

History of CEDAW and Women Empowerment

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Abstract

The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a burning issue all over the world including India. Many agencies of united nations in their report have emphasized that gender issue is to be given utmost priority. It is held that women now cannot be asked to wait for anymore equality. India has ratified various international convention and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of 'The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW) in 1993.

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Introduction

Woman involvement is the term used to refer to the empowerment of women in all the spheres of life example education, employment, health, safety etc. It is fundamental to the economic and social progress of the nation as well as that of the world. As long as gender discrimination exists and equated society and sustainable development cannot be achieved.

Women's empowerment can be defined as

- to promoting women's sense of self-worth,
- their ability to determine their own choices,
- and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

It is closely associated with female empowerment that is a fundamental human right which is also a key in achieving a more peaceful, prosperous world.

In Western countries, female empowerment is often aligned with definite phases of the women's rights movement in history. This movement tends to be split into three waves, the first phase beginning in the 19th and early 20th century where suffrage was a key feature. The second wave of feminism started in the 1960s which included the sexual revolution and the role of women in society. And the third wave feminism is often seen as beginning in the 1990s.

In recent years, women's empowerment and promoting women's rights is emerging as a part of a major global movement and is continuing to break new ground. Celebration of International Women's Empowerment Day globally is an example. Despite the fact that a great deal of progress has been made, the women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

Gender equality is a basic human right, and it is also essential to having a peaceful, prosperous world. But girls and women continue to face crucial challenges all around the world. Women are typically underrepresented and reduced in power and decision-making roles. This can be very well highlighted from the unequal pay they receive for equal work, and they very often face legal and other barriers that affect their opportunities at work.

The gender disparity is more significant in the developing world, where girls and women are often seen as less valuable than boys. The girls are often made to do domestic work at home or get married for a dowry before they are adults instead of sending them to school. As many as 12 million underage girls get married every year. (<https://www.worldvision.com.au/womens-empowerment/#principles>)

Even though some progress is being made in different parts of the world, but there is still a great deal of revolution and transformation to be done to eliminate and deal with the problems of gender inequality. It is always said that empowering women is essential to the well-being of the entire family viz it could be health and social development of families, communities and countries. If a woman is living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, she can contribute her skills to the workforce in her highest potentials and can also help achieve her family in all means of their respective lives be it husband or children. This in turn will help to develop sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

The focus for this empowerment can be made through education. Girls who are educated can pursue and earn meaningful work and contribute to their country's economy. This in turn can reduce four times the likelihood of them getting married young.

To empower women and girls the United Nation has been struggling since 1947. This can be reflected from the following history of UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which later on development conventions and laws.

A Brief Historical Review

After the founding of the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) first met at Lake Success, New York, in February 1947. It was represented by 15 government representatives who were all women. From its commencement, the Commission was supported by a unit of the United Nations which later became the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in the UN Secretariat.

From the year 1947 to the year 1962, the Commission concentrated on setting standards and formulating international conventions to bring change in discriminatory legislation and foster global awareness about women's issues. In addition to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the CSW successfully debated against references to "men" as a synonym for humanity, and succeeded in introducing new, more inclusive language.

To understand the legal rights of women globally, the commission needed an analytical data. Extensive research was carried out which gave and produced a detailed analysis of each country gave a clear picture of status of women in political and legal standing. This over a time period became instrumental in drafting human rights policy and laws.

To bring about necessary upliftment, the commission drafted the international conventions on women's rights such as 1953 the conventions on the political rights of women. This convention was the first international which aimed to recognize and protect the political rights of women. In the 1957, the first international agreements on women's rights in marriage was drafted which was Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, and the 1962 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages. The commission also focused on and contributed to Convention

concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, which protected the principle of equal pay for equal work (the International Labour Organization's 1951).

In 1963, the UN assembly approached the commission to consolidate standards on women's rights and draft a Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, this was adopted in 1967 by the Assembly. This was followed by Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979.

Simultaneously, as research and data were getting collected, the attention was drawn through wards the developing countries rural development, agricultural work, family planning, and scientific and technological advances. The developing countries largely faced issues were women were disproportionately affected by poverty. Therefore, the UN system expanded its technical assistance to further the advancement of women in developing countries.

In 1972, to mark its 25th anniversary, the commission proposed 1975 to be designated as 'The International Women's Year'. The aim was to draw attention to the importance of women's equality with men and their contributions to development and peace. The year had remarkable addresses and conferences related to women empowerment like

- the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City,
- followed by the 1976–1985 UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.
- world conferences took place in Copenhagen in 1980 and
- Nairobi in 1985.

Followed by this New UN offices dedicated to women were established, particularly the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

As part of follow-up to the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, in 1987, the Commission took the lead in coordinating and promoting the UN system's work on economic and social issues for women's empowerment. Its agenda and efforts shifted to promoting women's issues as cross-cutting and part of the mainstream of society and development, rather than as separate issues of concerns.

During this period for the first time, the Commission also brought to forefront the issues of violence against women in international debates. These efforts and struggle resulted in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which was adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993. In 1994, a UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women was appointed by the Commission on Human Rights, to find its causes and consequences, with a mandate to research, investigate and report on every aspects of violence against women.

In 2011, the four parts of the UN system mentioned that is DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI and UNIFEM, merged to become UN Women, now the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

This paper explains why CEDAW is important to youth, describes CEDAW's impact in advancing gender equality and human rights for women and girls around the world, and summarizes the articles of CEDAW. Woman involvement today has become the most discussed topic around the world. In basic terms it means to diminish the gender gap and providing equal opportunity and rights to men and women. Women have always been subjected to acts of physical violence and mental torture for centuries. They are raped

physically, assaulted, subject to mental harassment etc. This suppression of women in all spheres of life is a major hindrance to the progress of nation.

The realization of women's human rights is at the center of UN woman's work. United woman is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global campaign for women and girls united women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitor implementation of the convention under elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. CEDAW one of the core international human rights treaties of the United nation treaty system. CEDAW was adopted by UN General Assembly on December 19, 1979 coming into force tacit territory on December 3rd 1981. It is one of the most broadly endorsed human rights treaties as of April 2014 having been ratified by 188 countries. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international legal instrument that expect countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all sphere of their and promotes women's and girls' equal rights.

1. The CEDAW convention's Article 1 restricts any distinction, exclusion or barrier created on the basis of ex, which would nullify the enjoyment to have and exercise rights by women same and equal as men. therefore, the committee has segmented with the help of its General Recommendation, an idea of substantive equality which would take in account the difficulties faced in history and current differences between the two genders faced by girls and women in their daily life.

It can be noted that the CEDAW convention won't be effective with only the absence of discriminatory legal framework, it would also need the addition of laws and policies that would not be discriminatory in effect. this means that the CEDAW Convention requires substantive and formal equality, non-discrimination and empowerment of women, thus we need measures and action to address direct and indirect discrimination to achieve substantive equality between men and women. The CEDAW Convention provides critical normative standards that are naturally linked to the Agenda 2030 of sustainable development.

The undertaking of such a legal framework which would allow complete equal right to women under the CEDAW convention must underpin the principle of "no one must be left behind"

2. The identification of gaps, risk, challenges and areas which require attention The SDG targets are parallel with human rights standards, though they are formed explicitly in the language of human rights, yet some gaps still exist. The major problem between the Agenda 2030 and the CEDAW standard concerns with sexual and reproduction health right and lack of reference to the minority LGBTQIA. Therefore, it should be critically noted and marked that the target of CEDAW is consistent with all issues presented by all the people in the committee.

To meet with the urgent attention needed at the global level, the important targets which are implemented must contain the following:

- All forms of violence on women and girls (in public and in private) must be eliminated. this includes trafficking, domestic violence and other exploitation.
- Eliminate all forms of practices which are harmful for females such as early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation.

According to the CEDAW Concluding Observations made after the consideration of state parties' reports, which are country specific, the priority for the achievement of women's rights and for attaining gender equality differs in every country and for different groups of women. As a result, the Committee advises applying its Concluding Observations to SDG 5 and the gender equality goals incorporated into the other SDGs. This strategy might serve as a basis for exercising rights and assessing the gender equality implications of public policy. By the time the global community endeavours to reach the full implementation of the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” in the next decade, the committee’s observation will still be in use to keep an eye in check and assess the real situation of practice of human rights for women.

3. Valuable lessons learned on ensuring that no one is left behind:

From the previous experiences, we have seen that the fight to discrimination and violence includes a strong role and partnership between international and national and civil society organizations, which also consist human right defenders. The women’s and human right association can be very critical and strategic in advancing in SDG 5 as well as across all other goals related like ending poverty, protecting the environment, reducing inequalities and promoting a healthy and peaceful society for sustainable development. Enabling the work of CSOs and WHRDs, including by ensuring fruitful participation in the development and monitoring of the related agendas and policies, which should be the priority for implementing the Agenda 2030 to ensure we stick to our principle and no one is left behind. National and international institution should keep in check that the CSOs and WHRDs are protected from gender threats, violence or any type of inconvenience they can face because of their work on challenging the long going patriarchal structures and gender norms.

4. Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of this principle:

In the past decade, due to increase in extremism, escalating violent conflicts, increase and deepening of economic crises, drop in food availability, effects of climate change have intensified vulnerability and increased inequalities, including gender inequalities. Furthermore, as it can be seen in the Middle East with their refugee crises, the situation of female refugees and internally displaced women is particularly harsh and difficult. Such emerging problems and issues can have a heavy impact on the main principle that no female should be left behind. Thus, they should be duly considered about the global follow up review of the Agenda 2030. The attention should also be diverted towards newly emerging ways and patterns of discrimination and violence against women in countries with conflict situation and refugee flow and instability.

The GR 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict circumstances and the GR 32 on the gender-related features of refugee status, asylum, nationality, and statelessness of women are two substantive General Recommendations that the Committee has dedicated to these particular concerns. The Committee is satisfied that these GRs could offer the ECOSOC insightful direction.

5. Matters where political supervision by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is required:

Laws that give power to make sure that men and women practice equal rights provides an important base for demanding and achieving equality in practice. It can stand as a central reference point for political and cultural struggles and could be a key driving factor for making changes in social norms and create positive

attitudes. a substantive understanding of gender equality can be undertaken to serve as vision as well as an agenda for seeking advance rights for women in today's challenging society. Substantive equality is main concerned with the results and outcomes of the practices and agendas implemented, unlike formal equality which refers to the adoption of laws and policies that gives equal power to men and women. The monitoring process should be a pathway to address the direct/ indirect discrimination faced by women and girls on daily basis.

6. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress for those at risk of being left behind:

The three basic elements that make up the CEDAW Convention's framework for obligations are the obligation to respect (equality in laws and policies), the obligation to protect (against direct and indirect discrimination), and the obligation to fulfil (to uphold equality and eliminate gender discrimination in the entire sphere of the social and economic life). The "prism" of women's human rights, which serves as the lens through which all instances of gender discrimination must be investigated and remedied, is based on these three guiding principles. The achievement of substantive equality requires action in the three following areas:

- to address the stereotypical thinking, conservative stigma created and violence;
- pointing out the socio-economic problems and disadvantages faced by women;
- strengthening women's agency, participation, position, and voice.

Coordinated public action in all three of these areas has the ability to bring about long-lasting changes in the institutions and structures that prevent women from fully exercising their rights. At every level of society, from households to labour markets and from communities to local, national, and international governance institutions, substantive equality necessitates a fundamental transformation of economic and social institutions as well as the beliefs, norms, and attitudes that shape them.

The degree to which rights of underprivileged and marginalised women and girls are respected should serve as a yardstick for how far substantive gender equality has come. Legal, economic, and social policies must collaborate closely to ensure substantive equality. Incorporating the idea of "ensuring that no one is left behind," well-crafted social policies can boost macroeconomic growth and the post-crisis recovery through redistributive measures that boost employment, productivity, and aggregate demand.

The Women's Empowerment Principles

The Women's Empowerment Principles was formed in collaboration between the UN Global Compact and UN Women.

The Seven Principles are:

- Principle 1: To support the idea of non-discriminatory environment and to treat all people fairly at work.
- Principle 2: To take good care of health, ensure well-being and safety of all workers irrespective of his gender.
- Principle 3: To create high profile jobs and leadership available for women.
- Principle 4: to publicly report on progress to create gender equality.
- Principle 5: to create more opportunities in education, training and professional development for women.

- Principle 6: for growth of women, implementation of good supply chain, market practices and enterprise development should be initiated.

Individual Role in Empowering Women

A crucial beginning is standing alongside and supporting women. Gender equality underpins all of World Vision's work, and there are lots of wonderful activities you can be involved in to support the rights of women in developing countries. From businesses and schools to homes and communities, women are everywhere.

1. Sponsoring a girl, she is provided with the tools needed for quality education and give her the rights she deserves. This is a key way to empower girls and help them influence their generation.
2. We ourselves can get educated by understanding the current scenarios of females by finding out the issues faced by them, for example child marriage, dowry, no education for girls.

We trust that girls and women who are strong, educated, and empowered can effect change. If women and girls are given a chance to stand up for their rights and fight for their communities will lead to empowerment. Additionally, they are able to advance socially, which they can pass on to subsequent generations. This implies that women's organisations, laws promoting women's empowerment, and women's charity can acquire traction and strengthen the global community.

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