

HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN A GLOBAL ISSUE : INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND FACTS

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ABSTRACT

Now a day's human rights have become international issues. All women and men have these rights without any discrimination. Women's rights are the fundamental human rights that were enshrined by the United Nations for every human being on the planet nearly 70 years ago. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage and many others. According to the UN, "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not just a goal in itself, but a key to sustainable development, economic growth, and peace and security". To protect and promote women human rights many Conventions, Conferences and treaty have been held at international level. Despite of these, Condition of women is pity. Across the globe many women and girls are still facing discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. Gender inequality underpins many problems which disproportionately affect women and girls, such as domestic and sexual violence, lower pay, lack of access to education, and inadequate healthcare. Present article is an attempt to enlighten the measures, which have been taken at international level. Also to highlight how much the economic, social, political and cultural status has improved by these measures. Secondary sources have been used to write manuscripts.

KEYWORDS: *Impede, Sustainable Development, Rapporteur, Millennium Development Goals, Elimination.*

Equality among male and female is the most fundamental guarantees of human rights. In United Nations Charter it is adopted as goal "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women."(U.N. Charter and Statute of the International, Court of Justice, 1945, p. 02.) The Article 01 of the United Nations Charter states that, "To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." (U.N. Charter, 1945, p. 01.) The Universal Declaration of human rights adopted in 1948, too announced, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." (U.N. Gen. Ass. Res., 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, p. 71.)The word used in these declarations "All human being" and "Everyone" is intended for everyone, men and women alike. After the adoption of the Universal Declaration of human rights, the Commission on Human Rights drafted human rights covenant: (1) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (2) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (3) The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights, 1966. All these Covenant, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 compose the International Bill of Human Rights. All these covenants use the same word to prohibit discrimination as in U.N. Charter and in Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 02 of Covenant says: "Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.." (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, p. 173.)

International Human Rights Instruments for Women: Women's rights began to recognise in many countries as they revolved from feudal to representative forms of government. In the United States, the awareness for women's rights came with the ideals of American Revolution. Abigail Adams, wife of the second United States president, John Adams, demanded fair and equal treatment. Woman's suffrage movements began in the United States and Great Britain in the mid of 19th century and in a few European countries in the early 20th century. The United Nations declared the year 1975, as International Women's Year. Same year first world conference on women hosted by Mexico City, it highlighted the themes of "Equality, Development and Peace." Human rights of women emerged as a global

movement during 1976-1985, as the United Nations declare it Decade for women. From different back ground of geographic, cultural, religious, racial and class, women came together and organized to improve the statues of women. Many efforts have done for human rights of women, some are following:

- **Convention on Political Rights of Women (1952):**

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was approved 409th plenary meeting, on 20 December 1952 by the United National General Assembly. The Convention entered into force on 07 July, 1954. (Langley, Winston., 1999, p.71.) The Convention was the first international legislation protecting the equal status of women to exercise political rights. Moreover, it was the first international treaty to obligate its states to protect citizen's political rights. The Convention's purpose is to codify a basic international standard for women's political rights. (Cherif, Feryal M., 2015, p.271.) Convention asserts the rights of women to vote, to be eligible for election and to hold public office.

- **Convention on the Elimination of All form of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), (1979):**

The convention is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by United National General Assembly.(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Gen. Ass. resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, p.01.) Describe as an International Bill of Right for Women, it was instituted on 03 September, 1981 and has been ratified by 189 states. CEDAE is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate Discrimination against women in all areas and promotes women's equal rights. The Convention is structured in six parts with 30 articles in total. It lists the right of all girls and women. CEDAW says that all discriminations against girls and women must come to end.

- **World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna (14th to 25th June, 1993):**

The world conference on Human right was held at Vienna (Austria) from 14th to 25th June, 1993. Vienna Conference (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 25 June, 1993, p. 01.) adopted a two-part Vienna Declaration and a six-part 150 paragraph Programme of Action. In conference it was declared regarding women's human rights that, the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.

Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are

incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated. This can be achieved by legal measures and through national action and international cooperation in such fields as economic and social development, education, safe maternity and health care, and social support. The human rights of women should form an integral part of the United Nations human rights activities, including the promotion of all human rights instruments relating to women.

- **International Conference on Population and Development (1994):**

The International Conference on Population and Development was held in 1994 at Cairo (Egypt). The conference was on population and development, but it also focused on women's human rights. One of the main objectives (Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1995, p. 25.) of the conference was "to ensure that all women, as well as men, are provided with the education necessary for them to meet their basic human needs and to exercise their human rights." In Plan of Action, adopted by conference it was proclaimed that Countries should act to empower women and should take steps to eliminate inequalities between men and women as soon as possible by establishing mechanisms for women's equal participation and equitable representation at all levels of the political process and public life in each community and society and enabling women to articulate their concerns and needs.

- **World Conference on Women:**

Four United Nations sponsored global conference on women have been held, who internationally advocated for women's human rights. First world conference on women hosted by Mexico City in 1975, it highlighted the themes of "Equality, Development and Peace." The Second World Conference on Women convened in Copen Hagan in 1980, it highlights three major themes: "Education, Employment and Health." The third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985.

Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing (China) from 04th to 15th September, 1995. It was the fourth in series of United Nations sponsored global conference on Women. The conference was attended by representatives of 189 governments, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union and League of Arab States, as well as activists and organizations from across the world. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is widely known as the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights. At this conference, all participants were agreed on it that the status of women has advanced but that inequalities and obstacles are remain. Governments from around the world agreed on a comprehensive plan to achieve global legal equality.

In conference the United Nations Commission put a draft on the status of women, which describe 12 areas of concern (The Fourth United Nations Conference on women in Beijing, Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, p.16-17.) that impede the advancement of women. These critical areas of concern are: (1) Women and the environment; (2) Women in power and decision making; (3) The Girl child; (4) Women and the economy; (5) Women and poverty; (6) Violence against women; (7) Human rights of women; (8) Education and training of women; (9) Institutional mechanisms for advancement of women; (10) Women and health; (11) Women and the media; (12) Women and armed conflict.

- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000):** In 2000, the international countries agreed to achieve The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. All 191 UN member states have agreed to try to achieve. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000 commits world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The Eight Millennium Development Goals (Gen. Ass. Res. (A/55/2), 18 September 2000, p.01-09.) are: (1) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) to achieve universal primary education; (3) to promote gender equality and empower women; (4) to reduce child mortality; (5) to improve maternal health; (6) to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) to ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) to develop a global partnership for development. To achieve Goal 03rd Millennium Development Goals, 2000 emphasis to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels of education by 2015. To achieve goal 05th MDGs stress on two target: (1) to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75 percent; (2) to achieve universal access to reproductive health.

The Final MDGs Report, 2015 found (Report of MGDs, 2015, p.04.) that, “the primary school enrolment rate in the developing regions has reached 91 percent, and many more girls are now in school compared to 15 years ago. The under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, and maternal mortality is down 45 percent worldwide.”

- **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, (UNCSD) (2012):** The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio 2012, Rio+20 or Earth Summit 2012. The United Nation Conference on sustainable Development (Rio+20) took place in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on 20-22 June, 2012. At UNCSD, countries renewed their political commitment to sustainable development, agreed to establish a set of sustainable development goals and established a high level political forum on development. "The Future We Want"

Outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Proclaims that “We reaffirm the vital role of women and the need for their full and equal participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development, and decide to accelerate the implementation of our respective commitments in this regard as contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (U.N.T.S. vol. 1249, No. 20378, 03 September 1979, p.45. And also Gen. Ass. Res. [without reference to a Main Committee (A/66/L.56)] 66/288, on 27 July 2012, p. 45.) As well as Agenda 21, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration.” (Gen. Ass. Res. [without reference to a Main Committee (A/66/L.56)] 66/288, on 27 July 2012, p. 45.)

United Nation Bodies and Woman: Women empowerment and development is chief objective in all multipurpose campaigns and programs run by the United Nations. The current efforts of many international organizations to overcome poverty have illuminated the important role played by women in social and economic development. The United Nations supports women’s human rights through its poverty alleviation and support activities.

- **The Security Council:** The United Nations Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions specially regarding to women, peace and security. In 2000, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325, (U.N. Security Council Res. 1325, 2000, p.19-21) calling for increased participation of women in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution and a gender perspective all United Nations peace and security efforts, as well as in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent Security Council resolutions and United Nations Secretary-General reports on the same topic also call on all parties to conflicts to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in the context of armed conflict, while at the sometime recognizing women’s important role in peace processes as agents of change.

- **The Human Rights Council and its Mechanisms:** The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) (U. N. General Assembly Res. A/RES/60/251, 15 March 2006, p. 02.) is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world. The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva (Switzerland). With 47 states elected by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council has regularly held special panels on women’s rights and the integration of a gender perspective since its creation in 2006. The UNHRC investigates and addresses important thematic human rights issues such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women’s rights and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities. There is also a vast array of resolutions from the

Council which calls on States to implement their obligations relating to women's rights. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) also presents important opportunities to assess State compliance with its international obligations related to the human rights of women. Special Procedures Mandate is established by the Human Rights Council to examine particular thematic issues, or the human rights situation in a certain country. Certain special procedures mandates are specifically concerned with women's rights, such as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the working group on Discrimination against women in law and practice, and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

- **The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (U. N. ECOSOC Res. 11 (II), 21 JUNE 1946, p. 525.) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 1996, ECOSOC expanded the Commission's mandate (U. N. ECOSOC Resolution and decision of -E 1996/96, 1996, p. 57.) and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities. The Commission adopts multi-year programmes of work to appraise progress and make further recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action. These recommendations take the form of negotiated agreed conclusions on a priority theme. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination**

Against Women (CEDAW): The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an expert body established in 1982, is composed of 23 experts on women's issues from around the world. Committee watches over the progress for women; made in those countries that are the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979. Countries who have become party to the treaty (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979) are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights of the Convention are implemented. During its sessions

the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

- **United Nations Development Fund for Women**

(UNIFEM): The first world conference on Women in 1975 influenced the creation of UNIFEM. (Stange, Mary Zeiss; Oyster, Carol K.; Sloan, Jane E., February, 2011, p. 1496.) The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established in 1976 in conjunction with the United Nations Decade for Women (1976–85). UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. UNIFEM concentrates its financial and technical assistance in three key areas: reducing women's poverty, ending violence against women (including reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls), and promoting gender equality in democratic governance in times of war and peace. The organization reaches out to women worldwide via a network of regional offices and national committees. It also provides publications, including an annual report that documents the programmes and activities implemented to encourage women's empowerment and gender equality and a report providing data on programs implemented to reduce violence against women.

- **United Nations International Research and Training Institute For the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW):**

INSTRAW was created following the First world Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. (Shahani, Leticia Ramos, 2004, pp. 30–31.) The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was set up in 1976 as an autonomous part of the United Nations by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). UN-INSTRAW is a research and training institute dedicated to the advancement of women. Since inception it has carried out research and training activities on different topics. The Institute highlights the gender perspective as an essential element in the analysis and implementation of programmes and projects aimed at achieving peace, sustainable development and good governance.

UN Women: In July, 2010 the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to address challenges gender equality issues. Four previously distinct part of the United Nations system were merged and build the UN Women, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment: (1) Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); (2) International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); (3) Office of the Special Adviser on Gender

Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and (4) United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life.

Worldwide Position and Facts regarding of Women: Human rights and fundamental freedoms should be bright rights, but worldwide many countries have failed to accord human rights of women. They are often become the victims of human rights abuses. They cannot participate in decisions-making that affect them and are denied to take participate in political activities. There are many examples of their human rights abusing: Prevent them for going to school, discrimination in employment, denied for equal rights to land and property, honor killing, rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, acid attacking, reproductive coercion, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, obstetric violence and many others.

Only 24.3 per cent of women were in all national parliamentarians as of February 2019, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995. As of June 2019, 11 women are serving as Head of State and 12 are serving as Head of Government. There are no legal quotas to promote women's political participation in any country. A quarter of girls aged 15-24 (116 million) in developing countries have never completed primary school. The United States government estimates that 600,000 to 800,000 victims (mostly women and children) are trafficked globally each year, and 14,500 to 17,500 are trafficked in the United States. (U.S. Department of State, 2006, p. 04.)

Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18. Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: it is estimated that 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls.

Women represent almost half of the 244 million migrants and half of the 19.6 million refugees worldwide. (UN General Assembly- Report of Secretary General, 2016, p.01.) There are about 42 million prostitutes in the world, living all over the world (though most of Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa lacks data, studied countries in that large region rank as top sex tourism destinations). Today, women represent over 40% of the global labour force. Approximately 70% of women in developed countries and 60% in developing countries are engaged in paid employment. (Facts on Women at Work ILO, 2016, p.01.)

Globally, over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. Of 189 economies assessed in 2018, 104 economies still have laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, 59 economies have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 18 economies, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working. (World Bank report on Women, *Business and the Law, 2018, p.02.*) According to the World Bank women earn on average about 60% to 75% of men's wages. If the pay gap between men and women were to close, the world's GDP could grow by \$12 trillion by 2025.

Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights. Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. (WHO facts sheet, 29 November, 2017, p. 02.)

According to the United Nations, 37,000 girls under the age of 18 are married each day. We now have the greatest number of married girls and girls at-risk of child marriage than ever before. 1 in 3 girls in the developing world are married before 18; 1 in 9 are married before the age of 15. If present trend continues, more than 140 million girls will be married before the age of 18 in the next decade.

Almost **21 million people are victims of forced labour** among them are 11.4 million women and girls and 9.5 million men and boys.

According to the Global report on Trafficking in persons 2018, girls account for 23 percent of all trafficking victims, up from 21 percent in 2014 and 10 percent in 2004. The vast majority of all human trafficking victims are some 71 per cent; among them women and girls and one third are children. (Global Report of UNODC, 2016, p.07.)

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