

**Oasis International School Model United Nations**

**Economic and Social Council Sub-Commision 2: Status of Women**

**Chair:** Menna Kotb

**Co-chair:** Abd El Rahman Waleed

**Guiding Package**

**Topic 2 :** Women in the Workforce

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**I. Abstract**

Over decades, the identity of the woman worker has changed dramatically. From the 1820s, with the onset of industrialization in the [United States](http://www.encyclopedia.com/places/united-states-and-canada/us-political-geography/united-states), until 1940, the average female employee was young and single. If married, a woman working outside the home was likely poor and African American. From the 1940s to the 1970s, however, married women became the largest component of the female labour force. The number of gainfully employed, white middle-class women also rose rapidly. Women's lack of access to higher education had effectively excluded them from the practice of well-paid and high status occupations. Entry of women into the higher professions like law and medicine was delayed in most countries due to women being denied entry to universities and qualification for degrees; for example, Cambridge University only fully validated degrees for women late in 1947 and even then only after much opposition and acrimonious debate. Women have been challenged by inequality in the workforce. More frequently, women earn less than men for doing jobs of equal value do. One of the main causes is the way women's competences are valued compared to men's. They also work in sectors where Nevertheless, women often work in sectors (for example in health, education, and public administration) where their work is lower valued and lower paid than those dominated by men. When we look at the health sector alone, 80% of those working in this sector are women. It is still very much a man’s world. In many places across the globe, women are not paid as much or promoted as often as men. In India, women’s participation in the workforce is still shockingly low. In addition, in the United States, despite consistent agitation for equality and higher wages, women may never make up half of the total workforce.

## II. Key terms:

* ***Discrimination:*** the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.
* ***Empowerment:*** to give power or authority to; authorize, especially by legal or official means
* ***Inequality:*** difference in size, degree, circumstances
* ***Wage:*** an amount of money that is paid, usually every week to an employee for their work.
* ***Workforce:*** the people engaged in or available for work, either in a country or area or in a particular firm or industry.
* ***Pink-collar worker:*** A worker who performs work in the service sector that is considered to be stereotypically female.
* ***Gender pay gap:*** the gap in wages between women and men, even when women perform the same tasks as men.

## III. Background information:

Throughout history, women have faced inequality and discrimination in their workplaces. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, women were deprived of access to many highly paid jobs by being denied admission to degree programs that would permit them to enter those occupations. The following highlights important forms of gender inequality that women face in their work place.

* **Inequality in Employment and Earnings:**

Historically, men have greater participation in work outside home than women. However, women, particularly of poor households share unequal household duties in addition to economic production. Thus, they work longer than males. This kind of ‘division of labour’ may be seen as the ‘accumulation of labour’ on women. Household activities are often viewed as ‘sedentary activities’ which require less ‘calorie’ to gain energy.

* **Gender segregation in various activities**

As far as earnings are concerned, women are discriminated against male workers not only in the informal sector but also in administrative or business and commerce, as well as professional jobs.

* **Ownership inequality:**

In most of the societies, ownership over property and means of production rests mainly on male members. The law of inheritance provides such ownership rights on male child. Such denial coming out of hierarchical dualism within the family not only reduces the voice of women but also prevents them from participating in commercial, economic and social activities.

This kind of social deprivation means absence or lack of capability. Alternatively, because of ‘capability deprivation’, women are subject to various kinds of exploitation and un-freedoms. Social inequality distorts the process of development.

## IV. Major countries and organizations involved:

1. **Countries:**

* Jordan
* Egypt
* Indonesia
* Turkey
* Iran
* Malaysia
* Algeria
* India
* South Korea
* Saudi Arabia

## V. Guiding questions:

### What is the difference between gender equity, gender equality and women’s empowerment?

### Why is gender equality important?

* How can we attain gender equality in the workforce?
* What are the factors that lead to gender inequality?
* What are the basic rights that women need to have in her work?

## VI. UN involvement:

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end it. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They must submit national reports at least every four years on measures to comply with treaty obligations. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was the outcome of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. World leaders committed to measures in twelve critical areas of concern, to be implemented in cooperation with the UN system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and women and men at large.

In addition, Intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) regularly adopt resolutions dedicated to gender equality issues. UN Women supports these bodies by providing expert advice, information and policy recommendations on gender equality issues, often through reports of the UN Secretary-General, and by supporting Member States in all aspects of their work, including in negotiation of resolutions.

## VII. Possible solutions:

1. Rethink job interviews. The question: “What do you think your salary should be?” should be abolished altogether, as women consistently ask for less than men. Instead, interviewers should provide a fair and transparent salary range and ask applicants to position themselves within it.

2. Make gender equality part of training and education. Young people should be supported in choosing jobs that are future-oriented and promising, regardless of their gender.

3. Be proactive about welcoming women. Companies should clearly state that they want to hire, support and promote women. Salaries and promotions should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure equal treatment.

4. Make flexibility and work-life balance a part of the wider company culture. Too often, employees have to specifically ask to work part-time or work from home, which can be awkward. Companies should instead offer a broad range of different options.

5. Don’t limit your talent pool. Companies should aim for a 50-50 gender split in all their teams – right up to the executive floor. Offering practical support such as childcare, is part of this, as is the right attitude. It should not be a career killer for a man to ask for extended leave because he wants to look after his children.

6. Use the power of networking. Networking, mentoring and coaching opportunities can help women build confidence and develop their careers.

## VIII. Useful links:

* <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-03-10/the-10-worst-countries-for-gender-equality-ranked-by-perception>
* <http://www.economicsdiscussion.net/gender/7-forms-of-gender-inequality-discussed/11884>
* <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/causes/index_en.htm>
* <http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/women-workplace-issue>
* <https://www.summer.harvard.edu/inside-summer/gender-inequality-women-workplace>
* <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS>