

## **Background Guide**

### **Committee**

## **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**



### **Agenda**

**Achieving Gender Parity in Leadership Positions and  
Closing the Gender Pay Gap (SDG-5 Gender Equality)**

## *Letter from the Executive Board*

Greetings Delegates!

It is an honour to be serving as a part of the Executive Board of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at SAIMUN 2024. We hope to be a part of an enriching academic simulation and engage in a constructive discussion which includes the features of diplomacy, fact-based arguments, and most importantly confidence.

The background guide shall only be an instrument of assistance to the delegates instead of being the sole basis for your research. The objective of this document is to help and guide you with your research and should not be the only research you possess. Under no circumstances can the guide be provided as proof to enforce an argument in committee.

The given list of topics is not exhaustive, and it is not intended to be. The list is simply indicative of pressing issues and topics of concerns, which must be addressed and will give you a bird's eye view of the gist of the issue. The delegates are at full liberty to bring up any other relevant point for discussion.

We understand that MUN conferences can be an overwhelming experience for first timers, but it must be noted that our aspirations from the delegates is not how experienced or articulate they are. Rather, we want to see how they can respect disparities and differences of opinion, work around these, while extending their own foreign policy so that it includes more of comprehensive solutions without compromising their own stand and initiate consensus building.

The agenda at hand is vast and complex and a successful discussion on it would entail the collective participation of all of you. It shall be your prerogative to decide the direction in which you want to take this committee. Do not feel taken aback on the research, foreign policy and other details of the allotted country. Prior coming to the meeting it is vital to break the agenda into more modest subtopics and pose inquiries to yourself about the plan.

The committee would be an excellent opportunity for you to not only learn the skills of public speaking and diplomacy but also gain experience to become better professionals and persons in the future.

Warm regards,

Tanya Tiwari

Subhasmita Hota

(Chairperson)

[tanyaay24@gmail.com](mailto:tanyaay24@gmail.com)

+91-8109711664

(Co-chairperson)

[hotasubhasmita@gmail.com](mailto:hotasubhasmita@gmail.com)

+91-79781 12254

## SECTION A

### **BASIC SUGGESTIONS BEFORE YOU START RESEARCHING:**

A few aspects that delegates should keep in mind while preparing:

**Procedure:** The purpose of putting in procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organized and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UN4MUN Rules of Procedure. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding procedure.

**Foreign Policy:** Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

**Role of the Executive Board:** The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stance on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points of time to further debate and test participants. A challenging, yet highly rewarding committee, involvement in this simulation offers an insight into the dynamics of international relations and politics. Lots of work will be required but as previous participants in similar simulations ourselves, we promise you an exciting experience.

### **NATURE OF SOURCES/EVIDENCE:**

This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

1. United Nations:

Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body is held as a credible proof to support a claim or argument.

2. Multilateral Organizations:

Documents from international organizations like NATO, NAFTA, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, OPEC, the International Criminal Court, etc. may also be presented as credible source of information.

### 3. Government Reports:

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as a credible piece of information.

### 4. News Sources:

.Reuters: Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in council.

.State operated News Agencies: These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, may be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are – RIA Novosti<sup>8</sup> (Russian Federation), Xinhua News Agency<sup>11</sup> (People's Republic of China), etc.

#### **Note:**

Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia, or newspapers like the Guardian, Times of India etc. be accepted. However, notwithstanding the aforementioned criteria for acceptance of sources and evidence, delegates are still free to quote/cite from any source as they deem fit as a part of their statements.

## **About the Committee:**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946, it's the longest-running commission dedicated to this specific issue within the UN system.

The CSW serves several key purposes:

- **Reviewing progress:** It regularly reviews and appraises progress made on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment at the global, regional, and national levels.
- **Formulating policies:** Based on its findings, the CSW formulates policy recommendations and proposes actions to accelerate progress towards gender equality.
- **Promoting international cooperation:** It facilitates international cooperation and dialogue on gender issues, bringing together governments, civil society organisations, and UN entities.
- **Monitoring implementation:** The CSW also plays a role in monitoring the implementation of international agreements related to gender equality.

**Note: This background guide only provides an initial understanding of the agenda, offering insights on how to approach the topic. We encourage and anticipate that delegates will go above and beyond, bringing up new and fresh perspectives to the discussion.**

### **About the Agenda:**

The agenda tackles the intricate and sometimes tense scenario in regards with achieving gender parity in leadership positions. It also recognizes that achieving true gender equality requires a framework that acknowledges every gender in workforce and closing the gender pay gap.

Women's voices have traditionally been underrepresented. Concerns about competition for good position and equal pay as men have created and evoked a sense of need for gender parity. Additionally, traditional understandings of gender based role in society have strictly been confined to women as homemakers and men as breadwinners.

The agenda seeks to bridge this gap by fostering a space for inclusive dialogue. It emphasizes the need for policy frameworks that are gender-responsive, ensuring equality and non-discrimination for all individuals. By acknowledging the these issues, the UNCSW hopes to move beyond a zero-sum game approach and develop strategies that empower all those marginalized based on gender identity.

This agenda is a critical step towards building a more just and equitable world for everyone. It requires a commitment from governments, civil society organizations, and individuals to move beyond historical divides and work collaboratively to create a future where all genders can thrive.

## **History:**

Gender inequality has its roots in differences between the men and women in society. These stark differences of roles and opinions often result in form of social construction of relations, which in turn stem into bigger problem like gender inequality. Historically, the traditional role of men and women were set on the basis of biology, meaning women tend to bear roles around the reproductive labour and men tend to bear roles around the professional labour. Women often experience many types of discrimination—including social, institutionalized, communal, and household discrimination—which affects their well-being and keeps them subordinated as compared to men in the notion of patriarchy. These power structures exist in all societies in which gender is present.

Throughout the history women has fought and led many movement for representation and equality to give them an equal platform as the other gender. An organised women's movement really started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although women activists and struggle for equal rights have always been a small part of many activities.

One of the early pioneers, who thought and wrote about women as a group is the Italian writer Christine de Pizan, who published a book about women's position in society as early as 1495.

Later, many movements like "Suffrage Movement" were started in the early 1900's to achieve gender parity and focussed on issues like, "right to vote", "feminism", "equal representation", "equal pay". The agenda at hand is of great importance thus, Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

### **D) Terminology:**

1. **Gender equality:** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.
2. **Feminism:** feminism is about all genders having equal rights and opportunities. It is a movement advocating for women's social, political, legal and economic rights equal to those of men. It's about respecting diverse women's experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realise their full rights. It's about levelling the playing field between genders, and ensuring that diverse women and girls have the same opportunities in life available to boys and men.
3. **Gender Pay Gap:** it refers to the difference in earnings of men and women: what women on average take out of employment in monetary terms relative to men. It is calculated as the difference between average earnings of men and women as a percentage of average earnings of men.



## **II) Women in leadership position:**

Women's ascent to leadership positions is a testament to the progress made since the suffragette movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Women like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton laid the foundation for future generations to challenge gender norms and expectations. "Women in Leadership" refers to women occupying leadership positions in various fields, including business, politics, academia, and nonprofit organizations. It focuses on the challenges women face, their achievements, and the impact of their leadership on society. It is essential to discuss Women in Leadership because gender diversity in leadership positions fosters innovation, diverse perspectives, and social progress. By breaking gender barriers, women can contribute significantly to shaping a more equitable and inclusive future.

Such women led struggle has led to a tremendous change in the landscape of leadership today, as it has undergone a remarkable transformation as women have broken through traditional barriers to ascend to positions of power and influence. Women are seen across the world in many spheres handling the leadership positions and constantly working and fighting to close gender pay gap for the same work done.

Political leadership has seen significant strides with women like Angela Merkel, Jacinda Ardern, and Kamala Harris occupying powerful positions. Their leadership has not only advanced gender equality but also provided diverse perspectives in policy making. Women entrepreneurs have created innovative businesses that are redefining industries. Women like Oprah Winfrey, Sara Blakely, and Arianna Huffington have not only built successful enterprises but have also become role models for aspiring female business leaders.

## **SECTION B**

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals serve as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity for all.

The 17 SDGs are: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life on Land, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and Partnerships for the Goals.

Achieving these ambitious goals requires collaborative efforts from governments, civil society, the private sector and individuals. Addressing challenges like poverty, hunger, health, education, climate change and environmental degradation is crucial for building a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

### **SDG 5 and it's inter-linkage with other SDGs:**

At the onset, the main aim of SDG-5 is to have gender equality across all dimensions of society by empowering women and girls of all social classes irrespective of caste, creed, Birth disabilities, etc. In a democracy like India, various schemes and policies are put in place to achieve this goal. It is highly imperative to consider the integration of gender perspectives right from the grassroots level for the overall development and advancement of society. Hence here are a few ways how SDG-5 intertwines with other goals and how various policies and schemes are put in place to ensure the achievement of this goal.

#### **SDG-1: No Poverty**

Poverty is such a volatile component of the society which affects both classes and sub-classes of gender. Immediate difficulty being faced by women and girls in accessing basic economic resources and opportunities is one of the major concerns. Empowering women with the right tool sets to understand financial management and ease of reaching out to organizations specifically non-banking financial organizations or government-based organizations to avail financial services, property ownership, and decent work provided to them which help achieve SDG-1. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana is one of the schemes that specifically provides bank accounts to unbanked individuals which significantly benefits women. All State Rural Livelihood Missions in India have undertaken the aforementioned initiative to achieve this.

#### **SDG-2: Zero Hunger**

With the increase in population and higher demand ratio against the supply, Agricultural productivity and food security are not just national but also international concerns. And promoting gender equality through such policies in the agricultural sector will help achieve zero hunger. The National Food Security Act (NFSA) has a lot of provisions for issuing

ration cards and mobilizing their role in household food security. The World Food Programme (WFP) implements Purchase for Progress(P4P) which encourages people to buy food from small women farmers so that local economies can be supported.

### **SDG-3: Good Health and Well Being**

Informed and empowered women can make sane and wise decisions related to their health which will in turn lead to better health of their families as well. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) provides handholding and financial assistance for pregnant women or women who are in the lactating stage thereby providing better health services. To avail of such facilities, the Government must have a lot of community mobilization to educate women and empower them both technologically and manually to reach out for such services. The Global Financing Facility (GFF) focuses on the "Every Women Every Child" method to enhance their health by mobilizing and funding National Governments to achieve improved healthcare.

### **SDG-4: Quality Education**

The entire concept of SDG was devised to provide knowledge and assistance in achieving harmony in society. And for empowering women, education is the shortest way to go about it. This will in turn break the cycle of poverty and discrimination thereby leading to equitable societies. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan is specially tailored for this very purpose to ensure the survival, protection, and education of the girl child.

### **SDG-6: Clean water and Sanitation**

Culturally through division of labor in rural areas, women are involved in various collection activities right from water to milk. A lot of organizations have been formed through the Societies Act which works on this behavior. Access to clean water and good sanitation facilities is essential for health and well-being. Development of good water and Sanitation Infrastructure near their habitation saves time for women and young girls which they can utilize for education and other skill development activities which will boost their household-economy.

### **SDG-8: Decent Work and Economic growth**

Gender-based discrimination is a very common phenomenon in the workplace both at the National and International level. So, gender equality is very important in the workplace to give women a sense of ease freedom, and mental peace which will help in overall economic growth. The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act gives women paid maternity leave of 26 weeks. Also, recently Odisha Government has extended support for working women by allowing them to leave for their biological menstrual cycles excluding the ones already sanctioned.

### **SDG-10: Reduced Inequalities**

Gender inequality is synonymous with Social Inequality. There has always been a big wage pay gap in the work environment based on gender. Empowering women by educating them allows them to apply for higher studies, thereby creating more competition and helping them achieve various laurels. MGNREGA scheme does the very same by ensuring equal wages are provided to both men and women in workplaces based on the distribution of labor and not by gender.

**SDG-11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Safety and Mobility issues are always present in both urban and rural environments for girls and women. Empowerment of women acts as an aid for them to make sound decisions in Gender-Sensitive planning to create more inclusive and safe houses thereby leading to overall urban development. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) promotes Joint ownership and housing for women with other members of the society or their houses to ensure the safety and sustainability of the girls and women in society.

**SDG-16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

Women are subjected to a lot of violence, domestically as well as publicly. There has always been a disparity between women in having equal representation in Political, Economic, Social, Legal, and public life. Achieving SDG-5 will help women have equal representation in all kinds of decision-making processes ensuring governance which is very crucial for strong and accountable institutions.

## **Gender Equality Summit:**

Human rights are the cornerstone of the UN Global Compact Network India's first six principles, which are centred on the social aspect of corporate sustainability. The focus of organization's work is on social sustainability: children's rights, decent jobs, women's empowerment and gender equality, and high-quality education.

By providing a platform for a variety of stakeholders to participate in the conversation about a gender equal future, the 7th Gender Equality Summit of the UN Global Compact Network India reflected the international commitment to create a robust Indian pathway towards gender equality. Their dedication to promoting gender equality and empowerment is highlighted by this year's theme, "Inclusive Horizons: Integrating Gender Equality across SDGs."

The Summit witnessed the participation of more than 300 delegates from government, business, civil society, the UN and its systems, donors, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and academia. In order to address gender inequities, the summit focused on five main tactics: investing in women's potential; women driving business success; breaking down barriers through technology, innovation, and inclusiveness; developing gender-responsive climate change policies; and empowering feminist changemakers. It seemed to advance gender equality by proposing creative fixes and legislative measures that are consistent with fundamental values of labour, the environment, human rights, and anti-corruption.

## **Contemporary Situation:**

Gender Pay Gaps persist worldwide, though progress has been made in some countries. The World Economic Forum's 2022 report found women globally earn around 48.3% of what men earn for the same work on average.

European Union: While the overall gender pay gap in the EU stood at 13% in 2021, there are stark differences among member states. Some countries like Luxembourg (0.7%), Romania (3.8%), and Italy (4.2%) have relatively low gaps, indicating progress towards pay parity. However, others like Latvia (21.1%), Estonia (19.7%), and Austria (18.9%) lag behind, with women earning significantly less than men for the same work. Factors like occupational segregation, part-time work, and traditional gender roles contribute to these disparities.

United States: The gender pay gap in the US has narrowed over time, but significant disparities persist. In 2021, women earned approximately 82 cents for every dollar earned by men, according to the Census Bureau. However, the gap varies across racial and ethnic groups, with Black women earning 63 cents, Native American women earning 60 cents, and Hispanic women earning 57 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men. This highlights the intersectionality of gender and race in pay inequality.

Australia: Australia has made progress in reducing the gender pay gap, but challenges remain. The national gender pay gap stood at 14.1% in 2022, according to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. However, there are significant variations across industries and occupations, with larger gaps in male-dominated sectors like construction and finance. Additionally, the gap widens for women in leadership roles and those with children, reflecting the impact of career interruptions and caregiving responsibilities.

Latin America and the Caribbean: According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), women in the region earn on average 16.8% less than men. However, this figure masks significant variations among countries and sectors. For instance, the gap is larger in sectors like finance and construction, where women's participation is lower. Additionally, the pay gap is often exacerbated by factors like informal employment, occupational segregation, and traditional gender roles.

Asia: The gender pay gap in Asia varies significantly across countries and regions. For instance, South Korea had a gap of around 31.5% in 2021, reflecting deeply entrenched gender norms and workplace discrimination. In contrast, Singapore reported a gap of around 5.5% in 2021, attributable to efforts to promote gender equality and women's participation in the workforce. However, even in countries with relatively low gaps, challenges persist, such as the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the impact of caregiving responsibilities.

Addressing the gender pay gap requires a multifaceted approach that tackles various contributing factors. This includes strengthening legal protections against discrimination, promoting equal opportunities in education and employment, addressing unconscious biases and stereotypes, and encouraging greater participation of women in higher-paying fields and leadership roles. Additionally, policies that support work-life balance and shared caregiving responsibilities can help mitigate the impact of career interruptions on women's earnings.

## **Possible Solutions:**

Addressing gender pay disparity in leadership positions requires a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders, including governments, employers, and society as a whole. Here are some potential solutions:

1. **Legislation and enforcement:** Governments can enact laws that prohibit gender-based discrimination in hiring, promotion, and compensation practices. Robust enforcement mechanisms, such as regular audits and significant penalties for non-compliance, can help ensure employers adhere to these laws.
2. **Pay transparency:** Implementing pay transparency policies can shed light on pay disparities and discourage discriminatory practices. Employers could be required to disclose pay data, including breakdowns by gender and job level, allowing for closer scrutiny and accountability.
3. **Equal opportunity programs:** Employers can develop and implement equal opportunity programs that promote diversity and inclusivity in leadership pipelines. These programs may include mentorship initiatives, leadership development training, and targeted recruitment efforts to attract and retain diverse talent.
4. **Objective performance evaluation:** Implementing objective and standardized performance evaluation criteria can help mitigate unconscious biases that may influence promotion and compensation decisions. Regular training on recognizing and addressing biases can also be beneficial for decision-makers.
5. **Paid parental leave and flexible work arrangements:** Providing equitable paid parental leave and flexible work arrangements can help support work-life balance and prevent career interruptions or penalties, which disproportionately impact women's career progression.
6. **Gender diversity targets and accountability:** Setting measurable targets for gender diversity at all levels, including leadership positions, and holding leaders accountable for achieving these targets can drive meaningful progress.
7. **Cultural shift:** Addressing deep-rooted societal biases and stereotypes through education, awareness campaigns, and promoting positive role models can help create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in leadership roles.
8. **External audits and certifications:** Encouraging or mandating external audits and certifications for gender pay equity and inclusive practices can provide objective assessments and incentivize organizations to address disparities.

Addressing gender pay disparity in leadership positions requires sustained efforts from multiple stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, employees, and society as a whole. A combination of legal measures, organizational initiatives, and cultural changes can help create a more equitable and inclusive workplace.

## References

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