

Research Report | XXV Annual Session

Special Conference 1 on Good Governance

Strengthening women's participation in
politics



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

Alfredo Lira

Forum:	Special Conference 1 on Good Governance
Issue:	Strengthening women's participation in politics
Student Officer:	Alfredo Lira
Position:	President

Introduction

The United Nations has, in the past, set out to help women in a myriad of methods, particularly with the Millennium Development Goals. These development goals related to women's participation in their framework for the complete eradication of epidemics (e.g. AIDS), severe cases of poverty, and a way to progress towards a decline in the child mortality rate, all to have been accomplished by the year 2015. Keeping in mind that not sufficient progress has been made in these fields that will ultimately lead to helping ensure the empowerment of women, it is necessary to reproach this issue from another perspective.

There are still many factors that have failed to allow women's progression in society. It is still very difficult, in many developing nations, for women to receive an equal education to men – there is violence, sexual harassment, abuse, child labor that have indifferently left women in a tough situation to escape from. These are clear failures to develop, not only for women empowerment, but also for society on the whole.

The United Nations, and many of its member states, seeks to strengthen equality between men and women alike. On their own, women are subject to many discriminatory legislation systems, general attitudes and vulgar gender stereotyping.

To provide some words to think over - Emma Watson, The Ambassador for UN Women, stated in 2014:

'How can we effect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?'

Definition of Key Terms

Less Economically Developed Country (LEDC)



LEDC nations are countries in which the average income of individuals is relatively low in comparison to that of individuals from industrial nations. It is a nation that seeks to develop its resources through industrialization.

Political Participation

Political participation is a term that is used when describing equality between men and women – particularly with regards to saying that both genders have the right to vote and run for political elections.

Feminism

To gain equality between men and women, there is a barrier that is commonly referred to as ‘feminism’ that includes political, economical, social, and cultural struggle in the act of reaching equality.

Woman Suffrage

Woman suffrage is, in essence, the right for women to vote and a woman’s right to run for electoral office.

Gender Equality

Gender Equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favored.

Gender Equity

Gender Equity is a set of actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals.

General Overview

The ability to strengthen women’s participation in politics faces many modern day barriers, such as poor treatment of women. For any form of progress on the issue of strengthening women’s participation in politics to be made, it is important that equality is ensured. From this stems a healthy economy of any nation, one that is open to prosper, grow, and flourish with the support of its peoples.



Women in politics are sometimes seen as an unreasonable and impractical scenario – this in itself is a misconception that has grown through our society, one that brings negative connotations. To be able to supersede this crude stereotype, we must first acknowledge men and women as equals (something that many nations still lack to achieve). There is a need for economic growth, there is a need for governments to receive appropriate aid to reach economic growth, and there is need for a foundation and a framework that will help countries uphold their economic stability.

Access to Appropriate Tools

For women to be able to ‘sustain’ themselves in society, they must have access to certain tools. Commonly, these aspects are sought out by governments and this is what ultimately promotes equality between genders.

Access to Financing

There is an unequal access to finances between men and women; this creates a barrier of entry for women on an international scale. Being able to empower women depends on the fact that they must be able to support themselves – their status in society would not as quickly be undermined if they had economic and financial means. This includes financial reinforcement through bank loans to females. However, it is noteworthy that it is essentially the government duty to oversee that every individual has the ability to access financial support (not simply discriminate because of gender).

Access to Appropriate Work Force

For any group, in any part of the world it is common for certain levels of discrimination to take place – poor working conditions, uneven wages, and severe dangers. To ensure empowerment of women (and from there on out, their role in politics), it is necessary for women to meet decent living and working standards, particularly regarding an informal economy. Once again relating back to the Millennium Development Goal, this issue was a target that was not met and it is therefore to approach this issue from an alternate angle.

Access to Educational Systems

Education is one of the most powerful tools that any single individual can possess. A strong education helps to build a strong future. There have been efforts to rectify this particular aspect and create more fair educatory systems, although very few have prevailed. Providing women with education helps break the cyclical situation of poverty, boosting economic growth, helping a country to prosper. When women and men alike have decent

educations, they are able to support themselves and achieve great things – whether it be to strive in a field of study, or be strengthened in politics.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The European Union (EU)

The European Union has been seen to be very keen on tackling the issue of women empowerment in politics, as they have deeply participated in the United Nations commission on the Status of Women. As well as this, the European Union has been a part of several other conferences, including the Third Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society. Essentially, it is important to take into account that the EU is very committed to changing the current hierarchy that society has between men and women in politics, as well as other aspects of our lifestyle.

Rwanda

Rwanda is a major party involved because it is a nation that has a profound belief in the criticalness for a country to have women empowerment amongst politics. Rwanda is currently the nation with the most equal representation of gender in their government.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a very religiously led state. It currently does not allow the participation of women in any political form; it also has very strict regulations that prohibit women from conducting many 'normal' activities of western day-to-day culture. There have been many demands that have asked for reforms of this current political outlook:

In 2005, there was much criticism to the Saudi Arabian nation because of a refuse for women's vote to during the local elections. In 2009, this issue was revisited and put into hold until 2011, in which it was refused and therefore women still do not have the right to vote in this country. Nevertheless, later the same year, it was announced that women will be allowed the opportunity to vote during the next elections (2015).

UN Women

The official name of this organization is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Being established in 2011, it has been working to ensure equality between men and women on a global scale. This organization is governed by



multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure that asserts itself to be taking care of providing policy guidance to governments around the world.

United States of America

The Center for American Women and Politics reports that, as of 2013, 18.3% of congressional seats are held by women, as oppose to only 23% of statewide electoral positions. It is notable that congressional seats have steadily increased; yet statewide elective offices held by women have been decreasing since their peak in 2001 at 27.6%.

In 2001, a study was conducted by M. Margaret Conway (professor at the University of Florida) to explain the continuous of this disparity – she found three solutions: one, sociological and societal norms discourage women from running; two, women less frequently acquire the necessary skills to hold a political leadership positions from nonpolitical activities; three, gate keeping in party politics prevents women from running.

Timeline of Events

To cohesively understand the issue of strengthening women’s participation in politics, it is necessary to understand crucial points in the development of this dilemma:

Date	Description of event
1893	For the first time in history a country has allowed woman’s suffrage – New Zealand. This is a milestone when considering the issue of strengthening women in politics because it shows the recognition of this issue from such a long time period.
1979	The United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) adopted a convention: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. As implied by the title, this convention has the sole purpose of reducing discriminatory policies and making Women more involved with global situations.
1995	Further action to strengthen women equality was taken when The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) was signed.
2000	Seeing the need to further develop progress towards the common goal of empowering women into politics, the United Nations Security Council (UN SC) resolution on Women, Peace, and Security was created. This resolution addressed very specific points under which women’s rights are clearly outlined.
2011	The United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) on Women’s Political

2014 Participation is adopted. It is very useful to take into account that this resolution clearly outlines the points of the current issue at hand.

United Nations Women (UN Women) describe the HeForShe event as ‘ A Solidarity Movement for Gender Equality’. This encourages men to take a stronger stance in empowering women, simply because it has always been women who lead the ‘Women’s Rights’ movements, in a historical context.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

To continue forth with previous resolutions and plans that have been used to solve the issue, there are several aspects listed below. However effective this may have been, Women’s role in politics still needs support:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol **(A/RES/34/180)**
- Resolution on Women’s Political Participation **(A/RES/36/130)**
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security **(S/RES/1325/282000/29)**
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) – This was a plan that, as previously stated, was implemented to increase equality amongst both genders.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There have been, aforementioned, many attempts to address the issue of strengthening women’s role in politics. Many of the attempts have made progress, but this problem is pervasive and continues to damage future development.

There has mostly been work focused on creating gender equality – while this does prove to be a very useful step, there has not been enough done in this field for it to have had a significant effect. When we speak of ‘gender equality’ we are correlating it with equal education, equal legislation, etc. However, it is difficult to make any progress in this field



when there is not always a transparent initiative that will follow through with the actual plan itself or when states do not recognize the philosophy behind equality for genders.

If there is to be sustainable progress forward, it is inevitable for a need in economic growth. This economic growth will stimulate the need for professional workers, the demand for a higher standard of living will increase, and with a prosperous nation follows a more accepting and open culture. This is the idea that is only vaguely addressed by the frameworks that have been implemented in the past, and implementing it with a detailed plan will create a positive effect on women in society.

Possible Solutions

There are always the possible solutions of raising awareness of the issue at hand, to educate people – whether it is by holding local seminars, or by education in a school syllabus. Nevertheless, we want to stray away from these superficial methods and tackled the core of the dilemma that has been presented.

There is the possibility of setting a ‘set number’ of seats in the government (e.g. parliament). This will ensure that there is equal representation of both genders. However, this is not always a favorable solution because it brings with it many misconceptions about how unreasonable it is to select a candidate based on gender.

Another possible solution would be to create an international/regional framework to support the empowerment of women. This is very vague as it stands, it is necessary to create specific points about how such a framework would operate, under whom it will operate, and its specific targets towards progress.

Bibliography

"CAWP Home." *Center for American Women and Politics*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

Dodani, Sunita, and Ronald E. LaPorte. "Brain Drain from Developing Countries: How Can Brain Drain Be Converted into Wisdom Gain?" *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. The Royal Society of Medicine, n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

Butzmann, Dominik. Angela Merkel. Digital image. *CDU*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Aug. 2015.
<<https://www.cdu.de/presse/foto-downloads>>.



"Empowering Women." *Gender Equality*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Enhancing the Role of SMEs in Global Value Chains." (2008): n. pag. Web. 20 June 2015.

The International Convention on Migrant Workers and Its Committee. Geneva, Switzerland: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2005. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Military." *Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Site Tools." *Research*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Special Report: Brain Drain: A Global Problem - Analyst Insight from Euromonitor International." *Analyst Insight from Euromonitor International*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Strengthening Women's Rights and Political Participation." *Strengthening Women's Rights and Political Participation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Cambridge: Proquest LLC, 2007. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Women's Equality Party." *Women's Equality Party*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

"Women's Leadership and Political Participation." *HeadQuarters*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

"The World Health Report 2006 - Working Together for Health." *WHO*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2015.

