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Goal 5: Gender Equality

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Yan Ying Mor

Deputy Chair

Ariel Chen

Deputy Chair

Brian Lain

Head Chair

Aaron Chen

Deputy Chair

Emily Wang

Deputy Chair

Mayte Remero

Forum:	Goal 5: Gender Equality
Issue:	Preventing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
Chair:	Yu-An (Aaron) Chen and Brian Lain

Introduction

Across most parts of the world, it is widely known that recognition of sexual and orientation and gender identity is important; multiple states celebrate the act and actively promote it on a daily basis. However, within other states, little action is taken about it because of their fear of difference as well as their inherent cultural and religious sensitivity. Within these states, the ones who push for more protective policies in regards to recognition of individual identity are often hurt and abused, leading to the general lack of action, resulting in further discrimination against minorities. These are the core issues that need to be grappled with: many are being abused and violated upon because of their "unappealing" sexual orientation or gender identity and do not recognized for their basic human rights.

Despite this seemingly grim situation, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and the global community are currently actively working towards resolving the issue in a peaceful manner because of the recent global attention that it has received over the last few years. Just over six months ago, a resolution in the Human Rights Council (HRC) was passed that allowed the appointment of an independent expert on this specific issue, shining an optimistic light to the plight at hand. All in all, even though facilitating dialogue between parties with drastically differing viewpoints may prove to be a challenge, the steps that the international community has taken have shown to be in the right direction, ultimately aiming to prevent violence and discrimination on a global scale.

Definition of Key Terms

LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer)

The acronym stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer.

Lesbian

People with the biological sex of female romantically and physically attracted to the people of the same sex.

Gay

People with the biological sex of male romantically and physically attracted to the people of the same sex.

Bisexual

People that are romantically and physically attracted to members of both of the biological sexes of male and female.

Transgender

Most people's gender identity matches the social norms for their gender identity. However, transgender people often have the feeling that their physical anatomy or appearances do not match the social norms of their biological sex. Therefore, many of these people made the decision to undergo surgery or hormones to match their physical anatomy or appearances to their biological sex. However, some of these people are comfortable keeping their physical anatomy while dressing as the opposite gender.

Queer

The Q was later added to the LGBT acronym recently to represent the growing number of people identifying their identity as queer, which means uncertainty to his or her sexual orientation and gender identity. This action symbolizes the values of respect and representation to groups that would like to identify differently from the existing labels.

Gender

Gender identity refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles and relationships. However, gender identity also includes the people who do not fit the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as those represented by the LGBTQ acronym. Social and cultural impacts are some of the factors that can impact a person's decision on their gender.

Sex

Sex is different from gender. While people can decide on their gender identity, people cannot decide on their biological sex. The two biological sexes, male and female, are assigned by a doctor at birth based on the genitals and chromosomes people are born with.

Sexual Orientation

The term sexual orientation refers to the gender to which the person is attracted to. There are several types of sexual orientation that are most commonly described. The first one is heterosexual, which are people that are romantically and physically attracted to members of the opposite sex. Then there's homosexual (lesbian and gay), people who are romantically and physically attracted to people of the same sex. Finally, there's bisexual, people that are romantically attracted to members of both sexes.

Gender Equality

Achieving gender equality is part of the UN's SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), which is a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Achieving gender equality means promoting equal access to education, health care, salaries, work conditions etc. and representation in political and economic decision-making processes for all genders.

Discrimination

Biased judgements or preconceived opinions developed by the categorization of people based on their characteristics and differences.

Honor Killings

Honor killings are when family members protect their family honor by killing and murdering those that are considered as "dishonorable", often including people from the LGBTQ community based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. This is especially prevalent in Russia and the Middle East.

General Overview

Violence

In most parts of the world, the lack of understanding and unwillingness to do so is the core reason why violent acts toward different peoples occur; these acts may include murder, rape, kidnapping, and much more, often causing significant and irreversible mental harm to the victim. As stated in the introduction, religious sensitivity, as well as fear of cultural degradation, prevent the acceptance of individuals with sexual orientations or gender identities that are out of the norm, resulting in widespread violence in certain areas of the world. In addition, to make matters worse, the statistics and data published by acclaimed sources (Human Rights Watch, Family Equality Council, Human Rights Council, etc) downplay the significance of the issue, seeing as victims of discrimination often do not report the crime for fear of further violence, leading to the conclusion that violence against these people might actually be on a much wider scale and have a much more devastating impact than originally expected.

Lack of data, accuracy and representation

Another culprit for the widespread extent of this plight is the lack of data and awareness. Very few nations today publish annual reports or release updates on the situation as a whole, resulting in even less representation of the LGBTQ community; even for the nations that do so, their data are most likely not accurate. In 2012, a survey by Stonewall in Great Britain found that one in six LGBT surveyors experienced hate crime or the likes in the past three years while 75% chose not to reported their experience to the police. This is a perfect example of how lack of accuracy actively deters individuals within the LGBTQ community from speaking out in fear that he or she would be targeted for it. LGBTQ communities make up less than 10% in most, if not all member states. Given this and the fear of true expression, their voices are often times muffled under the constant barrage of insults and outrage of anti-LGBTQ individuals, resulting in underrepresentation and susceptibility to violence and discrimination

Discrimination

Discrimination against minorities exists at all levels of society because of the differences between the minority and majority. Discrimination, especially based on sexual orientation and gender identity, includes the inability to access healthcare, expression, education and employment, which are fundamental human rights.

Discriminatory Policies

As of today, more than one third of the world's nations, at least 76 member states, criminalize consensual, adult same-sex relationships and penalize cross-dressing. Iran, Mauritania, and Saudi Arabia

are some of the most well-known examples, implementing punishments such as lashings, life imprisonment, and death penalty. Such measures are a violation of the UDHR, as it violates the right to life, privacy, and non-discrimination. In healthcare, many laws also cause individuals from the LGBTQ community to suffer due to the declined quality of health services or even inability to access such services.

Inhumane Practices

Apart from the discriminatory policies, families around the world often believe that a child with differing sexual orientation and gender identity should be considered “sick” and send their children to the hospital to have them treated.. Many of the countries implemented measures to ban such unethical treatments involving torture such as whipping, forced sterilization, and electrocution.

Discrimination in society

Due to such laws and inhumane practices, many individuals suffer great discrimination when their sexuality or gender identity are considered different and sub-human. In the area of employment, many suffer from discrimination in the workplace since majority of the countries have no laws in protecting individuals from being judged based on sexual orientation and gender identity while looking for a job. Regarding housing, in the United States, 40 percent of homeless youths (many due to negligence from parents) are a part of the LGBTQ community.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 10th, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted, proclaiming the basic rights of every individual regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
June 17th, 2011	Resolution code: A/HRC/RES/17/19. The first resolution that focused on the sexual orientation and gender identity of individual was passed in the Human Rights Council.

June 30th, 2016

Titled *Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity* and passed in the Human Rights Council, an expert was called to be appointed to assess the international situation of the topic as well as raise awareness of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, along with multiple other tasks.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There has not been much UN involvement until fairly recently. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also been committed to advocate for the decriminalization of LGBTQ people while ensuring their human rights are preserved and their dignity is being upheld. By 2011, 14 nations have either abolished their discriminatory laws for homosexuality or adopted and/or strengthened their anti-discriminatory laws. Similarly, "twelve nations introduced marriage or civil unions (civil unions have similar benefits with marriage) for same-sex couples and ten have introduced reforms allowing transgender individuals to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity". Recently, media coverage have also raised awareness about the LGBTQ community, helping to boost the confidence of countless individuals while legitimizing their identity.

- Resolutions passed
 - Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, 14 July 2011 (**A/HRC/RES/17/19**)
 - Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, 17 November 2011 (**A/HRC/19/41**)
 - Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, 26 September 2014 (**A/HRC/RES/27/32**)
 - Discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, 4 May 2015 (**A/HRC/29/23**)
 - Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 30 June 2016 (**A/HRC/RES/32/2**)
 - Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 19 April 2017 (**A/HRC/35/36**)

Possible Solutions

Discrimination in society

Proper education from the youths to the people in the business world will help combat discrimination against LGBTQ identities. However, education cannot completely reduce and combat the

violence and discrimination faced as many people see these individuals as a human unlike themselves, allowing them to commit unethical acts. On the other hand, it will certainly give potential hate crimes and attackers a reason to reconsider their planned actions before implementing them.

Acceptance and recognition through media

The discrimination can likely be reduced as societal norms starts to accept the different non-traditional gender identity and sexual orientation. Recognition through the media such as TV and social media platforms can also stimulate a healthy environment while promoting acceptance of these people.

Recovery and Support

With discriminatory statements and treatments often made towards the people with non-traditional gender identity or sexual orientation, many of them faces mental issues such as depression due to possible discrimination and isolation from society. Frequent human rights violations were also reported, which actions can be made to ensure the psychological and physical recovery of the LGBTQ members facing abuse and societal issues. By supporting the LGBTQ community through providing aid and creating a safe environment that people are accepted and taken care of, this can create a sense of comfort within society and give proper attention to victims.

In the Business World

Necessary measures should be taken to prevent companies from discrimination against employees or hiring candidates based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Such measures range from implementing reporting processes to prevent and address discrimination and harassment while having protective policies to enforce a safe and productive workplace for all members of the company. Companies should collectively promote the rights of LGBTQ community members by sponsoring youth centers, community centers, advocacy groups and charities. However, the interests and incentives for these companies to do so have to be considered.

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Forum: Goal 5: Gender Equality

Issue: Implementing literacy programs for women to combat inequality universally

Chair: Ariel Chen and Emily Wang

Introduction

Gender inequality is currently one of the biggest issues in the world today. This issue is a result of societal perceptions of gender roles, causing the belief that women, who were often confined to the house and tasked with domestic jobs only, did not require an education. This was also supported by the belief that women were physically and intellectually inferior to men. Thus, throughout history, males have been prioritized for receiving an education, while women's right to education has yet to be secured in many countries today.

These factors have contributed to the issue of female illiteracy. According to 2014 data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), two-thirds of the world's 758 million illiterate adults were female. For decades, spreading female literacy continues to be one of the major features to combat gender inequality. However, the gap of literacy rates between males and females only began to narrow in 1990. UIS has developed the Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices database (LitBase), including sources of literacy programs containing ideas to improve the condition of illiteracy for various regions. In recent years, fewer and fewer women, regardless of their age group, are recorded as illiterate. However, a wide gap between the male and female literacy rate persists, especially regions such as South and West Asia, and especially Sub-Saharan Africa.

Definition of Key Terms

Literacy

The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with various contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society.

Discrimination against Women and Girls (Gender Discrimination)

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines gender discrimination as “Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” Gender discrimination in colloquial definition includes both gender, but in this chair report, it will chiefly refer to women and girls.

General Overview

The effects of women’s literacy in the world

Women’s literacy rates affect not only women themselves and their families, but also the international community. Educated women are more likely to be able to protect themselves from threats and issues such as human trafficking and unsafe sex. Being literate also greatly increases the chances of women being able to get a job and provide for themselves and their families, and introducing education to women in LEDCs can help to break families out of the cycle of poverty. Literate women are also able to participate in political events, such as elections or holding positions in political parties, thus providing more representation for women in politics and ensuring that the concerns of women are heard. Educated women are shown to be more likely to be able to provide her children with an education, which passes literacy down through generations to ensure the family is consistently able to earn a living for themselves.

Education passes down through generations

According to the last United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, “Literate women are more likely to send their children, especially their girls, to school.” Women who are able to read and write can get a job, help their own financial situation, participate in political activities or the country’s economy, and most importantly pass on their knowledge and end the cycle of poverty. As educated people, such women recognize the importance of literacy and therefore would prioritize the education of their children, male and female. Literate, educated women are more likely to make good decisions and defend themselves, and pass on these abilities to future generations.

Causes of women’s illiteracy

One of the root causes on this issue is the lack of chances for women to be educated, due to the shortage of good and free learning environments such as schools and libraries, the lack of faculty members, and the need of supplies such as textbooks and writing utensils. Female illiteracy is more prevalent in LEDCs, as the

affordability of education in LEDCs is a problem, and most parents who can afford to educate their children prioritize sending their boys to school instead of girls. In these places, the practice of child marriage is common, as marrying off a girl means fewer children to feed and be responsible for. For many families, the struggle to feed its children comes before any thoughts of education, which leads to a cycle of poverty with generations of uneducated children unable to get a job. Women illiteracy also exists in MEDCs. Despite adequate amount of learning environments, obstacles such as gender stereotypes and improper school regulations lowers girls' aspirations to go to school. There are still people who believe that women are physically and intellectually inferior to men, and problems of sexual harassment of girls in schools and universities hinder girls' ability or motivation to go to school.

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are overgeneralizations about the characteristics, differences, and attributes of a certain group based on their gender. Harmful gender stereotypes about women's abilities compared to men decrease their chances to get an education. These ideas include beliefs that women should be submissive and do domestic jobs only and have no need for an education have caused female illiteracy to be the norm in some countries. There are countries that do not recognize female illiteracy to be a problem or recognize the need for women to get an education, and these are ideas that should be eradicated in time to ensure gender equality and equal rights for women.

Poverty and premature marriage

For many poor families, an education is not considered a feasible possibility or future for their children, and many families in LEDCs such as Niger, Chad, and Bangladesh use child marriage as a means to save money. In many LEDCs, the bride's family pays a dowry to the husband, and many girls are married off as early as possible as the younger the bride is, the lower the dowry. There are also cases where the husband pays dowry instead, acting as incentive to marry girls off early. In essence, daughters are regarded as financial commodities to those families who are suffering in poverty. Girls are not seen as a person with potential to contribute to the family economically aside from dowries, and so families would not want to spend extra money for their daughters to be educated.

Learning environments

"A bad school environment can deter girls from attending school and also negatively impact on the quality of education girls receive." (right-to-education.org). Bad learning environments can include sexist school regulations, dress codes, bullying, sexual harassment, and lack of sanitation. In many schools, there are not enough rules in place to protect girls from discrimination and stereotyping, such

as when girls in sports are disregarded or girls are judged or sexualized for what they wear. For example, a case by the American Association of University Women (Bailey, S. 1992) revealed that feminine traits are considered insults to many young children in the public school circuit, and that acts of defiance from girls tend to be treated as misbehavior, while they are a sign of strength in boys. This inequality goes unquestioned in many school settings, and influences many violent and unequal actions, bullying, and punishments that girls suffer in school, even in privileged countries. If girls cannot feel safe in school, girls will not want to go to school, or bad experiences in school will affect their love for learning and contribute to depression or anxiety. Furthermore, one problem that affects learning environments in LEDCs is the lack of sanitation and clean water. A lot of schools lack clean, separate, private bathrooms, which robs girls in school of privacy and dignity. Many girls in LEDCs drop out of school when they start menstruating or skip school during their period, as they have no privacy to take care of their basic sanitary needs, and fear getting harassed for doing so. In addition, inadequate sanitation causes bad healths thus leads to diseases and ill of students in both gender. The effect of disease illness involves students' concentration and ability to learn, even worse, it may cease students from attending schools. Organizations such as the School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) project Thus, programs meant to increase women's literacy rates should ensure that girls can feel safe in school, and that they deserve to be there.

History of Girl's Education

The status of women and women's education has changed drastically over time.

Global Female Education Trends

For most of history, education for women was not a priority, and was prohibited in some cultures. While some females were able to receive some basic primary education, many were not allowed to go to school while boys were. In Western culture, only women born into rich families were allowed to receive private tutoring, but even that was focused on training for women's domestic duties, and they were not allowed to go to the same schools as boys. After World War I and World War II, women began obtaining freedoms that they had not had before. This was because many areas in the world acknowledged that while the men were at war, the women took on the jobs the men left open at home, including dealing with money and the economy, which had been restricted for women before the wars. Women felt empowered after proving themselves capable of handling the home front during wartime, showing that they were not inferior. Since then, the education rates for women and girls have been rising in many, but not all, parts of the world. In 2000, after the adoption of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), enrollment rates of students in primary schools increased, especially the number of girls. Literacy rates of females have also increased globally.

Despite the continuing rise of education rates of females in most parts of the world, they have been declining in other areas. With the ongoing armed conflicts in the Middle East, for example, more females are being pulled out of school. Safety is an issue for schoolgirls in conflict zones. Terrorist groups such as the Taliban have spoken against women's education and kidnapped schoolgirls in conflict zones, and many girls who escaped to rural areas are hindered by increased poverty and decreased access to schools.

Major countries and organizations involved

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO has been working on combating gender inequality. It supports and promotes the education of women and girls as a way to create sustainable development.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

In 2013, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) published a selection of literacy programmes with a particular focus on women

Sub-Saharan Africa

Most of the world's illiterate women (27.1 million) lives in this region. In recent years, a number of countries in this region have begun implementing effective literacy programs for women, some of which have been successful. These include "Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP)" in Ethiopia, "Economic Empowerment for Adolescent Girls (EPAG) Literacy Strengthening Programme" in Liberia, "Promoting Women's Literacy in Angola and Mozambique" in Mozambique, "Mother and Child Education Programme (MCEP)" in Nigeria, and "The Tostan Community Empowerment Program" in Senegal. These are focused educating women in the listed countries and helping them improve their job prospects,. For example, the Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme in Ethiopia focused on literacy, vocational training, and entrepreneur/business skills training, and aimed to decrease poverty amongst women in rural areas. The Mother and Child Education Programme (MCEP) in Nigeria focused on family-based education in two languages (English and mother tongue), child rearing skills, and livelihood skills to help mothers be able to better provide for their children.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 18, 1979	Adoption of Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by UN General Assembly (UNGA). The mandate of the Committee is to watch over the progress of implementation of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
October, 1982	Creation of Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
1992	The official document of 40 chapters of Agenda 21 was written by the UN. It includes paths to sustainability which included the Education for Sustainable Development(ESD) Section.
September 1995	The Fourth World Conference on Women was held and resulted in the issuance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This plan encourages women and girls to use their rights, receive an education, participate in decision-making, and receive equal pay for equal amounts of work.
October 10, 2014	Malala Yousafzai awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions to the fight to secure girls' education in Pakistan
September 25, 2015	The Sustainable Development Goals are adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 25 September 2015 (**A/RES/70/1**)
- Literacy for life: shaping future agendas, 24 January 2017 (**A/RES/71/166**)
- United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all, 11 February 2009 (**A/RES/63/154**)
- Education for all, 12 December 1997 (**A/52/634**)
- Agreed conclusions on access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work, 22 February – 4 March and 14 March 2011, (**CSW55**)

- Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women, 22 July 2003, **(A/RES/2003/44)**

Possible Solutions

Solutions to this issue should primarily focus on the factors that are hindering women's education today. These include availability, safety, affordability, and cultural obstacles, among others.

The availability of learning opportunities for women is the most straightforward step towards resolving this issue, and is based in ensuring that women and girls in all regions have access to some means of education, whether in the form of physical classrooms or online or through otherwise distributed learning materials. These solutions would be directed towards girls in rural areas, conflict areas, or other areas of poverty that do not have schools, and could include creative educational methods besides the traditional classroom for cases where that would be impossible.

Creating a better learning environments can also be included as one of the solutions. Literacy programs need safe classroom environments. This would entail physical protection for those in conflict zones and dangerous areas, as well as regulations within schools to decrease bullying and discrimination. A good learning environments motivates and encourages females to educate and learn. For those in conflict zones, physical classrooms will have to be far from dangerous areas and heavily guarded, and if that is not possible, learning over the internet or books and papers that can be distributed individually can be a temporary step towards a long-term solution when an educational facility and staff can be secured. These can also be useful for girls who live in rural areas who might not be able to travel to go to school.

Regardless of the quality of learning environment, a great amount of women are illiterate because they cannot afford an education. Programs directed at helping people who cannot afford an education can collaborate with NGOs and governments to provide financial aid, or rely on volunteers, donations, and fundraising campaigns to provide cheap learning opportunities.

One of the hardest aspects of this issue to tackle would be cultural obstacles, as unless the mindsets of populations in certain countries are changed, gender equality and equal education opportunities is unlikely. This can be addressed through plans for conventions or conferences to discuss women's role in society and education, and the promotion of female leadership roles to inspire women worldwide to take a more active role in securing their own future through education.

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Forum: Goal 5: Gender Equality

Issue: Enhancing the use of technological development to promote the empowerment of women

Chair: Yan Ying Mor and Mayte Romero

Introduction

Humans currently live in the Information or Digital Age, where our daily lives rely heavily on technology and we continuously innovate them with the aim of increasing the convenience and efficiency of daily activities. The goals that come with developing technology can also be expanded to solving social issues, such as gender

inequality. The development of technology can provide forums for conversations on the empowerment of women and promotes the freedom of expression, a human right guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It can also to empower women in the household; technologies that reduce the time spent on household chores can open women and girls up to more opportunities in the workplace and allow for time to be allocated to their education.

Moreover, traditionally, according to societal gender norms, females are confined to the domestic sphere and their duties are limited to household chores. However, the empowerment of women in economic, political, and public lives is, as former Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon stated, “not only a basic human right – it is a social and economic imperative”. 95% of the jobs in the world requiring the use of technology (According the International Telecommunication Union [ITU]); however the STEM industry, is heavily dominated by males. With a lack of representation of women, comes a lack in products and services that address the needs of 50% of the population. Thus, the inclusion of females in the technological fields and the enhancement of technological development dedicated to the cause of empowering females, the gap of inequality can be reduced and the world hopefully reach the Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality by 2030.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender Equality

According to UN Women, gender equality refers to the “equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.”

Empowerment of Women

Promoting and opening opportunities for the participation of women in all aspects of public and private life including sectors such as but not limited to politics and the economy. It is essential to note that the empowerment of women does not put them above men, but aims to achieve equal rights for all genders.

Gender/Sexual Division of Labor

The allocation of work and labor amongst a population based upon gender roles, or what capabilities are expected of a person depending on their assigned gender/sex. An example of a gender or sexual division of labor would be that men tend to handle physically heavier tasks or jobs that are often times more dangerous. While on the other hand, woman generally tend to handle domestic duties or take jobs that have a regular office hours so that their schedules can be compatible with the additional duties of caring for their children.

Technological Development

The advancement, growth, or innovation of technology, which is defined by oxford dictionary as “the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes”.

STEM

The field of studies that includes: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

A form of information technology. ICT enables the acquirement of information through telecommunications such as cell phones, internet, satellite, and bluetooth.

General Overview

Expanding opportunities for Women in Technology

In the world, women hold only 28.8% of the occupations related to scientific research and development. The lack of participation of women in the technological fields is largely influenced by gender roles, as they are often seen as less knowledgeable in the STEM. However, if more opportunities are opened in their education systems, and discrimination in the current workforce is addressed, the gender gap can be lessened.

Educational opportunities

The American Association of University Women study of 1,226 female science professionals found that girls do demonstrate interest in the sciences at a young age, but are discouraged due to antagonistic, critical behavior in many math and science departments. In order for women to gain more access to the technological fields, states must establish comprehensive education systems with subjects that encompass all aspects of STEM, liberal, visual, and performing arts, and give students the option to choose their paths. To reduce the gender gap, organizations such as the Global Fund for Women help girls gain access to computer training programs and technical skills building classes through their work with local organizations and schools. Some improvements have been observed over time in reducing the gender gap in science in secondary education 14 out of 17 countries that participated in a worldwide survey had a gender gap in science in 2015, compared to only one in 1995, however, there is still a long way to go.

Job Opportunities

In the majority of the world, fewer women than men are in paid employment, with only around 50 percent of working-age women participating in the labor force. The role of the breadwinner is commonly the responsibility of the male in the household, thus, they have greater influence in the household the workplace. The responsibility should be shared with women, so that they have greater opportunities to join the STEM fields. However, in many states, laws and social norms still restrict the ability of women to seek paid employment. Employers who do not offer equal opportunities to women simply ignore a large part of the skilled workforce. The economic and agricultural growth for countries could increase exponentially if women participated in paid employment. Countries must recognize that greater educational opportunities for women can lead to economic growth in developing countries, as an increased human capital will increase the productivity in workplaces. Women who are already in the industry are aware of the concerns and disadvantages of females in the workplace. Accordingly, it is essential for women and men alike to take action and create a more inclusive and accepting environment for all who are interested in pursuing similar careers in the STEM fields and to open more opportunities for women and girls to participate.

How Technological Development in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) empowers women

In less developed countries, poverty is often prominent, meaning citizens do not have access to many life necessities. Moreover, existing systems and infrastructure are mostly ineffective or inefficient, making it harder for the less privileged to break out of the poverty cycle. With these issues, women and girls often do not have the opportunity to carry on their education as their family's basic needs have not been met. Boys are sent to school while girls have to work alongside their mothers in completing domestic chores. Thus, the development of technology to facilitate jobs relating to domestic duties and agriculture can help bridge the gap of gender equality, especially in rural areas.

Agricultural Technologies

The income of the majority of LEDCs' citizens rely heavily on agriculture. An increase in agricultural productivity, through technological development, can decrease the need for the labor of females and ultimately result in the empowerment of women. For example, UN Women has worked to improve technologies in rural areas through the African Women in Technology Initiative (AWIT). The initiative promotes technological innovations that aim to minimize the loss of profit from bad harvests and reduces the time and labor spent on harvesting. Additionally, the AWIT gathers experts, innovators, researchers, and investors in areas including agriculture and business/management to teach basic

management and business skills and to implement permanent programs for them. With these technological improvements and developments, rural women can be empowered both socially, and economically.

Technology to Increase Water and Food Security

In less developed areas, clean water, renewable energy, and nutritional sources are limited. Thus, obtaining such resources is often an important job. Specifically, in Ghana, one of the female's traditional duties is to obtain water and filter it for their family's use, or to sell off for profit. However, the systems that were in place were not cost efficient or effective, despite the availability of cheap filtration devices and equipment within the proximity of their homes. The development and spread of such technologies was enabled through the work of a group of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) students and advisors who also established a permanent program for a few Ghanaian local communities. The group worked towards using locally available materials and filters such as chlorine tablets, and ceramic filters to treat water, and distributed containers to keep water clean and safe to drinking. With these developments, women and girls are able to make their water businesses more cost-efficient and profitable and overall, promotes the empowerment of rural women.

The development of Technological Infrastructure and its relation to Female Empowerment

An increase in the use of technological infrastructure can contribute to the empowerment of women and girls due to the accessibility of technology around the world. Advancing technological infrastructure can be conducted through ways such as digitizing school and financial resources, and the development of digital services whether it's by Multinational Corporations (MNCs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), or governments.

Technology, Learning, and Education

As mentioned previously, encouraging women and girls to pursue not only primary level education, but secondary and university level educations is essential to achieving gender equality. However, going to a physical school can be difficult for those in rural areas, or those who are aiming to earn a degree while caring for household duties or when they have a part time/full time job. Thus, technology can act as an aid for learning. If devices are invested in by a community, through their own efforts or through sponsorship by relevant organizations, the use of online resources such as online textbooks can in the

long term reduce the costs spent on education. Furthermore, participants may select courses from a wide range of subjects through online programs offered by schools and universities, allowing for education to be pursued while carrying out other obligations.

Banking

The growth in use of ICTs has allowed for banking services to be available through mobile devices or online. This offers a stable and secure banking system for families to manage financial transactions while also providing a chance for females to take part in financial matters. Women in less developed areas can also gain access to microfinances, an informal system which allows microcredit loans and insurance to be provided to areas without access to proper banking services. Microfinancing is a known tool that breaks the poverty cycle as women and girls are able to take loans to start businesses and ultimately to become female entrepreneurs to support their families.

Social Welfare and Healthcare

Technological development in the healthcare system has greatly benefited women and girls around the world. Sanitary products that aid with menstrual hygiene, mobile applications that track menstrual cycles, and all other products that ease the process of menstruation are continuously being innovated to best accommodate the needs of the users; the development of these products and services not only empower women by addressing their needs, but also generates conversations about periods, which is a taboo that needs to be addressed to ultimately achieve gender equality. In LEDCs, females are often the ones who are infected with contagious diseases due to their role as caregiver in the family. Developments in technology in healthcare to prevent the spread of disease such as Ebola and STDs must also be addressed to reduce the number of humans affected by them. Also, in LEDCs, pregnancy services are usually not readily accessible to them, which leads to a higher infant and maternal mortality rate. So, technology related to helping women during pregnancy needs to be developed while keeping cost in mind. Therefore, the incorporation of technology in the healthcare system of countries is essential to the empowerment of women.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
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September 3 rd , 1981	The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is instituted.
September 4 th 1995 – September 15 th 1995	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Fourth World Conference on Women, nation-states met to develop a foundation for action with the agenda of female empowerment.
July, 2010	UN Women, the UN organization devoted to the goal gender equality and female empowerment, was founded by the UN General Assembly.
September 28 th – October 1 st , 2010	Expert Group Meeting on Gender Science and Technology organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) along with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
January 1 st , 2016	The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including the fifth Goal on Gender Equality was adopted by member-states of the UN
September, 2017	The publication of UN Women's <i>Making Innovation and Technology Work For Women</i> detailing their work for females in those fields.
July to present, 2017- 2018	The development of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 that aims towards achieving the SDG of Gender Equality through means including technological development.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

UN Women is currently managing multiple innovation and technology related projects to empower women through data collection, blockchain technologies, virtual skills schools, platforms for women to obtain data on increasing agricultural productivity. However not many committees in the UN has passed resolutions specifically pertaining to using technological development to empower women. The following UN documents are primarily focused on women in technology and its development:

- Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women, 2003, (2003/44)
- Resolution on the Science and Technology for Development, 2011, (2011/17)

Possible Solutions

To achieve gender equality, women and girls need to have equal access to technology in their education programs as such skills will be carried with them to the workplace. More opportunities for women and girls should be opened at schools, such as through the promotion of robotics programs or offering more higher level STEM classes to all students. Not only must there be options to choose from in the aforementioned fields, the perpetuating gender norms and restrictions that women and girls face should be openly communicated and promoted through digital forums and other forms of technology and social media.

Technological development can occur both in less economically developed and more economically developed countries. To empower women in rural areas, the use of technology to reduce labor in agriculture and water will allow for greater productivity and the empowerment of women in the household. In order to advance the technological skills of women and girls, governments can subsidize schools that specialize in teaching such skills, such as learning to operate circuit boards to power lights through solar technology, and programming/coding. From these experiences and programs, females will be able to use the knowledge they have gained to help their local communities and will lead to them becoming greater entrepreneurs and businesspeople.

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