

Gymnasium Haganum Model United Nations

Preventing and reducing the adverse effects of climate change on vulnerable communities

Commission on the Status of Women

Strengthening Women's Participation in Politics



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Gymnasium Haganum, The Hague



Forum: Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
Issue: Strengthening Women's Participation in Politics
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Introduction

In modern day society women are still excluded from national and local decision making, struggling for their voices to be heard. Women's participation in politics is restricted as seen through a lack of women in leadership positions, but also through the underrepresentation of them as voters. There are many obstacles and factors, such as social, cultural, economic, and political, that prevent women from participating in politics, and often are overlooked by governments.

Strengthening women's participation in politics is the key to achieving gender equality and female empowerment, and is necessary to ensure an inclusive, accountable democracy. An inclusive democracy consists of the representation of all views, in order to satisfy the interests of all, and is crucial for an effective functioning government. Failing to give a voice to women weakens the democratic legitimacy and credibility.

This issue is specifically related to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The targets specifically related to the issues are 5.1 and 5.5, which are to: "End discrimination against women and girls," and to "Ensure full participation in leadership and decision making." SDG 5 relates to the issue as a whole as it discusses the issues of gender based discrimination in practice and unequal access of opportunities for women, and the importance of gaining equal balance of distribution of power in decisions.

This research report will discuss the many preventative barriers that pose an issue, and address underlying issues of exclusion with potential solutions.



Definition of Key Terms

Gender parity

In the context of politics and gender equality, gender parity refers to the equal distribution of access to opportunities, regardless of gender.

Less Economically Developed Country

A Less Economically Developed Country (LEDC) can be identified through its economy, poor infrastructure, and low GDP. Typically the people have low incomes, and have less access to healthcare, education, and other services. Typically birth rates are high and there is a high death rate. Due to the lower quality of life expectancy is lower compared to a More Economically Developed Country (MEDC).

Role Model Effect

The role model effect is using leading by example to motivate and encourage others to pursue a specific path, or go against harmful stereotypes. It is described as “breaking down gender stereotypical beliefs and empowering individuals.” The role model effect is especially influential to women in the smaller communities who lack exposure.

Women’s Suffrage

Women’s suffrage is the right of women to vote. In the past up until the 21st century most women were not allowed to vote, excluding their opinion and secluding them to housework.

Background Information

Positive Outcomes

By strengthening women’s participation in politics it is believed that there would be many benefits for whole communities, such as increased cooperation across parties and



ethnic lines. In governments with more women in power it has been noted that there is an increased prioritisation for social issues, such as health, education, and parental leave, which are all necessary for countries economic growth and development

It also has been noticed that there is a positive relationship with female voter turnout, female political participation, and public service responsiveness, as a result of the presence of women in decision making. It is believed that an increase in women in parliamentary presence could have the role model effect, by normalizing women being in positions of power, specifically LEDCs.

Barriers

One of the main barriers for strengthening women's participation in politics is from a general lack of equality of opportunities and encouragement. Capacity gaps exist internationally, such as women less likely to have the education and resources to become leaders and obtain positions of power. Many governments have identified that in order to solve this issue there should be equal opportunity to access political structures and positions of influence.

In many countries women's participation in politics is restricted, which includes attaining leadership positions. This is a result of structural barriers, such as discriminatory laws. In order to eradicate the many preventative barriers, such as internal ones present in party regulations or national legislations, governments must tackle systemic and systematic discrimination and marginalization of women

Social norms have a negative effect, as this can create women candidates who are household profiles, tending towards marriage and having goals of having a family. This is specifically prevalent in LEDCs. In our society positions of power and leadership are often seen as male dominated fields, which is perpetuated by stereotypes. This has a very harmful effect as women then feel confined by these predetermined 'rules' which are further enforced by the rest of society.

Another issue is that other women who have had positions of power in politics have encountered sexist remarks, and also experienced psychological and physical violence as a result of their position.



Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Rwanda

Roughly 61% of Rwanda's parliamentary seats are occupied by women, leading as an example for other countries to increase women's participation in politics. They achieved this by proposing in 2003 a 30% quota for women in elected positions. Although Rwanda has managed to increase participation, there are still issues regarding equality as many women still find their competency and capabilities questioned. This brings to light the importance of building the capacity of women leaders and countering the negative attitudes toward women in politics.

Sweden

Like many other nordic countries, Sweden has been regarded as a highly progressive nation in terms of many political issues such as gender equality and women's rights. Already in the 80's they established laws making gender discrimination in the workplace illegal. Sweden has adopted voluntary gender quotas, which each party can adopt to their own discretion. Their parliament currently is made up of 46% women.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan ranks worldwide as one of the lowest on the UN Gender Equality Index, as a result of decades of conflict combined with regressed gender norms. Currently under the Taliban rule, women are even more oppressed, being deprived of human rights such as an education and the right to vote. In relation to women's participation in politics, their rights have regressed, and as has their access to opportunities for leadership positions.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1800's	At the beginning of the 1800's some women and people sought out to change the voting laws to allow women to vote. This was the beginning of the Women's Suffrage movement.



1948	The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which voting rights for women were first introduced into international law
1960s	Inspired by the civil rights and anti war movements, women began to protest and fight actively for their rights. This was one of the key moments in history when women began participating in politics, delving into the possibilities of attaining positions of power and leadership.
2015	The UN establishes the SDG Programme, which includes targets to tackle equal rights and ensuring equal rights

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979
- Women in decision-making bodies, 19 March 1992 (E/CN.6/RES/36/3)
- The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women, 22 August 2011(E/RES/2011/5)
- Women and political participation, 10 February 2004 (A/RES/58/142)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women, 23 February 1994 (A/RES/48/107)

Possible Solutions

There have been previous attempts in order to try and resolve the issue, especially after the surge of women's rights movements. It is essential to note that there is not a debate



whether women are capable of being in positions of leadership and power, but instead people should advocate against and deter gender stereotypes by providing women with more opportunities. Possible solutions include:

Tackling Gender Stereotypes

A very important step to take is to take appropriate measures to eradicate prejudices based on ideas of superiority/inferiority of gender stereotypes. One of the most important things is to understand and challenge stereotypes that perpetuate the inequalities in the political field. This includes adopting inclusive approaches to empower women and promoting equal rights in social movements.

Funding Incentivising Party Quotas

One potential solution is to create incentivised quotas for parties to meet, to encourage them to elect more women. This could also include making minimum mandatory quotas. Although this could help there are some issues as this could result in unqualified people coming to positions of power, if the candidates qualifications are not suitable. In order to solve this potential issue governments could provide training for members of political parties.

Supporting Women's Leadership Programmes

Another solution is to create more programmes that encourage young women to develop their leadership skills and offer them more opportunities for things such as public speaking, self assertion, and political campaigning



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