Furthermore, the question is often raised of a women's ability to manage both her family, if she has one, and the country. As a combination of these two stereotypes, males are often considered to be more competent and better suited for political positions.

However, there have been some excellent female leaders across the world: Queen Elizabeth II of the commonwealth of nations, and the theoretical head of 53 member states, is an excellent example of this. Furthermore, leaders like Angela Merkel have revolutionized the way women are perceived, and informal leadership through campaigns by activists such as Malala Yousafzai has elevated the reputation and reduced prejudices against women all over the globe. Although there have been relatively few women in the political eye, these figures prove women's capabilities and leave no doubt as to the fact that they can be on par with men.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Center for Asia-Pacific Women In Politics (CAPWIP)

The center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics is a non-profit NGO (non-governmental organization) that emphasizes on training, educating, and providing resources for women throughout the Asia-Pacific region. CAPWIP has an objective of enhancing female participation in regional governance such that it "affirms gender equality, integrity and accountability, excellence, sustainable development and peace." It has organized six Asia-Pacific congresses and four global congresses since its initiation, from topics such as maternal health to women's electorate to the accountability and leadership of women in politics. This regional organization introduces the realities of representing women in the governance of a population ("About CAPWIP").

Women's Learning Partnership

The Women's Learning Partnership is a collection of twenty independent organizations that coordinate to execute plans to improve the rights and abilities of women at every level. One of the most

successful women's rights partnerships worldwide, the WLP's reach extends across fifty countries and hundreds of thousands of women. Aside from their achievements with women's rights around the world, their focus on leadership excels as well: for instance, the WLP has played a large role in influencing Mauritania and Zimbabwe in establishing political quotas, thereby introducing a more equal representation of women in government. The WLP has seen significant successes across the globe with their aim to "promote women's leadership, civic engagement, and human rights ("Our Impact")."

UN Women

UN Women is an organization of the United Nations, "working to develop and uphold standards and create an environment in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potential." It partners with organizations across the globe and serves as a leader in the fight for gender equality. It aims to accelerate the progress in the elimination of violence against women, promotion of economic empowerment and political empowerment, peace and security, and the safety and resources of female youth. UN Women serves as the backbone of the fight against gender discrimination across the globe ("Facts and Figures").

Norway

One of the most successful system of Gender Quotas in the world has been seen in Norway. In 2003, the Norwegian Minister of Trade and Industry announced that Norway-based companies would be required to have 40% of their board members be female in an unprecedented more intervening in corporate affairs. This was done to combat the self-perpetuating cycle of more men in leadership positions (q.v. Unconscious Discrimination). The consequences for non-compliance with this quota were that a company would effectively be denied registration as a business or, in some cases, shut down. (Birkvad). Firms complied, however, resulting in an improvement in productivity and equal representation across Norwegian companies (Solsvik). The success of this policy resulted in it being imitated by numerous countries across the European Union (EU), including France and Sweden.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Although created to oversee development across the world, the UNDP has also played a significant role in promoting women's equality. In a collaborative project with the League of Arab States, for instance, it worked with hundreds of women and non-governmental organizations across the globe to engage "in peace and development policymaking processes ('Women's Participation')." The UNDP has worked to promote to representation of women in every type of governmental institutions, from constitutional committees to the parliamentary houses to the judiciary.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Although seemingly unconnected, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has played a significant role in empowering women and advocating for gender equality. In 2018, the UNODC collaborated with the United Nations Office of Vienna (UNOV) to create the “Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.” This is a three year plan intended to achieve gender parity and female empowerment in accordance with the plans of the Secretary General of the United Nations (Antonio Guterres) as he stated in September 2017. The UNODC has played an active role in documenting progress of female empowerment across the globe and in reporting its progress to the United Nations. The UNODC recognizes the integral part that female empowerment will play in reducing the world of crimes, such as human and sex trafficking, for instance. For this reason, they have set forth two primary objectives that they hope to accomplish by 2021: to “Strengthen delivery of global results on gender equality and the empowerment of women” through their actions, and to “: Strengthen UNOV/UNODC institutional capacity and effectiveness to enhance delivery of results on gender equality and the empowerment of women.” They will accomplish this both through a promotion and gender-mainstreaming approach, as well as a gender equality targeted approach (“Strategy for Gender Equality”).

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1906	Grand Duchy of Finland grants universal suffrage—the right to vote and stand in an election as a female candidate.
March 1907	First women members of parliament in the world are elected as a group of 19 women in Finland.
1972	First female CEO of a Fortune 500 company, Katherine Graham of Washington Post
6 th March, 2015	German parliament approves quota for 30% of non-executive board seats to be reserved for women in major companies (Copley)
16 th August, 2015	Women granted Suffrage and Candidacy rights in Saudi Arabia. Women now permitted universal suffrage in 194 out of the 195 countries worldwide.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Council resolution 11(II), 21 June 1946, Establishes in Commission on the Status of Women
- Fourth World Conference on Women, September 1995

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, September 1995
 - Subtopic G, Women in Power and Decision-making
 - Subtopic H, Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), New York, 18 December 1979 (“Major Resolutions”).
- Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, 8 June 2015 (**E/RES/2015/6**)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The causes of the issue of women in leadership positions are numerous, and the attempts to solve the issue even more so. “In Albania, UN Women helped mobilize grassroots women and civil society organizations to develop community-based scorecards.” Here, said grassroots women and civil society organizations created rating systems for the severity of the issue in each Albanian community, thereby making aware and mobilizing women all over the region. They boycotted election unless the candidates agreed to their demands of equality. The solution chosen, and achieved in this case, by UN Women was the spreading of awareness through concrete facts and data of the severity of an issue, thereby persuading the population to act of their own accord.

Engaging civil and social rights organizations has also played a vital role in solving this issue. With more people believing in gender equality than ever before, there is a significant population willing to campaign, pressure, and overall participate in advancing the positions of women around the world. Organizations such as those mentioned above (refer to Major Countries and Organizations Involved) have played some of the largest roles in providing a population force behind the objective of solving the issue.

Furthermore, the Plurinational State of Bolivia (or Bolivia) is an example of a state that has had significant progress in the field of Women’s rights. Bolivia was one of the worst with regards to women’s political participation, with women holding less than an aggregate of 20% of Parliamentary seats. In 2000, countries across Latin America began passing quotas on the number of women in political positions. In Bolivia, the constitutional reform on 2010 symbolizes one of the greatest successes of women’s political representation: there was a quota of at least 50% enacted for the number of women in parliamentary seats. By 2015, Bolivia was one of two states in the world with at least half of its representation female: 53.1% of its parliamentary seats were occupied by female members (*Women in Parliament* 4). A similar result can be observed in Ecuador, where the establishment of a parliamentary quota raised the percentage of women represented in the Ecuadorian parliament from 4.5% to over 40%

in less than twenty years. Although the effectiveness of quotas are debatable, they proved to be enormous successes throughout Latin America.

On the other hand, there are instances where these quotas were not successful. One prime example of this is India, which faces some of the worst gender inequalities in Parliament. 49% of the electorate is female; however, they are represented by a female population forming less than 11% of the Indian Lower House of Parliament (The Lok Sabha). Moreover, minimal progress has been seen: in sixty years since the Indian independence, the parliamentary representation of women has only increased from 4.4% to 11%. In order to combat this, the Upper House of the Parliament of India, the Rajya Sabha, established a bill that reserves 33% of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies. This bill passed with a majority in the Rajya Sabha on the 9th of March, 2010; however, it was never voted on by the Lower House. It lapsed (expired) in 2014, and thus was never enacted.

Possible Solutions

Promoting women's participation in leadership positions is one of the most vital issues in our world, and it has a variety of solutions specific to different situations. Some of these situations will be addressed before.

Governmental participation of women is necessary and expected in a truly equal world. With roughly half of the world's population being female, in order to achieve equal representation there should, theoretically, be roughly the same proportion of females in government. This, however, is rarely true. One method to ensure this would be to install a quota in parliamentary positions and the separate branches of government. A quota could be mandated by governments, should they agree, such that the women to men ratio within a governing body be proportional to the women to men ratio in the population they will be governing. Furthermore, such a quota would encourage more women to run for governmental positions as they will likely not be denied a position due to their gender; rather, they may have a higher chance of being accepted. However, the implementation of a quota has dangers in that it may undermine the importance of competency. If a population of female or male candidates is largely incompetent, for instance, they may still have the chance of acquiring a position over another, more competent candidate because of their gender.

Corporations must be one of the largest considerations with regards to gender equality primarily due to the multi-faceted nature of the issue. There are inevitable advantages gained by men over women in corporate environments: women may require maternity leave, for instance, which raises employers' costs. Furthermore, changing the institutionalized biases present in corporations is a vital issue that would be difficult to solve. One way to solve this would be to invite external auditors who may judge

employees solely based on merit and assist management in an unbiased decision. Furthermore, blind applications/resumes should be encouraged and submitted, thereby reducing the chance of gender bias. To solve the former (maternity leave), a government could subsidize a corporation/company that employees women and pays them over maternity leave, therefore covering the costs that the company incurs and thus reducing their loss, encouraging them to hire women.

Institutionalized sexism or culturally accepted sexism, on the other hand, would be significantly more difficult to solve. Cultural sexist behaviours would have to be changed gradually through example and steady changes towards women's equality. Quotas such as those in Norway can be implemented; however, especially in developing countries, they run the risk of upsetting cultural practices and causing widespread dissatisfaction. One way to ensure that the transitions are smooth is by encouraging campaigns and grassroots activism, thus demonstrating the desires for gender equality in a society. Furthermore, women could be educated and encouraged to exhibit their knowledge, showing that women can be competent for and even desirable in leadership positions. In institutionally sexist societies, promoting women's participation in leadership would have to be through gradual movement and through exemplar, proving to a population that they would benefit from equal representation for women.

Bibliography

"About CAPWIP." *Center of Asia-Pacific Women In Politics*, 3 Mar. 2009, www.capwip.org/aboutcapwip/about.html. Accessed 22 Oct. 2018.

Birkvad, Ida Roland. "The Secret behind Norway's Gender Quota Success." Translated by Connie Stultz. *Kjonnsforskning*, 26 Oct. 2016, <https://kjonnsforskning.no/en/2016/10/secret-behind-norways-gender-quota-success>. Accessed 5 Nov. 2018.

Copley, Caroline. "German Parliament Approves Legal Quotas for Women on Company Boards." *Reuters*, 2018 Reuters, 6 Mar. 2015, www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-women-quotas/german-parliament-approves-legal-quotas-for-women-on-company-boards-idUSKBN0M214S20150306. Accessed 22 Oct. 2018. Editorial.

"Definitions and Metadata." *Definitions and Metadata - Data Finder - World Employment and Social Outlook*, 1996-2018 International Labour Organization (ILO), www.ilo.org/wesodata/definitions-and-metadata/vulnerable-employment.

Guterres, António. "Secretary-General's remarks at the launch of 'HERstory: Celebrating Women Leaders in the United Nations.'" *HERstory: Celebrating Women Leaders in the United Nations*, 27 June 2018, UN Headquarters, New York City. Speech transcript.

"An Investor's Guide to Gender Diversity." *Gender Diversity Investor's Guide* | Morgan Stanley, Morgan Stanley, 17 Jan. 2017, www.morganstanley.com/ideas/gender-diversity-investor-guide. Accessed 20 Oct. 2018.

"Major Resolutions." *Major Resolutions* | UN Women — Headquarters, UN Women, www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/major-resolutions. Accessed 22 Oct. 2018.

"Our Impact: Local to Global." *Our Impact*, Women's Learning Partnership, <https://learningpartnership.org/what-we-do/our-impact>.

Power, Rhett. "More Women in Leadership Roles -- Why and How It Should Happen." *More Women in Leadership Roles -- Why and How It Should Happen* | Inc.com, Inc, 6 May 2018, www.inc.com/rhett-power/more-women-in-leadership-roles-why-how-it-should-happen.html. Accessed 21 Oct. 2018.

Solsvik, Terje. "Norway's gender quota law has made boards more professional: state fund boss." Reuters, 30 Sept. 2013, www.reuters.com/article/us-nordic-investment-fund/norways-gender-quota-law-has-made-boards-more-professional-state-fund-boss-idUSBRE98T0LM20130930. Accessed 5 Nov. 2018.

Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2018–2021). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations Office in Vienna, Vienna, 2018, www.unodc.org/documents/Gender/UNOV-UNODC_Strategy_for_Gender_Equality_and_the_Empowerment_of_Women_2018-2021_FINAL.pdf. Accessed 12 Nov. 2018.

The Status & Progress of Women in the Middle East & North Africa. Washington D.C., World Bank, 2009. *World Bank*, https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/MENA_Gender_Compndium-2009-1.pdf. Accessed 21 Oct. 2018.

"Unconscious Bias." *UCSF Office of Diversity and Outreach*, University of California, <https://diversity.ucsf.edu/resources/unconscious-bias>. Accessed 22 Oct. 2018.

"Women CEOs of the S&P 500." *Catalyst*, 3 Oct. 2018, www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-ceos-sp-500. Accessed 21 Oct. 2018.

"Women In Management: Quick Take." *Catalyst*, Catalyst Inc., 30 July 2018, www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-management#footnote39_g6sir9x. Accessed 21 Oct. 2018.

Women in Parliament: 20 Years in Review. Geneva, Inter-Parliamentary Union,

2015, <https://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP20Y-en.pdf>. Accessed 5 Nov. 2018.

“Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation.” *UN Women*, UN Women, July 2017,

www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#notes.