



## **Oasis International School Model United Nations**

Economic and Social Council

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Guiding Package

Topic 1: Increasing sustainable development practices through gender, racial, social and economical equality

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## **Abstract**

Balancing current social, economical and environmental objectives--or--needs is the first and most important step leading to meeting the needs of the future and attaining sustainable development. Women's significant role in every aspect of the society creates a requisite link between gender equality and sustainable development. Women's knowledge and collective actions have a huge potential in playing and improving several aspects of sustainable development. Women should be viewed as central actors in achieving and moving towards sustainable development. As a result, promoting gender equality and empowering women is essential to finding solutions to sustainable development issues such as water, poverty eradication, natural resource management, energy, sustainable urbanization as well as food security and nutrition. Some of the major issues that may hinder the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment may be a lack of infrastructure, cultural and religious practices, lack of implementation methods, and lack of training. The MDGs<sup>1</sup> must be met, and the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs<sup>2</sup> must be developed, bearing in mind member states' sovereignty, cultural and religious practices, and other regional or global ideologies. Proper implementation of achieving goals must be made, and understanding where the MDGs fell short may assist in planning the future priorities for action. Gender equality and sustainable development can easily be achieved through support from the United Nations entities and member states.

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<sup>1</sup> Millennium development goals

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable development goals

## Introduction:

Over the past four decades, sustainable development has become a key goal within the United Nations (UN) system and at all levels of governance throughout the world. Sustainable development is defined as *'the ability to meet society's current needs without sacrificing the possibility of society meeting its own requirements in the future'* by *Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report*. The UN has divided sustainable development into three pillars, each of which women can play a role in: social development, environmental protection, and economic development. Statistics reflect that women often take part in job sectors such as construction, manufacturing, financial and business services, and engineering, which are essential to maintaining a green economy. Furthermore, applying sustainable development ideas in female-run households can lead to a reduction in poverty, domestic violence, environmental issues and health problems. As a result of these and other statistical outcomes, a number of UN entities such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) have addressed gender equality and empowering women in order to achieve sustainable development goals.

### Definition of Key Terms:

- Sustainable Development: economic development that is conducted without exhaustion of natural resources.
- Millennium Development goals: the eight international development goals that range from eradicate extreme poverty and decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS to providing universal primary education. These goals were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. The goals are defined on the following site: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
- Gender Equality: the state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender.
- Women Empowerment: Increasing the economic, political, social, educational or spiritual strength of an entity or entities.
- Environmental Protection: Environmental protection is a practice of protecting the natural environment on individual, organizational or governmental levels, for the benefit of both the natural environment and humans.
- Social Development: Putting people as the priority, in the centre of development
- Economic Development: Putting money as the priority, in the centre of development
- Requirements/Needs: A thing that is mandatorily needed or wanted, in our case, the empowerment of women for sustainable development.

## **Background Information:**

### International and Regional Framework:

A focus on sustainable development within the international community emerged in the early 1970s and has since grown at a quick pace. However, the UN's focus on supporting women originated in the Charter of the United Nations. The UN has often discussed sustainability, development and gender equality simultaneously, yet separately, in previous years. In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) emphasized the notion that the two concepts should be integrated.

### Sustainable Development:

In 1972, the UN Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm, Sweden, where a discussion of the “rights of the human family to a healthy and productive environment” led to further conversations on access to food, water, family planning, and related issues. Almost a decade later, the International Union for the Conservation of Natural Resources (IUCN) published a document called the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) which stated that nature cannot be conserved without development that relieves the impoverished across the globe, thus emphasizing the inherent connection between both conservation and development. In 1982, the World Charter for Nature (A/RES/37/7) was adopted by the UN General Assembly (GA), stating that “man's needs can be met only by ensuring the proper functioning of natural systems.” One year later, the GA created the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in order to formulate “a global agenda for change.” In 1992, the first UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) occurred in Rio de Janeiro, where Agenda 21: A Programme of Action for Sustainable Development was developed, resulting in increased Member State participation in working towards sustainable development. In 1993, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was formed, and in 1997, the GA held its 19th Special Session (UNGASS-19) with the goal of creating a “Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.” Ten years after Agenda 21 was developed, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in 2002 to renew the world's obligation to work

towards sustainable development.<sup>201</sup> Most recently, in 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) occurred, where sustainability issues were discussed in conjunction with MDGs 3 and 5, the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the post-2015 development agenda, the latter two of which are ongoing discussions related to the development and renewing of international development goals following the 2015 expiration of the MDGs. By the end of this conference, numerous entities and bodies made over 700 commitments to achieving the sustainability agenda, resulting in pledges of over \$500 billion for various actions such as empowering female entrepreneurs in Africa, planting 100 million trees, recycling at least 800,000 tons of PVC per year, and greening 10,000 square km of desert.

#### Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women:

The support of women's rights was present in the 1945 Charter of the UN, and CSW was created the following year by ECOSOC in order to work towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. This Commission emphasized the need for the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights to include gender-neutral language. In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the GA, which highlighted the rights of women in relation to gender equality and discrimination. In 1985, the Third World Conference on Women took place in Nairobi, where non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in a forum that discussed the movement of gender equality which led to the creation of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). In 1995, the landmark Fourth World Conference on Women resulted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which has been described as recognizing "the need to shift the focus from women to the concept of gender, recognizing that the entire structure of society, and all relations between men and women within it, had to be re-evaluated." Understanding this, MDGs 3 and 5 on gender equality and improving maternal health, respectively, emphasized attention to gender issues that the UN system continues to address.

#### Promoting Sustainable Development Practices:

The Economic and Social Council is a key facilitator in the UN system to achieve international goals on sustainable development. Generally, ECOSOC focuses on six building blocks of sustainable development that are recognized throughout other UN bodies and entities: water, poverty eradication, natural resource management, energy, sustainable urbanization, and food security and nutrition. Each of these key areas illustrates the impact that gender equality and women's empowerment can have on promoting sustainable development practices. Specifically, ECOSOC and the UN help facilitate the work of entities and bodies that focus on these building blocks and women, through the interaction of NGOs and agencies. In turn, these interactions can lead to policy coordination in order to achieve specific goals, such as the MDGs and SDGs. By understanding the interdependence of the MDGs and the SDGs, ECOSOC can use gender equality and women empowerment, along with a global partnership for development, as a starting place to help lead to the achievement each of the remaining goals. For example, empowering women can lead to solving development issues, which in turn can lead to the elimination of poverty and the increase of education.

#### Water:

The UN Inter-Agency Mechanism on All Freshwater Related Issues, Including Sanitation (UN-Water) focuses on several goals: water resources, water governance, water-related disasters, wastewater pollution and water quality, and drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. In relation to these goals, UN-Water has found evidence that using a gender-sensitive developmental approach can be effective in both the conservation of water and sustainability of water. For example, 90% of water and wood gathering in Africa is done by women, and female involvement in the creation and monitoring of water projects can increase the effectiveness of such projects up to six or seven times. As a result of these successes, UN-Water recommends women and men as equals at all levels of water resource management and governance, thus removing women and girls from unpaid activities and disempowerment as well as simultaneously addressing water sustainability and other issues. These efforts can be effective in approaching this issue; for example, a Tanzanian study found that reducing the length of distance women and girls must travel for water has resulted in increased school attendance by 12%.



### Poverty Eradication:

According to UNDP, women are often the primary producers of food and carry the burden of farming land, carrying water, grinding grain, and cooking. Yet, women often lack access to education, land, financial resources, and jobs, which in turn can lead to inefficient practices regarding food production. As a result, UNDP focuses on promoting women's and girls' economic rights and opportunities, including women in planning, budgeting, and policy-making processes, and ensuring equal access to essential services such as health and education. One successful example of poverty reduction took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where unemployed women over 40-years-old were trained in a program to become professional nannies. As a result of this program, women were able to obtain jobs even before completing training, thus leading to economic empowerment and eventually, a reduction in poverty.<sup>249</sup> This initiative has positively affected over 47,000 people so far, and more than 140 similar projects have been successfully executed.<sup>250</sup> By advancing women's economic empowerment through granting access to land, resources, paid work, and planning and budgeting, women are able to maintain a financial livelihood which in turn assists in the eradication of poverty.

### Natural Resource Management:

Lack of access to natural resources, particularly water, minerals, and land, can often cause conflict within Member States. Because of key responsibilities of gathering water and managing land, women play an important role in managing those natural resources. Specifically, educating women on irrigation and water management can lead to higher productivity while also addressing issues of soil erosion that can occur through subsistence agriculture which women are normally limited to using. As a result of gaining water entitlements, women can avoid catalysts for violence and promote economic recovery through their participation in decision-making. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has also proposed addressing gender equality in natural resource management through training modules on gender, collecting data on gender analysis in relation to water management, and addressing women's access to

control and ownership of water resources. For concrete evidence of the connection between women and natural resource management, a case study in Senegal found that female members of a community were able to revive a rare mangrove species by planting 2000 hectares of the plant. Women were the key actors in this instance because a majority of the men were engaged in other work activities. As a result, the mangroves influenced the local environment by increasing local oysters, honeybees, and carp.

#### Energy:

According to UN-Women, women and girls often lack access to modern energy sources. As a result, women in many Member States across the world use inefficient stoves that can result in lung disease, lung cancer, and pneumonia due to indoor air pollution. Education on safe cooking solutions can help reduce climate emissions while saving lives. Additionally, women can be educated regarding solar engineering that will make them both technically and financially self-sufficient, in turn contributing to more renewable energy options. An example of this occurred in Mauritania, where a solar-powered oven was installed in a small village. Over 250 households use the oven, which can output a large number of loaves of bread, in turn resulting in products that can be sold. This and similar efforts reduce poverty, empowers women, and utilizes sustainable energy simultaneously.

#### Sustainable Urbanization:

According to ECOSOC, “urbanization can be an effective tool for the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.” Consideration of gender is important within sustainable urbanization, particularly in relation to urban migration, slum growth, and urban services such as sanitation, water, and transportation. Over half of the world’s population lives in urban areas, but women and girls often suffer negative aspects of urbanization unequally. Negative effects of urbanization include lack of access to clean water, sanitation issues, low-quality housing, unemployment, and crime. Women are often affected more by these than men because of unequal poverty rates and lack of access to resources to improve living situations. As a result, empowering women starting within their own homes is one way to increase the standard of living. Increasing affordable and low-income housing options can also

ease the burden of child-rearing, income-earning, and household management, and make a neighborhood more habitable as a result. One successful case study related to this took place in Bangladesh, where women participated in a training offered by UNDP's "Urban Partnerships in Poverty Reduction," in order to understand how to manage their finances. As a result of that training, a series of slums were transformed into small businesses, thus assisting in cleaning up the area and increasing the ability to obtain safe sanitation and water.

#### Food Security and Nutrition:

Food security has been defined as "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life." As noted previously, women are often in charge of growing and preparing food for the home. However, they are often limited in their access to lands, must only eat food remaining after male family members have eaten, and providing care for family which can prevent them from spending as much time growing and gathering food. Yet, when women have control over assets and what to produce, they tend to produce food that allows for family security, whereas men tend to produce what produces the most cash crops. By assisting women in the training of hygiene and sanitation, improving food processing, increasing access to decision-making, and creating gender-sensitive indicators, all of which can lead to safer practices and better nutrition, women can be empowered while also addressing food security and nutrition sustainability issues. In an FAO training project in Afghanistan, women who were primary producers of poultry and eggs were trained in order to increase their production. As a result of their training, in the first three years, the women produced 20 million eggs, consuming 7.5 million themselves. The remaining eggs were then traded or sold, and this contributed to family food security and nutrition and assisted the families financially.

### **Major countries involved:**

This topic concerns every single country in the world, especially countries where sustainable development did not have enough help and aid over the last few years and maybe decades. As for organization involved in the situation, many NGO's and UN based organizations helped ease the problem, such as:

- AWID: Asia Pacific Forum of Women
- UN-Water: United Nations Water organization
- UN-Habitat: United Nations Habitat organization
- UN-Women: United Nations Women organization
- UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
- UN Women Watch: United Nation Women Watch
- UN-DESA: United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- FAO UN: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- UNEGE: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality

There are many other organizations involved in the matter, and they all help in one way or another, depending on each entity's job and field, and each and everyone of them is crucial to build enough momentum to the empowerment of women. Countries concerned for this topic, as rare as ever, will not be the ones most vulnerable to financial crisis, or low GDPs, but will actually be the countries that have the widest ratio of equality between men and women, as those countries are the ones most touched, not only there will be gender equality in those countries, but it will also support sustainable development practices.

Therefore, the major countries involved, would be divided into two parties, one which aims to help solving other countries' gender inequality (countries with the lowest gaps of inequality), and the other being the countries concerned by that inequality.

<b><i><u>Helping countries</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>Concerned countries</u></i></b>
United States of America	China
United Kingdom	Egypt
Russia	Nigeria
Sweden	Greece
Denmark	Brazil
Netherlands	Italy
Spain	Turkey
Germany	Korea

### **UN involvement:**

As mentioned above, the United Nations have put pen on paper to help the matter, and thus, by far, they have done their best. More than 75% of the organizations involved in the matter are UN-related, such as UN-Water, FAO-UN, UN-Women and many others.

### **Possible solutions:**

Many international commitments support women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality. UN Women supports women's economic empowerment in line with these, and with the growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development.

Working with a variety of partners, UN programmes promote women's ability to secure decent jobs, accumulate assets, and influence institutions and public policies determining growth and

development. One critical area of focus involves advocacy to measure women's unpaid care work, and to take actions so women and men can more readily combine it with paid employment.

In all our economic empowerment programmes, UN Women reaches out to women most in need, often by engaging with grassroots and civil society organizations. Particularly marginalized groups include rural women, domestic workers, some migrants and low-skilled women. The aims are higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- How to empower Women?
- How does empowering women boost sustainable development?
- Will empowering women really make a difference in sustainable development?
- What may hinder the achievement of gender equality?
- How can those solutions be implemented in each pillar or building block of sustainable development?
- How can the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs be developed to promote sustainable development practices through gender equality and the empowerment of women?
- What shortfalls of the MDGs can be addressed through reaching the goals of the SDGs, particularly in relation to sustainable development and gender equality and women's empowerment?

## **Useful Links:**

- <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-programme/gender-food/en/>
- <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/women/index.shtml>
- <http://www.uncsd2012.org/history.html>
- <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/overview.html>
- <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/sustainable.shtml>

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