



General Assembly

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Third Committee – Social, Humanitarian & Cultural

This group focuses on the rights people. It wants all people to be free to make their own choices. They believe human rights are important and apply to every person in the world.

The members of this committee discuss human rights. They encourage states to respect the rights of citizens. During the year, they hear a lot of reports from experts and groups about the human rights records of states. Social issues are important to this committee. Questions of crime prevention, drug control, youth, elderly and others are discussed.

This committee works closely with the Human Rights Council. They passed resolutions on the protection of children, how refugees should be treated, and ending racism.

Agenda Item 29.A – Advancement of Women

Background

The Charter of the UN affirms the equal rights of women. But, in many states women are not treated equally. In Saudi Arabia women cannot drive. In India, some women are harassed by their husband's families. They ask for a dowry (money) because the women have married into the family. Some of these women are murdered. Often, their deaths are called 'accidents'. In the US the average woman earns 78¢ for every 1\$ a man earns. There is a lot that needs to be done.

In 1947 the UN created the Commission on the Status of Women. This group helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They worked to include more equal language that represented women. The group spent a lot of time researching the problems women faced. They published reports so states would know where there was discrimination against women. Many states took the suggestions. The lives of women have improved a lot.

By 1952 less than 100 states allowed women to vote. Members of the UN created the *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* to protect the political rights of women. It states all women have the right to vote. They can join government. They can get access to public services.

The Commission worked on two other Conventions to protect women. One protects women from losing their nationality after marriage. The other one states women can choose who to marry. It asks states to decide a minimum age for marriage.

The work of the Commission continued. In 1979 it drafted a new convention. It is called the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. This Convention aims to protect all the rights of women in one document. Most countries have signed this document.

Background

Research since the 1960s shows women are at risk of poverty. The UN made the advancement of women a priority. Technology can help women at risk of poverty in rural areas. Rural women can have their lives improved if investments are made in farming. Family planning information can help women. This means women learn how to have the number of children they want. Many women keep having children because they do not know how to stop.

1995 was the Fourth World Conference on Women. It was held in Beijing. This was an important meeting because states agreed to the Beijing Declaration. This declaration said states would improve the rights of women. Every five years there is a review. The next review will take place in 2020.

In 2010 the UN created UN Women. It brought four UN organizations working to help women into one group. This organization works to help women achieve equality. They also publish statistics on women.

Recent Developments

Women are a minority group. Although there are roughly the same amount of women and men in the world women are discriminated against. In many societies women are treated unfairly by the government. There are laws against them that stop them from being treated equally to men. Also, traditional gender roles force women to do more work. For example, women on average spend 1 to 3 hours on housework more than men. This negatively impacts a women's ability to hold a job.

Women live 18 years longer in developed states than they do in developing states. This happens because women in developing countries are more likely to have culture institutions that discriminate against women. For example, around the world 700 million women are married as children. This puts them at risk of becoming pregnant. A pregnant child is at risk of dying during childbirth. They can contract a disease from their husband. Also, more than 1.3 billion women do not have a bank account. This means they are less likely to manage finances. They have less of a voice in spending money.

Women are also at risk because they are victims of violence. However, many women do not feel comfortable seeking help. Less than 10% of women who experienced violence went to the police for help. Less than 40% looked for help at all. This shows that women do not feel the rule of law protects them and do not feel like they can get help when they are treated unfairly. Also, women and girls are victims of traffickers. This means they are forced into slavery. 70% of the victims of human trafficking are women or girls.

Rural women have an important role to play when it comes to ending poverty. 70% of women with jobs in South Asia work in farming. It is 60% in sub-Saharan Africa. These women have a role to place in food security. However, they are not usually involved in decision-making even though they might have the best knowledge. Young children in rural areas are twice as likely to not attend school which helps contribute to the cycle of poverty. As well, education for mothers is important for the health of children. Children of uneducated mothers in Latin America and the Caribbean are 3.1 times more likely to die than those whose mothers have secondary education.

Causes

Convention on the Political Rights of Women

This convention was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 31 March 1953. In 1945, women were still not treated as equal to men in most countries. This document protects the political rights of women and enshrines the rights of women to represent their government and they should receive services the government offers. It has 123 state parties.

Convention on the Nationality of Married Women

This convention was adopted by the UN in 1958. Before this time many women lost their citizenship if they married a man with a different citizenship. They would also have to take the husband's new citizenship if he changed his. This was unfair and forced women to change their citizenship against their will. This convention gives women choice to choose to retain their citizenship or accept their husband's. This convention has 74 state parties

Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages

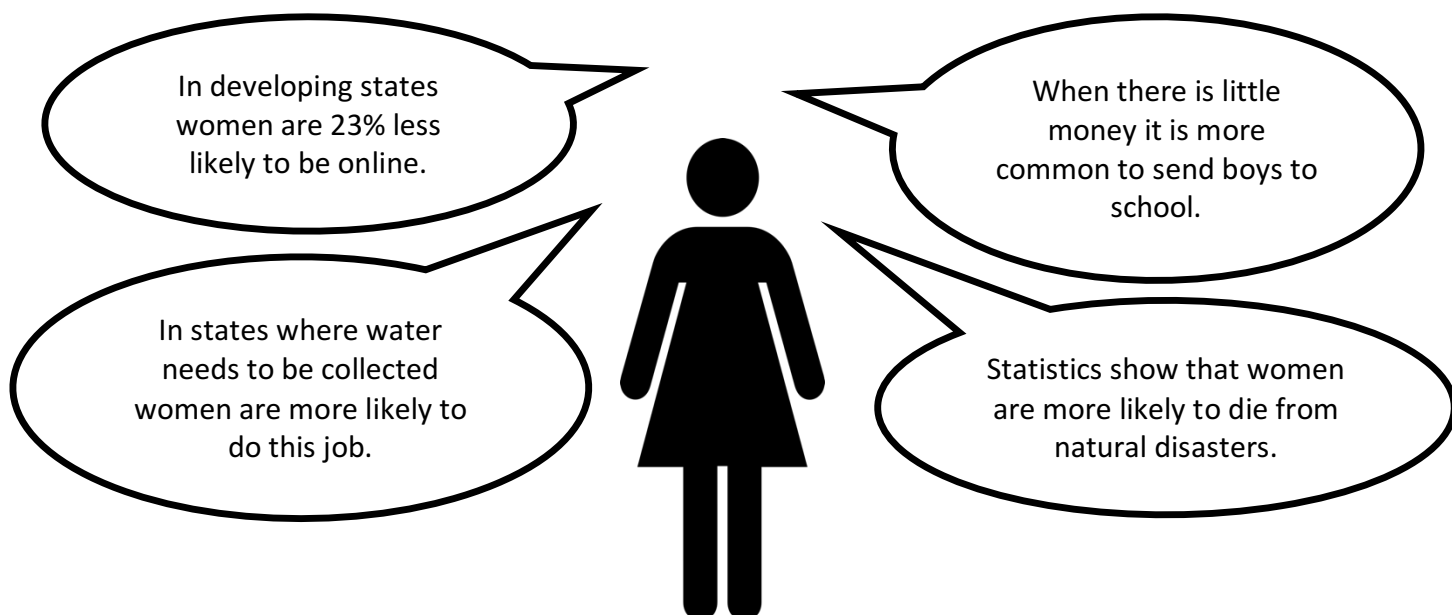
This convention was adopted by the UN on 10 December 1962. Many marriages in history were between people who may not have wanted to get married. It is important to say marriage is for people who want to be married. This convention says marriages must be agreed to by both parties and it asks states to set a minimum age for marriage and organize a system to register marriages. This convention has 55 parties to the convention.

Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

This convention was adopted by the UN in 1979. It is often called a bill of rights for women. Because women are often discriminated against it is important to list the rights of women. This document also defines what is discrimination against women and asks states to work to end it. It has been ratified by 189 states.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

This declaration was made during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. It says women should be active and equal to men in all aspects of public and private life. It also acknowledges women and girls from all states, cultures, class, and incomes are victims of violence because of their gender. 2015 was the 20th anniversary of the declaration.

How Does Poverty Affect Women?

Guiding Questions

1. Research the women's rights movement in your country. When did women get the right to vote? To run for government? To own land?
2. Does your country protect the rights of women? What are some important issues to bring equality to women?
3. How can states work together to protect the rights of women?
4. The UN has recently passed resolutions on migrant women, violence against women and women in rural areas. All these topics help the advancement of women. Where else do women need to be protected?
5. There are links between women's inequality and poverty. Research how these two issues are connected. How can the situation be improved?
6. Violence against women is a problem. These are acts committed against women *because* they are women. What can states do to stop this?
7. How would education play a role in creating equality between men and women?

Resources

Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<i>UN WOMEN</i>	http://www.unwomen.org/en	UN organization dedicated to gender equality.
<i>Equal Pay Day 2015</i>	http://money.cnn.com/2015/04/13/news/economy/equal-pay-day-2015/	CNN article about the wage gap between men and women.
<i>10 Worst States for Women</i>	https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/03/08/ten_worst_states_for_women.html	Toronto Star article about states where women face discrimination.
<i>Women and Poverty</i>	http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/poverty	An in depth look at the connection between women and poverty.
<i>Equality Now</i>	http://www.equalitynow.org/	This is an NGO working towards gender equality.
<i>Because I Am a Girl</i>	http://plancanada.ca/because-i-am-a-girl	NGO protecting the rights of children. They have a special campaign for girls.
<i>Women Watch</i>	http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/facts-figures.html	Facts and figures about rural women.
<i>The Female Face of Farming</i>	http://www.fao.org/gender/infographic/en/	Information on the importance of women in farming.
<i>Girl's Education and Gender Equality</i>	http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_70640.html	UNICEF overview of education for girls.