

2nd BILMUN
United Nations Conference
Study Guide



UN WOMEN

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Winter 2023
Kusadasi - Turkey



About the Committee

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress. The Third Committee is expected to consider a similar number of draft resolutions during the present session of the General Assembly.



Topic Background

Historically, women have not had the same access to property as men and even opportunity for employment outside the home. This has put women at a unique disadvantage in their local and the global economy. The obstacles to economic empowerment for women revolve around addressing three main issues: legal restrictions, vulnerable employment, and expansion of key industries and positions to women.

While part of the issue encompasses pushing women to take risks and “lean in,” a huge obstacle in solving the issue includes lifting restrictions in the law. These women may already want to take advantage of property ownership or new fields of employment but are unable to do so because of legal barriers. Legal restrictions include land and inheritance rights, access to credit, and ensuring safe migration.

In some instances, women’s economic success is hindered because of the tendency for women to fall into vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment is defined loosely as “low-productivity, informal working arrangements and without adequate social protection.” In 2012 the International Labor Organization found that 50.4% of women worldwide were in vulnerable employment positions compared to 48.1% of men.

While there is roughly a 2% gap between women and men worldwide, by region the gap usually increases. In North Africa, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia the gaps are 23.6%, 15%, 14.9%, and 9% respectively. Although women are extremely important in food security, UN women encourages women to find employment outside of the agricultural sector. Between 1990 and 2010, the rate of women working outside of agriculture increased from 35% to 40%. Although this is progress, 60% of women still work in agriculture. As well, women hold only 25% of senior management positions worldwide. By encouraging women to find diverse employment, they will stimulate the economy



Past Actions



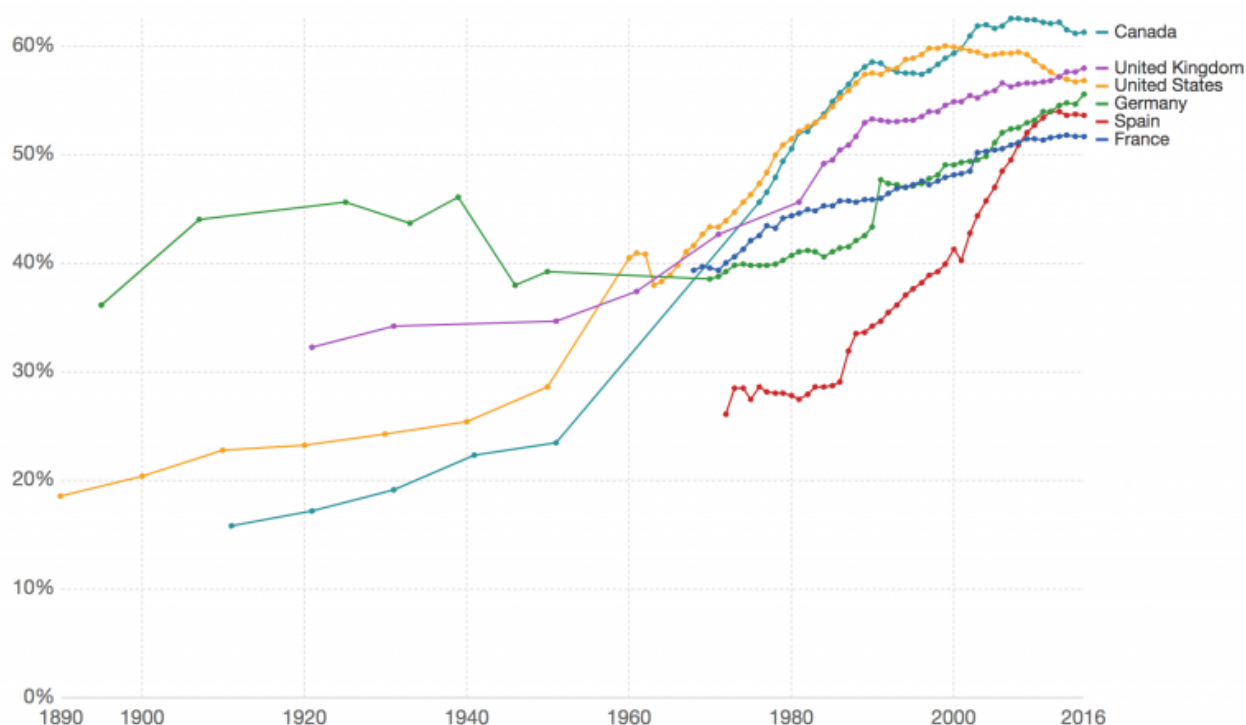
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the most important international treaty to help empower women in labor and the workforce. The convention defines discrimination against women and outlines a plan of national action for each nation to eradicate it. The only countries that have not ratified the convention include Iran, Palau, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tonga, and the United States. The Convention is controversial among the previous nations and others whom have previously ratified. For example, the Convention also does not discuss maternity leave and benefits as a special protection. This convention offers a plan for countries to implement legal protection for women's economic success. The UN and the international community have taken various actions to support CEDAW. One of the most important international initiatives has been the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight goals to lift the world out of poverty by 2015. Goal #3 is to "Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women," specifically by eliminating "gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015." Since 2000, developing countries have made large



efforts to achieve the MDGs and Goal #3, and developed countries have assisting developing countries in making these efforts. In addition to the work of the UN and governments, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) help to promote the economic empowerment of women, specifically through lending money. The Micro-Loan Foundations (MLF), based in the United Kingdom, grants small loans to women living in Africa. MLF estimated that in 2012 it lent nearly £4.1 million in micro loans to women in Africa. According to MLF, “clients who take successive loans from us can expect an average improvement of 9.5% after 12-18 months at the \$1.25/day line.” Women make up 70% of the world’s poor. Not just this program, but micro-loan programs in general are criticized. Because these loans often go to vulnerable populations in poverty ridden and conflict areas, the returns on the investments are low, especially compared to Western standards. This program provides women with loans to start businesses in their communities, but more education is needed for these women in order to properly succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Long-run perspective on female labor force participation rates

Proportion of the female population ages 15 and over that is economically active. Data is available for OECD member countries, as well as for non-member countries publishing statistics in OECD.stats.



Source: Our World In Data based on OECD (2017) and Long (1958)

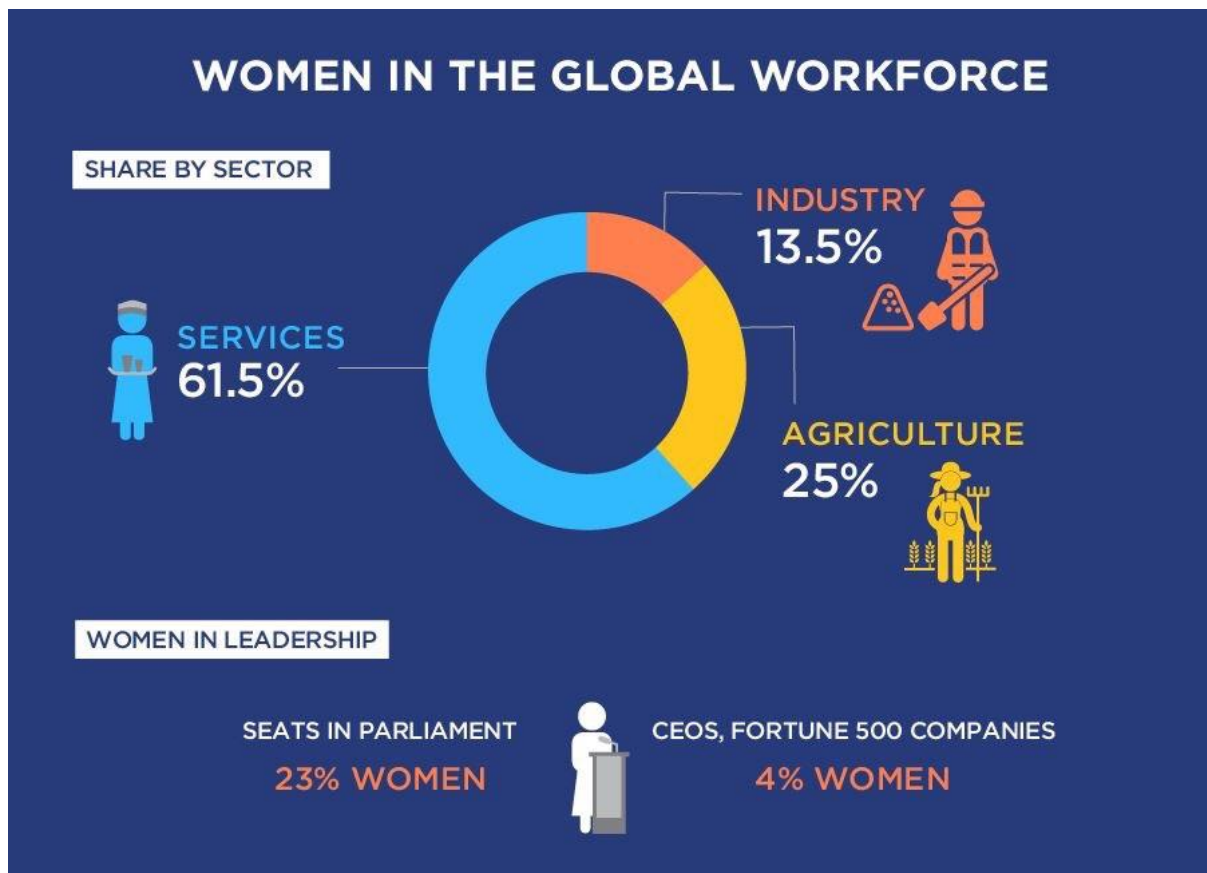
OurWorldInData.org/female-labor-force-participation-key-facts - CC BY-SA

Note: For some observations prior 1960, the participation rate is taken with respect to the female population 14 and over. See sources for details.



Possible Solutions

The United Nations' commitment to gender equality began with its founding Charter. Article I specifies "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. In order to adequately uphold the UN's core values, this committee will attempt to empower women in economic development in order to respect human rights and further economic development.



The UN also has a commitment to eradicating poverty. As stated above, the three main facets of the issue the committee should address include the following:

- **Legal Restrictions:** What type of property rights do women possess in your country? How does this compare to other leading countries in the region and world? Solutions for this sub-issue include amending legal codes, strengthening property laws, expanding access to credit, creating infrastructure to facilitate safe migration, and placing pressure on countries slow to implement these laws.



- **Vulnerable Employment and Poverty:** What vulnerable jobs do many women have? What is your country's poverty rate for women? Do women have equal access to employment in your country? Solutions for this sub-issue include micro-loans, better hiring practices, and addressing vulnerable jobs.
- **Expansion of Key Industries and Positions:** What is the success rate for women in small business in your country or region? Do women have an equal shot for high management positions in your country? Solutions for this sub-issue include leadership programs, locating women steady employment out of agriculture, etc. This committee is challenged with upholding those values and creating a plan to empower women in the global economy.



Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- How are women treated in your country? Are they treated equally to men? Do they have the same rights not just on paper, but in practice?
- What can be done to improve gender-balance in high-level roles in government and private sectors? How can we make sure that more women can participate in decision-making processes?
- Are women safe in your country? Does their economic status make them vulnerable? How can this be solved? What measures can be taken to ensure their independence?

Further Research

- UN Women Watch
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/women_and_the_economy_3006.htm
- UN Women: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdgmomentum/http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum/>
- International Center for Research on Women: <http://www.icrw.org/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>



References

UN Women: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum/>

<http://leanin.org/>

ILO http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_195447.pdf

UN Women: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum/>

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml>

MLF 2012 Annual Review [www.microloanfoundation.org.uk/Files/2012 annual review.PDF](http://www.microloanfoundation.org.uk/Files/2012%20annual%20review.PDF)

<http://www.un.org/rights/poverty/poverty1.htm>