



UNITED AMBASSADORS MUN YOUTH ASSEMBLY (MUN-YA)

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS NYC, 22-25 AUGUST 2017
SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS



The MUN Youth Assembly

Second Committee: Education, Youth Development, and Female Empowerment

Distr: General
Date: August 8 2017
Original: English

First Session
Agenda Item 2

The role of education and youth development in the empowerment of girls and advancement of women's leadership in the global economy

Report of the UA-MUN Youth Assembly Secretary General

Introduction:

Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

However, they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies. And, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities.

A discussion about sustainable development is not complete without a conversation on gender equality¹ Since women account for half of any country's talent base, empowering their participation in the workforce greatly enhances productivity and fosters economic growth².(Reuters) In fact, World Bank studies show that development strategies focusing on gender equality see stronger economic growth than gender-neutral strategies. Throughout the world, women represent a substantial, underutilized force for sustainable development. In Asia, for example, women are responsible for 50% of agricultural output, while nearly 80% of the agricultural labor in Africa market is female.

¹ Candice Steven- Are women Key to Sustainable Development? www.bu.edu/pardee/sdi-003-women/www.un.org/esa/dsd April 2010

² http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2011.pdf.

Unfortunately, many of these women lack access to necessary agricultural resources, which, if freely accessible, could decrease global hunger by 12-17%.³

Extreme poverty presents a large obstacle, as women and girls comprise 70% of the 1.3 billion⁴ people living on less than a dollar per day. Empowering women to take part in the workforce is not a simple problem to solve. For many women, there are physical and psychological consequences for entering the workplace – harassment, discrimination, violence and shame⁵ Moreover, women across the globe still require investment in basic health and education.⁶

A crucial part of the solution is getting resources for these working women to access to these working women to access, allowing them to thrive in their economic environments so that they may, in turn, foster the success of local communities. However, the solution must fit both the lifestyles of women and their cultures. For example, in indigenous societies women are custodians of traditional knowledge relating to resource management; providing access to modern technology presents a perfect opportunity⁷ for both empowering local women and encouraging sustainable development.

The strategy for economic empowerment⁸, according to the World Bank is twofold: (i) making the market work for women and (ii) empowering women in the market. Supporting the economic empowerment of women is not just good company policy; it actually benefits the corporate world.

Firms that employ women in leadership positions⁹ have better performance and higher profits. to what might be believed, supporting female employment actually has a positive impact on family life and encourages women to have more children. Countries with family-oriented practices and government funded healthcare have both more working women and higher birth rates than those without gender equality policies, an important consideration for countries with aging populations.

The increase in female employment in developed countries has been aided by a big shift in the type of jobs on offer. Manufacturing work, traditionally a male preserve, has declined, while jobs in the service industries have expanded. This has reduced the demand for manual labor and put the sexes on a more equal footing. Moreover, the developing world also has shifted towards enhanced gender equality and more women now have paid jobs. In the emerging East Asian economies, for every 100 men in the labor force there are now 83 women¹⁰, higher even than the average

³ Africa: Women and Sustainability - Recognizing the Role of Women At Rio+20

⁴ Candice Steven- Are women Key to Sustainable Development? www.bu.edu/pardee/sdi-003-women/www.un.org/esa/dsd/April2010

⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2011.pdf

⁶ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2011.pdf

⁷ <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/3629656a-70f3-4c94-b58f-fd1e7ea2f4dc>

⁸ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/GAPNov2.pdf>

⁹ http://neweconomist.blogs.com/new_economist/2006/04/the_economist_a.html a guide to Womenomics, <https://www.economist.com/printedition/2006-04-15> (under the section Finance and Economics- A guide to womenomics)

in OECD countries. Women have been particularly important to the success of Asia's export industries, typically accounting for 60-80% of jobs in many export sectors, such as textiles and clothing¹¹

Women are becoming more important in the global marketplace not just as workers, but also as consumers, entrepreneurs, managers and investors. In the past women have been subjected to gender roles, through which, females were excluded from the workforce. In turn, this indicates that women were unable to earn an equal living wage to their male counterparts. However, in light of modern practices, women are now fundamental consumers as progress in the human psyche has led to the deconstruction of gender barriers. Surveys suggest that women make perhaps 80% of consumers' buying decisions—from health care and homes to furniture and food.¹²

Women's participation in the global economy is fundamental to sustaining economic growth as female participation in the global economy is vital to sustaining economic growth; women require support in all facets of society. This includes both the social and financial spheres in order to continue progressive change in accordance with human rights discourse. Considering this notion it is imperative that the Youth Assembly discusses how to achieve economic empowerment of women, as women in emerging markets are displaying a clear manifestation of equality as there are many underdeveloped nation states where this reality does not exist.

I. Background

Since the foundation of the United Nations in 1945, the organization has passed several mandates and spearheaded many initiatives to advance women's rights and gender equality. The initiatives created by the General Assembly include the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, both of which aimed to foster the empowerment of women. As a result, in July of 2010, the United Nations General Assembly made the historic decision to create the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women¹³

UN Women is the culmination of “four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality”: the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).¹⁴

UN Women works primarily in the realms of the following:

- Strengthening women's leadership

¹¹ <https://www.economist.com/printedition/2006-04-15> Women in the workforce: Importance of Sex (under the section: leaders)

¹³ <https://www.economist.com/printedition/2006-04-15> Women in the workforce: Importance of Sex (under the section: leaders)

¹² <https://www.economist.com/printedition/2006-04-15> Women in the workforce: Importance of Sex (under the section: leaders)

¹³ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

¹⁴ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

- Political participation and economic empowerment
- Violence against women
- Peace and security
- Humanitarian action
- Governance and national planning
- Sustainable development agenda
- HIV and AIDS also come under the purview of UN Women¹⁵

UN Women also performs a number of critical roles, including supporting inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms, helping 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, and leading and coordinating the UN system's work on gender equality as well as promoting accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.¹⁶

In June 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20, attended by 192 UN member states, welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda, hosts 17 goals premised on achieving sustainable development by the year 2030. In January 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals or Agenda 2030 for Development replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the new universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 Targets to build on what the Millennium Development Goals could not achieve a source of guidance and a framework for future development for all UN Member States.¹⁷

The source of guidance for UN Member States on action for women's empowerment stems from The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995), which launched the concept of gender mainstreaming and flagged 12 areas where urgent action is needed to ensure gender equality and equal opportunities for men and women. It strives for the effective implementation of a global policy framework and blueprint for action for the advancement of women as well as removing all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share of economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making.¹⁸

II. Committee

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal body of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)¹⁹ The CSW is a functional commission reporting to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) on an annual basis.²⁰ Its main priority is to mainstream gender equality within the UN system and link

¹⁵ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

¹⁶ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

¹⁷ Sustainable Development Action Campaign- www.sdgaactioncampaign.org

¹⁸ The Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995, September 15). Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

¹⁹ UN-Women, Commission on the Status of Women, 2015

²⁰ New Zealand, United Nations Handbook 2016-17, 2016, p. 9.

women's empowerment to sustainable development.²¹ Together with the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and civil society actors, the Commission worked to guarantee that the SDGs, adopted during the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, not only included a standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5), but also mainstreamed a gender perspective within all goals.²² CSW and its secretariat, UN-Women, are the most significant international actors working with Member States and civil society in order to create a discrimination-free world where women and girls are able to fully participate in the economic, political, and social spheres of their societies.²³ In 1946, the first efforts by the UN to address women's issues were carried out in a sub-commission under the Commission on Human Rights,²⁴ it became clear that the empowerment of women deserved more.

The Commission on Status of Women in its 61'st Session discussed "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work"²⁵, as well as, reviewed the "challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls (agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session)." The Commission's work for the upcoming years will be centered around the effective implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

III. Present discussions

Empowering women in the economy and closing gender gaps at work are central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yet, too many gaps persist. Questions considering this notion, may outline how progress pertaining to the subject matter may be further accelerated as concrete actions by individuals, businesses, governments, employee based organizations, civil society, and multilateral institutions to drive change by addressing systemic constraints.

UN Women recognizes that the world's women and girls still face a number of undue challenges, including violence and discrimination, lack of access to basic education and healthcare, denial of access to decent working conditions, as well as occupational segregation and the gender wage gap, and under-representation in political and economic decision-making processes. UN Women strives to address and resolve these challenges by working to eliminate between men and women as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.²⁶

Expanding women's economic opportunities is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More than two decades after the landmark 1995 United Nations (UN) Conference on Women in Beijing and with the unprecedented consensus on the 2030 Agenda, the global

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UN-Women, Commission on the Status of Women, 2015.

²² UN General Assembly, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1), 2015.

²³ UN-Women, Governments Endorse New Roles for Women's Commission: The UN Commission on the Status of Women revamps working methods to raise the stakes in advancing women's equality, empowerment and rights, 2015

²⁴ UN CSW, Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2006, p. 1.

²⁵ www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017

²⁶ <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/en>

commitment to gender equality has never been stronger. For the first time in history, governments have set a concrete deadline for the elimination of gender inequality— the year 2030. And the potential gains for basic human rights, for human development and for economic growth have never been larger ²⁷

At the September 2015 UN General Assembly, governments from across the world adopted the 2030 Agenda, with goals to improve lives for all. Applied to all countries and promised sustained, transformative change, the Agenda commits to **leave no one behind— not women, not children, not minorities, not migrants, not indigenous people, not people with disabilities.**²⁸

Moreover, those who are farthest behind must be moved to the top of the international community's agenda. Today around 1 billion people continue to live in extreme poverty, many of them women and children. The economic empowerment of women—to succeed and advance economically and to make and act on economic decisions—is a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over the past two decades, there has been progress in closing gender inequalities, especially in education and health. Yet there still is much to do to achieve the full and equal participation of women in society and in the economy.²⁹

Gender inequality in accordance with the SDG's is the core of discussion pertaining to the committee for the **2017 MUN Youth Assembly**. The questions to consider in our committee should lead the committee to understand how MUN as a platform can help in spreading awareness, starts projects, engage civic society, engage with civic society, invite community partnership and NGO's to help achieve and make SDG #Goal 5 Agenda 2030 a reality. The involvement of all agencies is important for the success of the SDG Action Plan 2030. All member nations have to collaborate and cooperate extending assistance to countries which need financial assistance or technical expertise. However, one of the most important driving force is going to be the Youth and Youth leaders. **Act Local to achieve Global** will be important to spearhead the movement-SDG Action Plan 2030.

²⁷ <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/en>

²⁸ <https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf>

²⁹ <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/en>

IV. Questions to consider:

What been done and what needs to be considered?

The discussions in the committee should be focusing on the following questions to consider-

1. Have international bodies and local governments been effective in implementing gender-equal policies into their national mandates?
2. How can the CSW ensure appropriate enforcement of the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and SDG5?
3. Why is it that women do not participate in the labor force to the same extent as men and, when they do, earn 18 percent less?
4. Has UN Women been effective in implementing initiatives promoting gender equality through health care?
5. How can the Beijing Platform for Action strategic objectives be addressed pertaining to the Sustainable Development Goals?
6. What role do women play in their economic, social and environmental empowerment? How can it be improved?
7. Given the direction of the economy in the future what skills should be promoted in educational programs aimed at women, especially in the developing world?
8. Given that many women spend much of their time performing crucial, yet often unpaid, household labor, what policies will help women attain economic recognition and independence?

V. Present actions and way forward:

To be effective at both advancing the cause of women empowerment and MUN with SDG's Goal 5 we need to develop an approach grounded in three key principles: -holistic, integrated, and strategic.

A holistic approach means that **MUN Societies** in collaboration with Civic bodies look at the full scope of economic, social, cultural, and political factors that affect women's access to information, opportunities, and agency. It also means looking at the range of actors, including male figures, who impact women directly and indirectly through their influence on community perceptions and societal expectations of women.

An integrated approach requires embedding gender considerations throughout the programs processes, policies, values, and relationships across the collaborations. It also means that opportunities for women's empowerment are not housed in isolated areas of work. Rather, they are considered in different decisions along the collaboration, prioritized by leadership, and reiterated in collaborations aims and objectives.

A strategic approach takes into account feasibility, business drivers, and long-term investment, as well as your MUN Society or Club's own competitive advantages based on its expertise, resources, tools, and networks. It seeks to prioritize issues that, from your perspective, have the greatest potential to improve opportunities for women to contribute to the collaboration and the individual herself.

VI. Action Plan:

Youth being the strongest agent of change can bring about great influences and channelize actions in the right direction. Youth can also enable and influence other agencies, partners, individuals, and policymakers by incentivizing, partnering, and communicating with others in their community thereby influencing a broader population.

1. How will you as a leader of your MUN Society prepare an action plan to monitor SDG progress, build accountability and create dialogue between citizens and decision makers?
2. What are few best ways of Advocacy and communications around SDG's and what will your MUN Society do to contribute towards the action.
3. How do you see your MUN Society helping local women entrepreneurs from low socio-economic background?
4. What kind of role does your MUN Society fits in vis a vis civil society and youth?
5. What are some of ways your MUN Society can leave a lasting positive impact on the world both locally and globally?

Some more considerations that should emerge out of committee discussion should be your MUN society or club taking inspiration from NGO's or agencies in your region. Also remember the Agenda under discussion is **Women empowerment and global economy**. Women empowerment is embedded in all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals hence women empowerment is a key factor to end global poverty. For that women entrepreneurs need empowerment and support.

Women are "starting businesses, investing back in their families and communities, and ensuring that their children have nutritious meals and access to healthcare," said Richard Parker, vice president of marketing and communications at Project Concern International, a non-profit working to promote social and economic empowerment of women, at the Wilson Center.

But giving every woman and girl the opportunity for a fully productive life requires closer cooperation between governments, the private sector, and NGOs and this will be an important area of discussion in the committee.

Do consider how can your MUN Society can partner with Government organizations, national mechanism, civil society, business and foundations, national committees, Goodwill Ambassadors and media and the collaborations can be used to help the cause of SDG's.

How can your MUN Society or you as a leader potentially contribute to making a lifetime impact to support women empowerment?

There are many organizations doing great work to support women empowering them socially, emotionally, morally, and rendering economic support. Women entrepreneurs will be a significant force to add to the World GDP and thus boost global economy.

Women entrepreneurs will help create jobs and their small business will eventually become big businesses. However, they will need support and most important financial investment.

Do consider the question of Funds, sponsors and investors ready to invest in Female entrepreneurs. What are the obstacles and possible solutions to the problem?

How will you set priorities, identify opportunities for action and integrate and implement the actions planned? (this question may be integrated with the question above or be dealt with in its own entirety)

Partnerships in action

SDG Goal 17 is Partnership for the goals. Partnership inviting countries, government, non-governmental bodies and the private sector, with think tanks, with foundations, and with NGO's is key to end extreme poverty and build resilient democratic societies in order to achieve a more prosperous and secure world. A few examples-

NGO's like **Maiti Nepal** support girls rescued from human trafficking by training them in vocational courses is supported by individuals like Mr. Samir Panthi based in US as their Spokesperson and fund raiser.

WEConnect International, is a US based organization working to ensure at least 51 percent of businesses outside the United States are owned, managed, or controlled by women, and can succeed in global markets.³⁰

Power Africa is an organization working to show impact of electricity on Gender and explicitly involves women as their work force ³¹

DAIS Foundation in India is an educational initiative run by young individuals to TEACH SDG's at school and university level.

The SPRING Accelerator program, for example, is a public-private partnership with the Nike Foundation and the UK Department for International Development to provide capital, technical assistance, mentoring, and networking to businesses working with adolescent girls in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. ³²

³⁰ <https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-Report-Womens-Empowerment-Supply-Chains.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-Report-Womens-Empowerment-Supply-Chains.pdf>

³² <https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-Report-Womens-Empowerment-Supply-Chains.pdf>

Peace Corps Volunteers implement the Camp GLOW program, or Girls Leading Our World, to help girls develop self-esteem and leadership skills. Recognizing that men and boys must be equal partners in achieving gender equality, Peace Corps Volunteers teach leadership and life skills to boys through Teaching Our Boys Excellence (TOBE) camps. Peace Corps Volunteers promote gender equality and women's empowerment through health education, business development, and by raising awareness of women's rights and contributions to their communities. ³³

TEACH SDG's action tool kit and Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign has been created in partnership with UNDP, ODI, UN Volunteers and TNS Opinion to spread awareness and encourage individuals, organizations, educational institutions to implement SDG's actions. ³⁴It is such public-private partnerships that can really move women's empowerment forward.

Do discuss role of your MUN Society in establishing such partnership or starting an organization of your own as a community outreach project.

"Women's empowerment isn't just a part of development," "it's really the core of development. Gender is now everyone's issue." Susan Reichle, counselor at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) ³⁵

Resources-

1. **Female entrepreneurs: The key to sustained global economic growth-**
<http://www.latimes.com/world/global-development/la-fg-global-women-entrepreneurs-oped-snap-story.html> - Women entrepreneurs. For economic development
2. <http://sustainability.thomsonreuters.com/2012/10/10/the-role-of-women-in-sustainable-economic-development/> - Katie M. Scholz
3. <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/global-issues-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/>
4. <https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-Report-Womens-Empowerment-Supply-Chains.pdf>
5. Women and the world economy-<http://www.economist.com/node/6802551>
6. <http://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2017/L.5> Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-first session 13-24 March 2017 Agenda item 3 (a) (i) Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and

³³ <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/global-issues-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/>

³⁴ www.sdgactioncampaign.org

³⁵ <https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-Report-Womens-Empowerment-Supply-Chains.pdf>

initiatives: women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work Women's economic empowerment in the changing world

7. The Dias Foundation- www.thedias.in
8. Maiti Nepal- www.maitinepal.org
9. Sustainable Development Action Campaign- www.sdgactioncampaign.org
10. <http://sustainability.thomsonreuters.com/2012/10/10/the-role-of-women-in-sustainable-economic-development/>
11. www.un.org/esa/dsdapril2010
12. www.bu.edu/pardee/sdi-003-women/ Candice Steven- Are women key to Sustainable development
13. www.economist.com
14. <https://www.economist.com/printedition/2006-04-15> (under the section Finance and Economics- A guide to womenomics)
15. <https://www.economist.com/printedition/2006-04-15> Women in the workforce: Importance of Sex (under the heading: leaders section)
16. www.unwomen.org
17. UNWomen.EE-Thematic-Brief_US-webpdf.pdf
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2322UN%20Women%20Analysis%20on%20Women%20and%20SDGs.pdf>
18. www.sdgactioncampaign.org
19. www.heforshe.org/
20. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/3/media-advisory-planet-50-50-by-2030-step-it-up-for-gender-equality>
21. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/03/iwd2017unsg/>