



Sreenidhi Model

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ECONOMIC and SOCIAL COUNCIL

Study Guide



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Topic

Economic, Social and Political Empowerment of Women

About ECOSOC

The Economic and Social Council is the United Nations' central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development.¹

Mandate

ECOSOC, one of the six main organs of the United Nations established by the UN Charter in 1946, is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

ECOSOC serves as the central mechanism for the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, and supervises the subsidiary and expert bodies in the economic, social and environmental fields.

ECOSOC has undergone reforms in the last decade to strengthen the Council and its working methods, giving special attention to the integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields.

Functions

ECOSOC engages a wide variety of stakeholders – policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, major groups, foundations, business sector representatives and 3,200+ registered non-governmental organizations – in a productive dialogue on sustainable development through a programmatic cycle of meetings. The work of the Council is guided by an issue-based approach, and there is an annual theme that accompanies each programmatic cycle, ensuring a sustained and focused discussion among multiple stakeholders.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>

empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

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 in resolution 1996/6 expanded the Commission's mandate 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.

Economic Empowerment

"Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

But they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies. And, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities." - UN Women

Facts and Figures ²

- When more women work, economies grow. An increase in female labour force participation—or a reduction in the gap between women's and men's labour force participation—results in faster economic growth .
- Evidence from a range of countries shows that increasing the share of household income controlled by women, either through their own earnings or cash transfers, changes spending in ways that benefit children .
- Increasing women and girls' education contributes to higher economic growth. Increased educational attainment accounts for about 50 per cent of the economic growth in [OECD](#)

² UN Women

countries over the past 50 years , of which over half is due to girls having had access to higher levels of education and achieving greater equality in the number of years spent in education between men and women . But, for the majority of women, significant gains in education have not translated into better labour market outcomes.

- A study using data from 219 countries from 1970 to 2009 found that, for every one additional year of education for women of reproductive age, child mortality decreased by 9.5 per cent .
- Women tend to have less access to formal financial institutions and saving mechanisms. While 55 per cent of men report having an account at a formal financial institution, only 47 per cent of women do worldwide. This gap is largest among lower middle-income economies as well as in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa .



The World of Work ³

Women continue to participate in labour markets on an unequal basis with men. In 2013, the male employment-to-population ratio stood at 72.2 per cent, while the ratio for females was 47.1 per cent .

Globally, women are paid less than men. Women in most countries earn on average only 60 to 75 per cent of men's wages. Contributing factors include the fact that

women are more likely to be wage workers and unpaid family workers; that women are more likely to engage in low-productivity activities and to work in the informal sector.

- It is calculated that women could increase their income globally by up to 76 per cent if the employment participation gap and the wage gap between women and men were closed. This is calculated to have a global value of USD 17 trillion .
- Women bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work. Women devote 1 to 3 hours more a day to housework than men; 2 to 10 times the amount of time a day to care (for children, elderly, and the sick), and 1 to 4 hours less a day to market activities . In the European Union for example, 25 per cent of women report care and other family and personal responsibilities as the reason for not being in the labour force, versus only three per cent of men . This directly and negatively impacts women's participation in the labour force.

³ Un Women

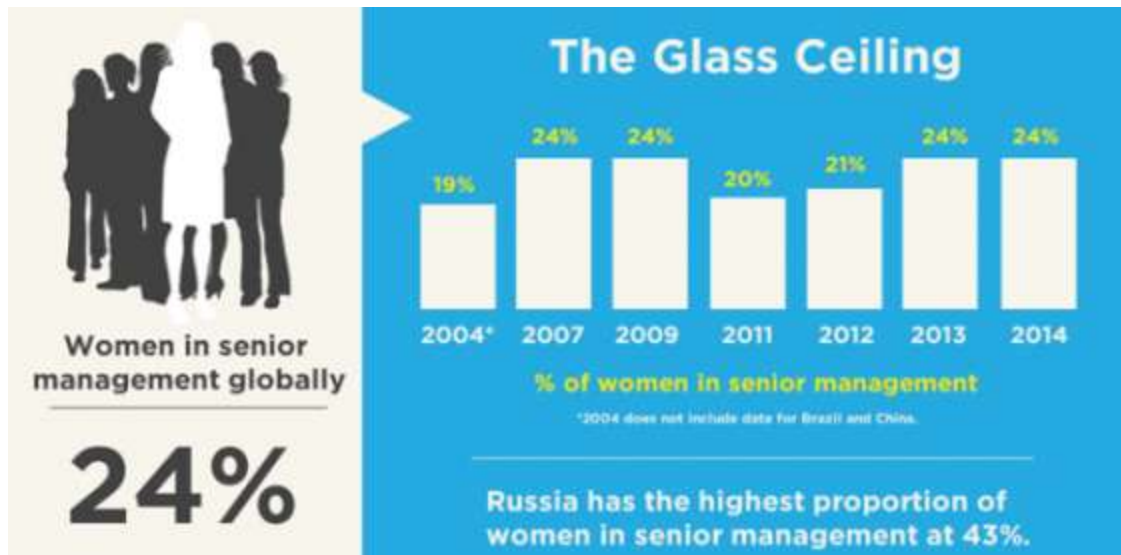
Infographics: The Global Findex Database: Women and Financial Inclusion

- Gender inequalities in time use are still large and persistent in all countries. When paid and unpaid work are combined, women in developing countries work more than men, with less time for education, leisure, political participation and self-care . **Despite some improvements over the last 50 years, in virtually every country, men spend more time on leisure each day while women spend more time doing unpaid housework .**
- More women than men work in vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs.
- Gender differences in laws affect both developing and developed economies, and women in all regions. Almost 90 per cent of 143 economies studied have at least one legal difference restricting women’s economic opportunities . Of those, 79 economies have laws that restrict the types of jobs that women can do . And husbands can object to their wives working and prevent them from accepting jobs in 15 economies .
- Women’s economic equality is good for business. Companies greatly benefit from increasing leadership opportunities for women, which is shown to increase organizational effectiveness. It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness .

Macroeconomic Policies and Social Protection

Macroeconomic and social policies are crucial instruments guiding the achievement of women’s empowerment and gender equality. Macroeconomic policies do not necessarily affect men and women in the same ways. Gender-blind policies can perpetuate limits on women’s ability to gain decent employment, for example. Given wide gaps between women and men in access to jobs and other economic assets, policies deliberately crafted to close these stand a far greater chance of improving women’s lives and advancing gender equality. Social protection policies play important roles in opening women’s access to labour markets, addressing economic risks faced by working families, and helping poor households meet basic needs.⁴

⁴ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/macroeconomics-policies-and-social-protection#sthash.IF356uus.dpuf>



Social Issues

Violence Against Women

“A pandemic in diverse forms”

- According to a 2013 global review of available data, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence. However, some national violence studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner .
- It is estimated that of all women killed in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members.
- More often than not, cases of violence against women go unreported. For instance, a study based on interviews with 42,000 women across the 28 Member States of the European Union revealed that only 14 per cent of women reported their most serious incident of intimate partner violence to the police, and 13 per cent reported their most serious incident of non-partner violence to the police .
- Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age). More than one in three—or some 250 million—were married before 15. Child brides are often unable to effectively negotiate safer sex, leaving themselves vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, along with early pregnancy. The fact that girls are not physically mature enough to give birth, places both mothers and their babies at risk.

⁵ Infographics <http://www.womenlobby.org/>

- Trafficking ensnares millions of women and girls in modern-day slavery. Women and girls represent 55 per cent of the estimated 20.9 million victims of forced labour worldwide, and 98 per cent of the estimated 4.5 million forced into sexual exploitation .

Extra vulnerabilities

- Women in urban areas are twice as likely as men to experience violence, particularly in developing countries [11].
- In New Delhi, a 2010 study found that 66 per cent of women reported experiencing sexual harassment between two and five times during the past year .

Passing and Implementing Effective Laws and Policies ⁶

Passing and Implementing Effective Laws and Policies Legal systems and public policy frameworks have often overlooked the crisis of violence against women. In failing to protect the rights and well-being of survivors or punish perpetrators, many reflect social biases tolerating violence. Domestic violence and harmful traditional practices have often been seen as private matters that are “outside justice.” Laws and policies can provide the foundation for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to violence against women (VAW).

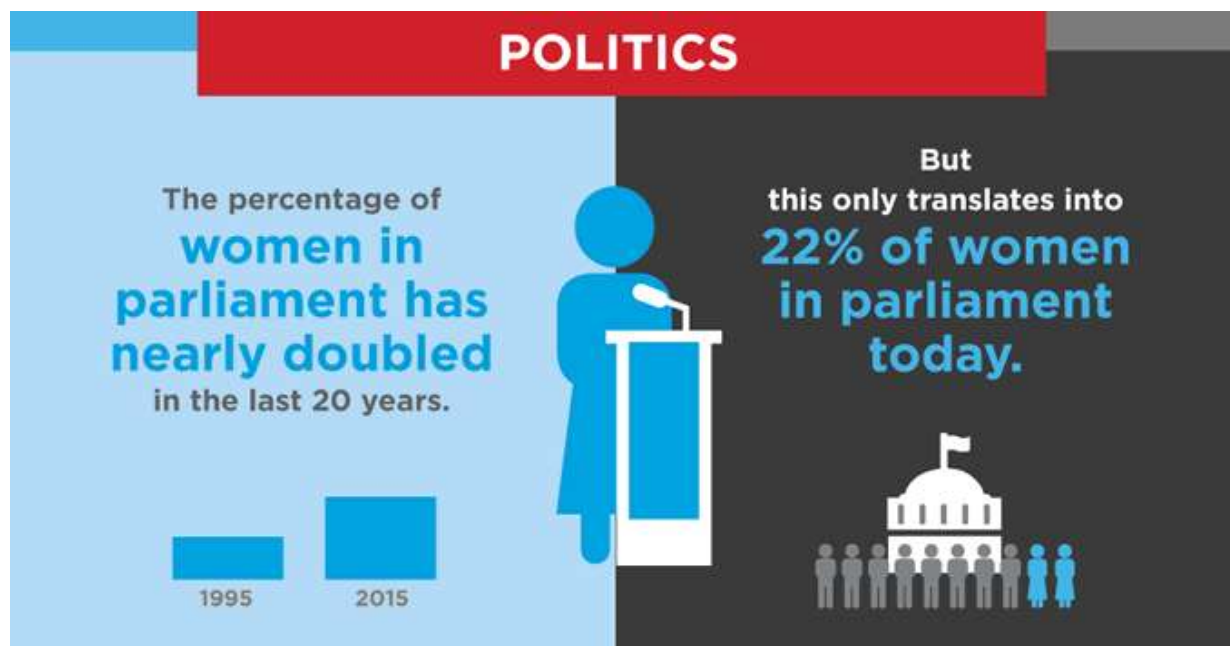
While a historic number of laws and policies against violence are now in place, implementation is still lagging behind. Measures to strengthen effective implementation should include training of officials who handle cases of violence against women, the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and impact evaluation as well as accountability and better coordination. Committing adequate human and financial resources is also essential.

Women’s Leadership and Political Participation

From the local to the global level, women’s leadership and political participation are restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected office, the civil service, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance. Women face several obstacles to participating in political life. Structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women’s options to run for office. Capacity gaps

⁶ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/passing-strong-laws-and-policies#sthash.OhQD6qT8.dpuf>

mean women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders.



As the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women’s political participation notes, “Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.”

Individual women have overcome these obstacles with great acclaim, and often to the benefit of society at large. But for women as a whole, the playing field needs to be level, opening opportunities for all.⁷

Education and Training of Women⁸

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Investing in

⁷ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation#sthash.II2bbaNY.dpuf>
Infographics: UN Women

⁸ UN.org

formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.

Conventions/ Resolutions

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW)

This convention is also known as “The Women’s bill of rights” , it is a bedrock for UN women programs. It has been signed by more than 185 countries in the world.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) . It has been adopted by governments at the 1995 fourth world conference on women , it aims to document the commitment of governments to the enhancements and implications of women’s rights in societies ; it is reviewed every 5 years , the last review and improvement has been made in 2010 .

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women , Peace and Security (2000). It has affirmed that war affects women in various aspects , and reaffirmed the role of women in decision –making processes concerning the peace and security. Four additional resolutions were adopted by the UN security council on peace and security :1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960(2010).

Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals . A set of goals that were adopted by all UN member states which must be achieved in a specific time including , promoting gender equality , eliminating poverty and reducing famine by 2015 .

Points To Be Addressed

Promoting of women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources

Training in entrepreneurship and use of information and communication technologies

Facilitate access to financial resources and micro finance

Fair representation of women in leadership positions

Increasing women’s participation in decision-making

Enhancing women’s political participation

Additional Resources

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/economy.htm>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/poverty>

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>

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<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/macro-economics-policies-and-social-protection#sthash.IF356uus.dpuf>