

# PacificMUN

Dare to Speak



UN Woman-Topic A  
Backgrounder Guide



# Political Influence of Woman - UN Woman

Topic A

PacificMUN



## Letter from the Director

Dear delegates,

My name is Stephanie Chang and it is with utmost pleasure that I welcome you to The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or UN Women, in this iteration of PacificMUN 2019. I will be serving as your Director for the weekend alongside Margaret Yan and Eric Berzin, your respective Chairs. Currently, I am a Grade 11 student at Richmond Christian School and entering my third year of Model United Nations, having fostered a passion for global affairs ever since I first attended PacificMUN in 2017.

The first topic on our committee's agenda is the Political Influence of Women. As delegates, you will discuss the ability of women to enact change in global and local political spheres, emphasizing the importance (or lack thereof depending on your country's foreign policy) of women with varying backgrounds maintaining active stances in diplomacy. What happens when only men are tasked with creating policies that impact women, and why are equal-gendered governments so significant?

The second topic will focus on the Rights of LGBTQ Women. This subject should highlight the presence of female-identifying members of the LGBTQ community within a broad scope, considering not only Western perspectives, but universal attitudes that reflect the globe today. As both topics cover sensitive material, it is expected you remain mindful in researching solutions.



I truly believe that whether you are experiencing MUN for the first time or nearing the end of your Model UN career, PacificMUN 2019 will challenge you to think critically about international relations and allow you to forge long-lasting friendships. Personally, participating in Model UN has not only challenged me to think beyond the scope of my own community, but educate myself on various issues that persist around the world. I hope that you will take this opportunity as a chance to step out of your comfort zone, no matter how intimidating the act of standing on the podium may seem.

If you have any questions regarding research, position papers, or this committee in general, please reach out at [unwomen@pacificmun.org](mailto:unwomen@pacificmun.org). Margaret, Eric, and myself are more than happy to assist you with any concerns in hopes that you will gain the confidence to actively speak out within committee discussions.

Please keep in mind that submitting a position paper is necessary to be considered for an award. While papers for this committee are optional, it is highly encouraged that you submit one as delegates who refrain from doing so are ineligible for awards. Any inquiries regarding position papers can be directed to the email above, with extensions permitted on a case-by-case basis. I wish you the best of luck in preparing for the conference and look forward to meeting all of you!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Chang  
Director of UN Women  
PacificMUN 2019

## Committee Overview

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, known commonly as UN Women, was created in July 2010 to address gender inequality and empowering women on an international scale. As a single United Nations body, UN Women merged four previously existing committees as the sole group responsible for combating issues violating women's rights.<sup>1</sup> UN Women focuses not only on social equity, but elevating women in economic situations, challenging poor workplace standards and wage discrepancies, and providing accessible education for girls in poverty-stricken communities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>



The mission of UN Women revolves around three primary tasks, the first being to aid intergovernmental committees such as the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>2</sup> This means providing input for discourse occurring between the United Nations and Member States and supplying research, evidence, legal standards, and recommendations for action in order to formulate successful policies on the national level for different countries.

Secondly, UN Women operates several flagship programs aimed towards directly working with women on the field to enact change. These programs make up most UN Women's action abroad. A total of five prioritized areas (called Strategic Plans or SPs) set a foundation for the flagship programs' functions.<sup>3</sup> These include eliminating violence against women, creating access to justice, political leadership training, and available public services.

The third goal revolves around partnering with other United Nations bodies to implement gender equality as a prime incentive in any developmental agenda. The General Assembly works to enforce this aspect and puts UN Women in the unique position of ensuring written policies translate into tangible change for affected women.

UN Women exists to promote the well-being of women in both the developed and developing world where women continue to face hardships despite societal advancements. The focal point of this committee is not to replace or assume authority over the existing work by UNICEF or UNDP, but aid in matters that involve women and showroom for progressive growth. Today, the organization remains a leader in women's rights activism, particularly by planning initiatives and projects executed on International Women's Day. Recently in 2015, the Financing for Development Conference took place in Ethiopia where UN Women proposed funding women's empowerment as an integral part of development planning, advocating for its inclusion in the post-2015 development agenda.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/un-women-flagship-programmes-booklet-en.pdf?la=en&vs=357>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/30577471/THE\\_NEW\\_DEVELOPMENT\\_AGENDA\\_AND\\_THE\\_REFORM\\_OF\\_THE\\_UNITED\\_NATIONS\\_DEVELOPMENT\\_SYSTEM](https://www.academia.edu/30577471/THE_NEW_DEVELOPMENT_AGENDA_AND_THE_REFORM_OF_THE_UNITED_NATIONS_DEVELOPMENT_SYSTEM)



## Topic A: Political Influence of Women

Despite the ability of women to vote in most nations (excluding Vatican City), taking political office or actively pursuing activism outside of governance still holds challenges. Nations that allow the right to vote are nevertheless complacent about executing the right as countries like Afghanistan, Uganda, and Pakistan tie women closely to their male guardians. This makes it difficult for women to leave the house and vote without express permission, at times being prohibited entirely by family. Women that do present themselves at voting stations risk harassment and violence.<sup>5</sup> Domestic duties and household chores also act as obstacles to finding time to vote, where walking distances to stations could also impact a woman's choice to vote or not.

Simply allowing the right to vote is not enough for legal enforcement. The stigma surrounding women in various Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian nations carries challenges in safely placing a ballot. In Papua New Guinea, women lack incentive to vote due to nearly non-existent representation within legislature. No more than seven women in the country have been elected into office since 1975.

On the other hand, even among western liberal democracies, equal representation of men and women is scarce in high-level governmental positions. This creates a disconnect between policymakers and policies involving women, as female advocates for industry-verified gender wage gaps and LGBTQ education in schools, for example, go unheard. Note that this is due to a gender gap in political interest.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://graziadaily.co.uk/life/real-life/countries-where-women-can-t-vote/>



**Table 2**  
**Worldwide Rankings of Women**  
**in the National Legislature**

Rank and Country	Percent Women
1. Rwanda	56.3
2. Andorra	53.6
3. Sweden	45.0
4. South Africa	44.5
5. Cuba	43.2
6. Iceland	42.9
7. Finland	42.5
8. Norway	39.6
9. Belgium	39.3
Netherlands	39.3
11. Mozambique	39.2
12. Angola	38.6
Costa Rica	38.6
14. Argentina	38.5
15. Denmark	38.0
16. Spain	36.6
17. Tanzania	36.0
18. Uganda	34.9
19. New Zealand	33.6
20. Nepal	33.2
91. United States of America	16.9
International Average	19.3

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," as of August 31, 2011.

*A table ranking the top twenty countries with the highest proportions of women holding office at the national level.<sup>6</sup>*

Women typically view their ability to run for office as inferior to males, and are often unequipped with the same level of financial leverage and resources in high-level political party environments. Notwithstanding the United States, a study conducted by Goldman Sachs in 2014<sup>7</sup> claims that Japan could increase its GDP by 12.5% if the female workforce equaled the size of the men's. Simultaneously, this calls for greater representation in politics. There is an undeniable disadvantage for women in less developed, developing, and less socially progressive nations to access the opportunity of running for office. Typically, regions in Africa experience cultural sentiments where girls' education will not be prioritized, or even temporary quotas do not exist to fill positions for women when they would otherwise be unachievable.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/2012-Men-Rule-Report-web.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2016/07/29/opinions/women-rising-benefits-society-young/index.html>



On the basis of democracy, the international community has an incentive to collaborate and work together to find inclusive solutions. Despite nations' differences, it is important to consider that responsible and effective leadership requires the presence of both men and women at work. In developing nations especially, achieving office translates into more than simply "breaking the glass ceiling," it allows the flow of opportunity to enter the lives of young girls and fuel ambition for future generations.

## Timeline

**800-500 B.C** - Women are prohibited from voting in ancient Greece, with this law prevalent in Rome as well.

**1769** - Colonizers in the United States of America prohibit women from owning property with their own name or retain individual earnings.

**1869** - The first female lawyer, Arabella Mansfield, is permitted to practice law within the state of Iowa. The first female law school graduate was Ada H. Kepley in the same year.

**1893** - New Zealand is the first country to permit women the full right to vote, not including the right to hold office, however; the nation introduces this in 1919.

**1906** - Finland allows women to vote, becoming the first European nation to present this right and electing nineteen females into parliament shortly after.

**August 18th, 1920** -The United States of America grants women the right to vote, drawing close nearly a century of suffragist activism through the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.<sup>8</sup>

**1934** - Brazil and Thailand grant female citizens the right to vote.

**2005** - Liberia faced fourteen years of consecutive war in which child soldiers and insurgent groups destroyed the country's infrastructure. Fifteen years after, a group of women in 2003 organized a sex strike<sup>9</sup> to gain an audience with the president at the time. They rallied to elect Ellen Johnson Sirleaf,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/19th-amendment>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42748769>



who despite being the first woman president of Africa, did not act under a pro-woman agenda. Sirleaf did not remain true to her proposal and permitted female genital mutilation to continue occurring as a lawful practice in girls ages 18 and under.

**2007** - Hillary Clinton, a United States Senator, is viewed as the nation's first top female candidate in the running for presidency.<sup>10</sup>

**2011** - Dilma Rousseff gains presidency in Brazil and recognized as the first woman to hold office in the nation since the vote was permitted.

**2015** - Saudi Arabia allows women to vote in municipal elections. 130,000 women expressed a desire to vote the same year, compared to 1.35 million males. Additionally, 978 women registered as political candidates alongside 5,983 men.<sup>11</sup>

**January 2016** - Tsai Ing-wen becomes the first female prime minister of Taiwan, winning the province's election by a "landslide"<sup>12</sup> and leading the Democratic Progressive Party or DPP into the spotlight. The DPP is known for the party's strong stance promoting independence for Taiwan, with Ing-wen declaring the Taiwanese population's responsibility to protect the province's distinct culture and democratic freedoms. She openly opposed re-unification with China in her first speech as prime minister.

**January 21st, 2017** - The first Women's March is held to protest the Trump administration and the President of the United States' public comments regarding women, where many interpreted his views as anti-women, objectifying, and demoralizing. It is the largest recorded one-day protest within the United States of America. 168 "Sister Marches" were held in 81 other countries.<sup>13</sup>

## Historical Analysis

Women were prohibited from voting since ancient Greece and the Roman Republic.<sup>14</sup> Gender roles often facilitated a lack of necessity for women to involve themselves with politics. It was not until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century where the concept of women's rights began to emerge, most notably in the United

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_42047-1522-2-30.pdf?150715094603](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_42047-1522-2-30.pdf?150715094603)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35075702>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36339276>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.womensmarch.com/sisters>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/woman-suffrage>





Kingdom and United States of America. The suffragist movement was created to reflect growing sentiments of what is known today as the first wave of feminism. Suffragists were most prominent in the west during this time, meeting in Seneca Falls, New York during 1848 to participate in a small conference on women's issues.<sup>15</sup>

When the American Civil War began, the movement dwindled until after conflicts were resolved; the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments in the Constitution extended their definitions to include African-American men as citizens who held equal opportunity to vote. In retaliation, several suffragists sided with southern activists, holding white supremacist views and stating that the vote for white women should have been prioritized. This sentiment went on to taint the suffragist movement, and in 1869, the National Woman Suffrage Association was formed. On the other hand, suffragists who rejected the notion that African-American activism must be pushed below women's rights for their movement's true success created the American Woman Suffrage Association. This organization supported the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment and allied with African-American activist groups.

Shortly after, both organizations combined to create the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The Association's methods had shifted compared to earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from demanding the vote should be granted to women because they are created equal to men, to arguing the right to vote was imperative because women were *not* men. They stated that women possessed traits that could influence the political sphere into adopting more moral and virtuous policies, using the stereotype that women belonged in domestic chores to their advantage. This in turn led to several activist groups supporting this belief. Anti-alcohol organizations, which consisted of predominantly females, thought that this concept could push for their own agendas as women could sway public policy. White supremacist groups also believed this idea could support pro-white agendas with the influence of both genders.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a handful of American states had granted women the right to vote. These included Idaho and Utah, however, this right was still exclusive to white women. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1920 that all women could vote as equals.

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, the suffrage movement held no ties to any other forms of activism unlike the United States. Similar assumptions were made, dictating that women possessed no need to vote due to their maternal identities. The movement gained traction in 1866, where campaigns and

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/the-fight-for-womens-suffrage>



meetings were held. As the Industrial Revolution had taken place just prior, employed women found opportunities to discuss issues related to politics and society with one another.

Twenty-two years after, in 1888, women received the right to vote in most local, municipal elections in Great Britain.<sup>16</sup> An earlier amendment suggested by John Stuart Mill, a political economist, could have allowed women to vote in all elections as early as 1867. This was rejected by parliament, further fueling the movement.

In 1903, a new society was created in response to the slow progress being made by suffragists. Emmeline Pankhurst coined the term “suffragette” and formed the Women’s Social and Political Union in Manchester<sup>17</sup>, using violent and militant means to gain attention. Hunger strikes and sometimes criminal activity led to the arrest of numerous suffragettes, raising concern and allowing for public sympathy to trickle into political landscapes.

Women would not begin to run for office or gain political influence as figures until late into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; even so, their successes were still somewhat shaky. The perception of women’s ability to lead and act as leaders was affected by politics being historically dominated by men. Sexism and the desire to keep women in domestic roles often heaped negative stereotypes that prevented women from running without being critiqued by the media; not for their proposed policies, rather for defying society’s expectations for females. This remains prevalent today, where phenomena such as the “glass cliff” and other social barriers stop women from achieving the same level of legitimacy as male political leaders, despite equal qualifications.

## Current Situation

The devastating disparity between men and women who currently hold office remains prevalent across the globe. Currently, women make up 19.3% of national legislatures on average internationally. This means that even in states that are pro-woman and home to growing women’s rights movements, representation is not upheld to a significant degree.

Social stigma and stereotypes are still in play for women who consider political careers. Not only externally, but through internal means as well. Women typically do not consider themselves even

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/history/britsuff/suffrage/revision/1/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/history/britsuff/suffrage/revision/3/>



slightly qualified compared to men who may hold less qualifications than them. This mentality is perpetuated by women of the past who failed to successfully break the glass ceiling and push through public reluctance.

This is harmful because of the policies and international controversies that plague women. One specific example is female genital mutilation (FGM), or sex trafficking. A lack of female voices in these matters blatantly denies a half of the population's opinion in issues that directly affect them. Additionally, in western liberal democracies, corrupted judicial systems and social norms allow convicted rapists to serve only short sentences. Seen in Brock Turner's court case, outrage from women's rights activists could not initially enact change due to not being physically present in political positions of power. Abortion rights also remain controversial due to strong opposition from right-wing individuals, despite the democratic ideal that women own all rights to their bodies.

Women who do attempt to immerse themselves in politics, especially in the west, are called "radical" or promoting extreme feminist agendas. This mischaracterization has impacted the rise of the alt-right and social media-spawned speakers, including Lauren Southern, Milo Yiannopoulos, Ben Shapiro, and others. During Hillary Clinton's campaign in the 2016 election, these activists were involved in spreading vicious rhetoric and protesting the notion of third-wave feminism to a degree where following Donald Trump's victory, these speakers spoke at university campuses only to be shut down in many cases.<sup>18</sup>

The reason this prevents women from gaining political traction is that it promotes guaranteed backlash. While this issue is specific to the west, Europe is seeing similar figures emerging from right-wing ideologies and using social media as a primary tool of action.

In the Middle East, the vote is considered a right by law that women possess, but little action from state actors has made it possible for most women to properly access voting stations. Having the right to vote means nothing when women are still oppressed by laws that strip them of their free will or prohibit them from exercising individual autonomy. Nations that strictly emphasize women being underneath their guardians perpetuate these hardships and do not guarantee a safe way for women to vote in local or national elections. Voting stations themselves are not often equipped with the proper measures regardless, with bias towards certain parties found through means of coercive violence.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/01/us/milo-yiannopoulos-berkeley/index.html>



Getting women into education to run for political office and into voting booths to maintain democracy are both priorities that Middle Eastern nations must continue to strive towards. This is similar for members of the African Union (AU), where women-run businesses could substantially change economic landscapes for the better.

Encouraging women and training them to assume confident stances means more representation in all offices. NGOs and UN Women are always at work to uphold quality leadership training programs in nations where mentorship is unavailable. This brings in perspectives from both sides of the gender spectrum and creates change where male-dominated offices did not recognize as significant before. When nations have women in leadership roles, this demonstrates that women are capable in such positions and sends a message to corporations, small businesses, and fields like science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM) that women possess the same level of competence.

Today, public pressure has forced governments to consider the structural imbalances and barriers in place that prevent women from entering office. Major harms that have occurred thus far include intimidation tactics and blatant discrimination for women running against men perceived as superior. Female politicians are abused online, with slurs and sexist comments hurtled towards them that remain irrelevant to their actual political stances.<sup>19</sup> This is often worse for women of color, whose intersectional identities invite increased harassment.

In 2017, 25,000 tweets on Twitter were directed as instances of hate speech against six female Members of Parliament (MPs) in the United Kingdom. This was during a six-month period alone. The same source shows that Asian and black MPs were the victims of 35% more tweets defined as abusive than the white women who were also MPs.

In Kenya during the same year, women from every point on the political spectrum reported cases of harassment. In 2015, of the 53,000 women eligible to vote in Pakistan, none of them participated in the parliamentary by-election. When women cannot hold office or even participate in political campaigns, democracy is threatened across the globe. It is imperative that as delegates, you acknowledge that while nations have their right to sovereignty, denying basic human rights does not fall under that premise.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/4/op-ed-ed-phumzile-closing-the-gender-gap-in-politics>



Compromise must be achieved in order to secure equal and fair opportunities for women to gain political traction, and address the growing problem of women feeling unqualified to participate.

## United Nations Involvement

### ***Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)***

In 1979, CEDAW was implemented into the General Assembly as what is known today as “an international bill of rights for women”.<sup>20</sup> The document lists cases of discrimination and prohibits nations from continuing to perpetuate norms where women lack the same opportunities or rights as men. Adhering to the Convention assumes responsibilities that Member States must follow, such as creating new public establishments and organizations that combat the discrimination of women.

Article 7 states that:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.”<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, Article 8 states:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.”<sup>17</sup>

While the Convention outlines clear definitions of the rights women hold access to, it is important to note that a significant number of countries do not uphold them. Voting stations can act as locations for women to receive harassment and become subject to violence, as laws may contradict or make it difficult for them to vote despite the supposed legality. For instance,

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article7>



many women in Southeast Asian or Middle Eastern countries may need to ask permission from their guardians, or take off their headdresses for identification purposes while doing so may upset local belief systems.

There is also the issue of disincentive. When women lack education on politics or feel indifferent towards all-male governances with no pro-woman proposals, there is little to resonate with them as voting typically involves going out of their way to temporarily abandon household duties.

### ***United Nations' Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Women's Leadership Programme***

UNITAR has worked alongside UN Women since May 2015 to deliver quality workshops and conferences to female delegates involved with the United Nations and other relevant bodies. This program seeks to empower and provide skills training to women in political positions, as well as those involved in non-governmental organizations. These workshops are most useful to leaders in the developing world, where resources and mentorship for women can be scarce.

From 2016-2017, more than 500 women participated in workshops held in conferences, hailing from 60 different nations.<sup>22</sup> A program of this caliber could be expanded upon when considering solutions, with questions directed towards how this might benefit women in small communities and seeking political influence in developing countries. As social media and access to Internet is not often available, maintaining a steady flow of resources to women in physically isolated locations could be a solution inspired by UNITAR's leadership program.

## **Seeking Resolution**

### ***Mandatory Quotas***

In 2015, the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, established the country's first cabinet with explicit gender parity. His cabinet consisted of 50% men and 50% women, stating that he had prepared for years prior to its formation.<sup>23</sup> Trudeau believes that the reason why women so often lack representation lies not only in inherent, widespread sexism preventing an election win, but reluctance to run in the first place.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://unitar.org/mdp/portfolio-projects/3640>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.elitedaily.com/news/politics/justin-trudeau-talks-feminist-cabinet/1853014>



Women usually do not receive the same amount of encouragement from teachers, guardians, or political party officials to run for office.<sup>24</sup> In fact, they tend to wait until their qualifications contest those of their male superiors, despite this being unnecessary for most males with similar starting experience. Societal standards in both western liberal democracies and even more so in developing nations prevent women from gaining a sense of confidence, beginning their political careers in lower occupations compared to their male counterparts.

The solution of mandatory quotas could solve sexist sentiments and push for representation in office with ease. Whether temporary or long-term, quotas would essentially guarantee a set number of seats for both men and women, increasing competition within either gender, but providing an outcome that is favorable towards representative politics. On regional, municipal, provincial, and national levels, this might look slightly different depending on a country's governmental structure.

However, common arguments against gender quotas revolve around the idea that they promote essentialism, a concept that dictates women who advocate for pro-woman policies cannot simultaneously advocate for men. Or that one woman could possibly represent all women along the political spectrum. While these are valid arguments, consider that many nations excluding the west pit all possibility of being elected against women, and quotas have previously shown highly qualified candidates leading governments into success.

### ***Political Leadership Training and Partnerships with NGOs***

Among local communities, very little resources exist for women hoping to gain political influence on a regional scale. UN Women could work alongside UNICEF, UNITAR, and other United Nations bodies to create temporary training programs that support women in positions of power across developing municipalities. Having female policymakers allows effective change in areas that affect women, such as instances of rape, sexual abuse, immunization against disease, and HIV or AIDS contraction. This is especially significant in rural communities.

Leadership training may involve employing the use of non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, and international charities. NGOs may supply trained teachers or female mentors to empower women politicians, funding projects if necessary. This creates a foundation of female-led improvements in places where sentiments may not be so welcoming. Additionally, this could entail

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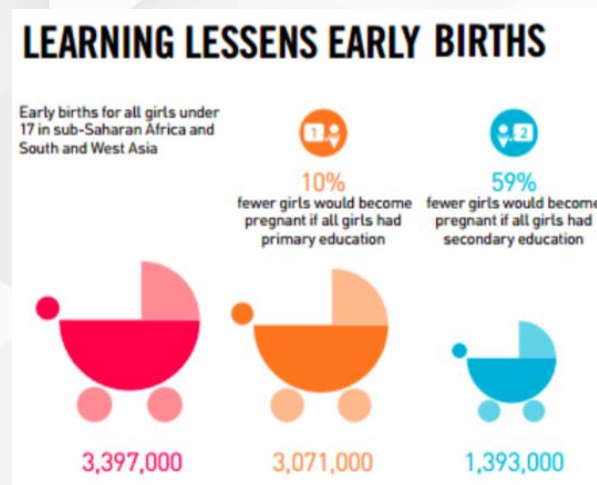
<sup>24</sup>[https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/25/upshot/the-problem-for-women-is-not-winning-its-deciding-to-run.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/25/upshot/the-problem-for-women-is-not-winning-its-deciding-to-run.html?_r=0)



joint initiatives for boosting healthcare, sanitation, medical supplies, infrastructure, and education in rural locations

Mentorship is invaluable, and communities are often open to NGOs' stances as they provide help in areas of struggle. UN Women has the potential to recognize local talent and elevate women to positions where they feel incentivized to lead. Possible challenges include combatting heavy anti-women mentalities, wherein seeking office could prove dangerous to a woman's wellbeing.

## Education



*A 2014 infographic correlating increased education with declining early pregnancy rates.<sup>25</sup>*

For girls to consider politics at an impressionable age, access to schooling is a necessity as literacy and basic education pave the way to healthy careers. In nations like India, communities are spread apart, physically isolated from one another which makes the implementation of schools difficult. Additionally, girls are expected to assist with domestic tasks and at times, seek labor to support their family's low wages. Consider that education is not a current priority for many countries where poverty-stricken villages and slums exist. Despite a full education potentially leading to skilled jobs and higher salaries, families are unfamiliar with the benefits and simply follow societal norms.

Getting girls into school may come at the cost of maintaining traditional family roles. However, according to the statistic above, this could substantially impact the high rates of early births that occur in the developing world. Employing more women into the workforce and concurrently, political office, may ease the stress on local healthcare.

<sup>25</sup> <https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2014/07/21/womens-education-helps-avert-child-marriage/>





## **Bloc Positions**

### ***Western Liberal Democracies***

Western liberal democracies typically favour and hold other developing nations accountable for the most basic women's rights, considering them as necessary to upholding human rights.

The suffrage movement was essentially hosted upon democracy in states like the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These western nations bred gradual support towards women's rights, influencing regional neighbors like Canada and the EU to adopt similar stances. In present day, the west boasts a strong agenda in favor of women's rights and representation in politics, such as Justin Trudeau's gender-equal cabinet. While this is true, alt-right and neo-conservative coalitions also threaten modern feminism and characterize today's social movements as "radical" and "backwards". This opposition clashes against mainstream views of women, fueling both sides to further protect their ideologies and forward stances through social media, protests, and occasionally violent means.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton was nominated by the Democrats to represent the party in the presidential election. This made history as the media described this victory as a first of many firsts, noting that no woman had ever achieved such a position among major parties.<sup>26</sup> Despite her loss to the current President of the United States, Donald Trump, the turn of events upset many activists and fueled traction for the Women's March later in 2017.

### ***Asia-Pacific***

Regionally, the Asian bloc boasts flourishing economies and businesses across several nations. Women, however, are still subject to gender biases and harmful stereotypes that put them at a significantly higher unemployment rate compared to men.<sup>27</sup> Social and economic disparities based on gender are not unusual, with two-thirds of the globe's poverty-stricken living in Asia, specifically in China and India. The economic hardship faced through gaping income inequality in East and Southeast Asian slums force women to seek work elsewhere, often taking on domestic or janitorial work that offer marginal benefits. The problem is that these women lack education, thus prohibiting them from

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/hillary-clinton-first-female-presidential-nominee/493163/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/asia-and-the-pacific>



seeking higher employment or political influence when their quality of life demands basic necessities be met beforehand.

Sex trafficking and illegal prostitution is also prominent among urban East Asian nations like Japan. UN Women seeks to integrate effective laws to combat violence against women and encourage education as a priority to get women into the political spotlight. Sentiments about women in office may vary from country to country, as Taiwan recently voted in their first female Prime Minister.

In both rural and urban locations, women are subject to greater household obligations than in the west. This negatively impacts their perception in all fields of work, including education where a recent incident in Japan revealed that a medical university was altering the entrance exam scores of women to decrease their marks and boost those of male students.<sup>28</sup> If such stigma exists against women pursuing academic lives outside the home, political influence can be significantly harder to achieve for working or lower class women who simply do not have the resources available to them for notable action.

### ***Middle East***

Currently, Syria, Pakistan, Yemen, and Afghanistan hold records for being the lowest ranked in women's rights.<sup>29</sup> This is closely tied to extreme interpretations of Sharia law where these Muslim nations aggressively enforce traditional beliefs on the roles of women and rules regarding head-coverings. The burka and niqab are most indicative of this. The problem is not that women are wearing these headscarves, but that they are forced to without any autonomy over alternatives like the hijab.

Civil war and ongoing conflicts also make it difficult for women to safely attain political influence without risking their lives. The presence of NGOs is especially important in several nations to assist women in poverty, as domestic terrorist and insurgent groups are known to commit acts of violence on a regular basis.

### ***Developing Nations***

For developing nations in the African Union (AU) and elsewhere, economic hardship is the main barrier to pursuing political influence. Girls cannot typically access education, adult women are tasked with household responsibilities, and even men must focus on stable employment before anything else.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/japan-university-cut-women-test-scores-1.4775961>

<sup>29</sup> <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>



This is where political leadership training could be most useful. For women in isolated and rural communities, having a say in politics would easily allow other women to gain voices in matters relevant to them. Women being involved in the well-being of society could also strengthen local water sanitation systems or schooling programs, with the United Nations stepping in with NGOs to assist with such initiatives. In order for women to be qualified to stand in higher, national political offices, adequate education is necessary as other means of influence available to the west (voicing political opinions over social media, for example) remains largely inaccessible to developing countries.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why are the perspectives of women integral to representative policies and a better administration within any level of government?
2. What are the issues that arise when women do not hold political influence or power in their communities?
3. What are some past actions or changes that were initiated by women holding office? (Child care policies, parental leave, equal wages, etc.)
4. Besides maintaining a political position, what are other ways women can participate in activism and extend their voice?
5. On a local level, how can the influence of women in the region help shape policies and financing budgets drastically?
6. What barriers (social, economic, financial) stand in the way of certain women achieving political influence? Does this differ across nations and how can they be addressed?
7. How can education systems for girls be used to empower and promote the idea of being a politician as a career? What are some curriculum-based changes that should be implemented to introduce leadership?
8. How can women in developing nations combat obsolete stereotypes and backwards thinking to advance their positions in government? What can UN Women do to contribute, specifically?



9. What is the root of this issue? How can this committee tackle the source of gender disparities in politics and elevate women around the globe?

## Further Reading

### 1. Women, Policy and Political Leadership: Regional Perspectives in Today's World<sup>30</sup>

An in-depth analysis and report on the political influence and progression of women across the globe. It is written by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, a German think-tank and political party foundation.

### 2. BBC News – Women's Rights<sup>31</sup>

A consistently updated and relevant source of news regarding women's rights in each continent. All BBC News articles tagged as specific to this subject can be found under this heading and serve as the most recent information for research.

### 3. UN Women – Official UN News<sup>32</sup>

Press releases, statements, news reports, and speeches on UN Women's work and relevant updates to other United Nations' bodies. This source is useful for finding out how women are directly impacted by large-scale conflicts or local disasters, and can aid in creating specific solutions that address the struggles of these communities on a closer level.

### 4. The Huffington Post – Women in Politics<sup>33</sup>

Opinion editorials and news that are relevant to primarily Western demographics. The stories of women involved in mainstream activism are frequently covered, with women in both official and secular positions appearing and influencing change through social media outlets, for example. This source serves as a digestible way of understanding societal perspectives in western liberal democracies; however, does not hold as much information for nations elsewhere.

### 5. Institute for Women's Policy Research

A policy-based research institution and think-tank founded on the mission to "inspire public dialogue".<sup>34</sup> This is a resourceful and abundant tool that divides annual reports, analyses, press

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_42047-1522-2-30.pdf?150715094603](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_42047-1522-2-30.pdf?150715094603)

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cjnw18q4gxwt/womens-rights>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/topic/women-in-politics>

<sup>34</sup> <https://iwpr.org/about/our-mission/>



releases, fact sheets, and briefing papers into categories of impacts surrounding women. For solutions and recorded past solutions, this is an excellent way to find the most successful methods of overcoming barriers related to this topic. Delegates are encouraged to examine the research and read over several publications to gain a sense of how women across the globe face issues specific to their gender.

## **6. Women Deliver**

Women Deliver is an organization that promotes global advocacy for women's rights and works internationally to lift the voices of young women. They operate a newsletter and database with infographics and documents available to the public, reporting on HIV and AIDS, pregnancy, education, humanitarian action, and access to clean water, for example. There is a strong focus on the role of women in affected communities and ways in which increasing political influence can create positive change on the policy-level.<sup>35</sup>

## **7. Women, Peace, and Security Index – Georgetown University<sup>36</sup>**

This lists all countries on earth from the best to worst living conditions, standards, and rights for women in a convenient document.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://womendeliver.org/2018/why-women-in-politics/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WPS-Country-Ranking.pdf>



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