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INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE:

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. It became the leading effort in creating and strengthening a more powerful and influential institution that could champion women's rights globally, while influencing policy development and holding the UN system answerable on gender equality.

UN Women holds a vital position in setting global standards for gender equality. However, challenges persist, such as lack of access to decent work, healthcare, and education. Women in all parts of the world continue to face violence and discrimination. UN Women support women in all aspects of life, focusing on five priorities: women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

COMMITTEE MANDATE:

The United Nations Committee on the Status of Women (UNW) has several key powers and a broad mandate to address issues related to women's rights and gender equality. UNW is responsible for making policy recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly on gender equality and women's empowerment. This includes recommendations related to women's participation in the political sphere and the digital economy in developing countries. The committee promotes awareness of women's issues and advocates for gender-sensitive policies, strategies, and actions. It also mobilizes support for initiatives aimed at advancing women's rights.

UNW assesses the progress of member states in achieving gender equality and prepares regular reports such as the implementation of international commitments related to women's rights (CEDAW). It has the authority to draft and propose resolutions on issues concerning women's

rights and gender equality. These resolutions can focus on political participation, economic empowerment, and more.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Increasing gender equality and enhancing women's economic empowerment through work opportunities are important steps in achieving sustainable development. Women's economic empowerment increases economic diversification and income equality for shared prosperity. However, gender inequalities in employment and job quality result in gaps in access to social protection, such as pensions, unemployment benefits, or maternity protection. Education, upskilling, and re-skilling—especially to keep pace with rapid technological transformations affecting jobs—are critical for women's and girls' health and wellbeing, as well as their income-generation opportunities and participation in the formal labor market, but due to the global gender gap women are less likely to be economically secure.

Weak legal and international frameworks become a trap of economic inequality for women; restricting access to fair pay, property ownership and the safety of their work environment often leading to job discrimination or unsafe work-place conditions. Removing discriminatory laws and putting in place legal frameworks that advance gender equality are prerequisites to achieving economic well-being of women.

KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Gender Equality

The state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender. The committee promotes awareness of women's issues and advocates for gender-sensitive policies, strategies, and actions. It also mobilizes support for initiatives aimed at advancing women's rights.

Developing Economies

Nations with a lower industrial base, lower average income, and a lower Human Development Index (HDI) compared to wealthy, industrialized countries.

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the ownership of finances, investments, property, and gaining education.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Social protection

Social protection is concerned with protecting and helping those who are poor and vulnerable, such as children, women, older people, people living with disabilities, the displaced, the unemployed, and the sick.

Economically secure

Having a stable financial situation, income, or resource baseline that protects you from poverty, sudden shocks, or hard times.

Colonialism

The practice by which a powerful country takes political and economic control of a dependent territory, region, or people.

The Industrial Revolution

The process of change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing.

Maternity Protection

Enables women to combine their reproductive and productive roles successfully and to promote equal opportunities and treatment in employment and occupation, without prejudice to health or economic security.

Financial Autonomy

Financial autonomy refers to a university's ability to decide freely on its internal financial affairs. The ability to manage its funds independently enables an institution to set and realise its strategic aims.

Macroeconomic growth

Macroeconomics is the field of economics that examines the overarching mechanisms and dynamics influencing national and global economies. It is the long-term increase in a country's total production of goods and services.

Macroeconomics

A branch of economics that studies an entire economy on a large scale, focusing on key indicators like gross domestic product (GDP), inflation, and unemployment.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT STATUS:

Historical Context:

Women's productivity in pre-colonial society was obvious when they labored in the fields side by side with their men. They raised children and kept house, which is just as much a part of economic activity as production for the market. With the first wave of colonialism women saw the erosion of their economic autonomy, which was promised during the pre-colonial period. With the erosion of their economic standing and access to resources, the period saw the loss of land as colonial administrations rewrote laws, promising property to men. With the dismantling of the previous economic structure women were left heavily depending on men.

Although women played crucial roles in the global supply chains of agricultural products and bore primary responsibility for cooking food, they were often the last to eat and consumed the least. Furthermore, employers consistently assigned women employees lesser rations and lower calorific entitlements than men, even when they performed labor-intensive work.

During the past two centuries, the work patterns of Western Civilization have changed drastically, particularly those of women. The development of the factory system removed the workplace from the home for the first time in history. This separated women from their children, putting a strain on family ties and adversely affecting female productivity. By the middle of the nineteenth century, men were earning enough to retire their wives and children from the work force in vast numbers.

Current status:

Currently legal forms are managing to improve the economic rights of women in developing economies; however, deep gaps remain. One in every 10 women is living in extreme poverty (10.3 per cent). If current trends continue, by 2030, an estimated 8 per cent of the world's female population; 342.4 million women and girls will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day. Most (220.9 million) will reside in sub-Saharan Africa. This shows that women are less likely to have social protection acquired through employment.

Women are more food insecure than men. Gender gaps in food insecurity have grown from 1.7 per cent in 2019 to more than 4 per cent in 2021, with 31.9 per cent of women moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6 per cent of men. This is even more acute for older and indigenous women, women of African descent, those living in rural and remote areas, and those with disabilities.

The gender gap in bank account ownership has dropped in 2021 after years of stagnation, although rates vary across economies. In developing economies the gap stands at 6 percent. While digitally 37 percent of women do not have access to the internet.

KEY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FRAMEWORKS:

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

- a. **Article 11:** Mandates equal employment opportunities with equal pay, the right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security, all benefits and conditions of service, and protection against dismissal due to pregnancy and maternity.
- b. **Article 13:** Guarantees the right to family benefits, the right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.
- c. **Article 14:** Mandates equal access to agricultural credit, land ownership, technology, and participation in economic planning. Furthermore, to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency.

ILO Conventions:

- a. **Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100):** Equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. This ensures that men and women receive equal benefits, in cash or kind, for the same, similar, or different jobs that are shown to be of equal value, based on objective, gender-neutral criteria. This approach focuses not only on cases where women earn less than men for the same work but also addresses wage disparities arising from women being assigned to lower-paid "women's jobs."
- b. **Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111):** Convention No. 111 affirms that discrimination constitutes a violation of rights enunciated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It upholds the fact that all people, irrespective of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, economic security and equal opportunity. Consequently, it ensures that women are not trapped in undervalued and unsafe occupations, enhancing women's capacity to earn, control assets and ensures independent economic autonomy.

- c. **Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183):** Protects the health of working mothers and their babies by ensuring paid leaves, health safety at work. It provides at least 14 weeks of leave at a rate of at least two-thirds of previous earnings, paid by social insurance or public funds. Also, fathers undertaking a more active role in caregiving is likely to be one of the most significant social developments of the twenty-first century.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966):

Equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights. Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work. It provides equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (SDG 5):

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. It undertakes reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

Beijing Platform for Action (1995):

Promotion of financial autonomy and equal access to productive resources. It also focuses on women's financial independence and removal of workplace barriers. Important measures such as work-life balance policies can accelerate change, which are introduced in this convention. Embedding gender parity democracy into law, protecting women in public life, and resourcing civil society can help safeguard and fast track gains.

Maputo Protocol (2003):

Adopted by the African Union (AU), it guarantees the right to equal pay, equal access to employment, and mandates the protection of widows and their inheritance rights. Its emphasis on equal rights and representation has been essential in increasing the number of African women who hold political and other decision-making positions across the African region.

Convention of Belém do Pará (1994):

While economic violence most commonly occurred in the home, it could also be enabled and perpetrated by the State through discriminatory legal frameworks which restricted women's access to credit, employment, social protection, or property and land rights. Hence, the convention addresses economic violence faced by women such as the controlling of financial resources and rejection of employment. It recognizes that discrimination and abuse restricts a woman's ability to participate equally in the economy.

ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Inclusive Agenda:

Women's participation in the region's labor force is systematically lower than men's partly due to women's unequal share of care responsibilities in households. It expands care services, such as kindergartens, and enhancing care-supporting workplaces through parental leave can ease the time constraints on women and girls with care responsibilities. Improving the status of women workers in the care economy requires expanding social protections and improving labour conditions, including wages, equal opportunities, and freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS:

A/RES/79/223 (Women in Development):

Reaffirms that promoting the full and equal participation of women and girls in economic, social, and political spheres along with equal access to economic and productive resources, technology is vital to the achievement of sustainable development and significantly enhance economic growth and productivity. Promotes of equal access to and control over economic and productive resources, decent work, social protection, inclusive and equitable quality education, health and technology, addressing barriers to their empowerment and their realization and enjoyment of their human rights is of fundamental importance and has a multiplier effect for achieving sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

A/RES/52/195 (Women in Development):

It reaffirms that gender equality has fundamental importance for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development. It recognizes women's contributions in all sectors of the economy especially the agriculture, industry and services sector, while also taking into account the denial or lack of equal rights and access to education, training and credit facilities and the lack of control over land, capital, technology and other areas of production. It ensures women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace and that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.

A/RES/62/206 (Women in Development):

Lack of economic empowerment and independence increases women's vulnerability to a range of negative consequences, including the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, and that the neglect of the full enjoyment of human rights by women severely limits their opportunities in public and private life. Women's disproportionate responsibilities for domestic work result in a lack of economic autonomy and influence in economic decision-making within households and in society at all levels. Hence, it emphasizes that eliminating barriers to women's economic and public life directly accelerates productivity, efficiency, and macroeconomic growth in developing regions.

ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS:

Grassroot Women Organizations (WGOs):

GWOs have a deep appreciation of the multi-faceted issues that can affect the ability of women and girls to become full participants in society, and they often offer programs that address those issues—programs that cover skills development, violence prevention, education about legal rights, and access to maternal and reproductive health care, among other topics. Moreover, access to money provided through charities and social funds which offer loans to women who lack bank access.

AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development):

AWID is a global feminist, membership movement-support organisation working to achieve gender justice and women's human rights worldwide. It challenges economic systems that drive inequality and create sustainable alternatives. Its current work focuses on resourcing feminist movements, building feminist economies, and universal rights. It promotes self-determination that gives people the ability to take control over their natural resources and use those resources for their own ends or collective use.

SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association):

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is the single largest National trade union center in India for the women workers of the informal economy. Addresses the needs of the workers as a laborer, as well as a woman. Provides full employment and self-reliance. The integrated and holistic view of the workers has given birth to new and innovative ways to fight poverty and vulnerability as well as to achieve voice, visibility and validation for the women workers of the informal economy.

WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing):

A global network that gives technical support, and policy backing to informal female workers (waste pickers, street vendors, home-based workers) across the world. WIEGO joins workers in informal employment to realize these rights by developing research, statistics and policy analysis to inform action led by women workers and their organizations. It builds a fairer world of work, especially for women and those living in poverty.

Women for Women International:

Supports marginalized women by teaching them business skills, financial literacy, and rights awareness. Their aim is to create a world in which all women determine the course of their lives and reach their full potential. They ensure women are free to decide how to engage in economic life and how resources are saved, spent, sold or invested, and support economic empowerment for women affected by conflict is fundamental to sustainable progress for women's rights, ending extreme poverty, building peace and preventing conflict.

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ROLE OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Technology has become an integral part of human life that enhances well-being and improves the overall quality of life. Women in rural and marginalized areas still have limited digital literacy due to inadequate infrastructure, limited training, and lack of access to technological devices. Women often face economic barriers that prevent them from fully engaging in the digital sphere. Women's participation in the information and communication technology sector remains below 30%. Consequently, many women struggle to compete in the digital labor market or build technology-based enterprises.

This condition contributes to household economic instability and limits women's empowerment in the region. Enhancing women's digital literacy not only improves technical competence but also builds confidence and adaptability to social and economic change.

Women's digital literacy is not merely a gender equality issue but also a smart economic strategy to boost productivity and enhance national economic resilience. Therefore, the role of digital literacy focuses on understanding how it can serve as an effective strategy for reducing gender gaps and promoting women's economic empowerment in modern technology-based societies.

ROOT CAUSES OF STRENGTHENING PREVIOUS FRAMEWORKS:

Loopholes in previous Agreements:

The development of regulations and laws that foster economic activities and opportunities for women is a signal of the fight against gender discrimination and the achievement of greater equality. The regulatory framework for improving women's economic opportunities can be defined as the legal model applied at the national level that aims to foster greater participation of women in the economy and to eliminate discrimination. That is, in the legal and practical environments that enable women to participate equally in the economy, access resources, and benefit from economic activities. These regulations include the implementation of laws that promote a more significant presence and permanence of women in leadership roles and protect them from workplace discrimination, sometimes motivated by natural conditions associated with their sex, such as pregnancy and childbirth.

Reduction in gender equality, produces severe inequalities that translate into wage gaps and fewer permanent or full-time contracts for women, more accentuated labor instability, especially in the poorest or least developed regions, greater female dependence on financial aid and subsidies from governments, inequitable distribution of unpaid work especially linked to family care and domestic responsibilities, and situations of discrimination, job insecurity, underemployment, and even violence or sexual harassment against women in the workplace.

Contradictions in Previous Legal Frameworks:

Contradictions of early framework models compared to recent ones affect women's ability to work and inhibit their job prospects, earning potential, career growth, and ability to balance work and family. Previous laws have declared the right to work freely, however, due to the resistive labour bans women are declared as a minority in specific trades and limiting pays.

Gender based stereotypes:

Gender biases and discriminatory practices point to the prevalence of gender stereotypes that still associate economic empowerment with masculinity, producing career hindering and discrimination that hamper the more substantial economic participation of women. These assumptions, based on the social-psychological theories of gender stereotypes, emphasize gender belief systems about the different behaviors, characteristics, and roles of women and men in and outside of job settings. These beliefs act as descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes about what traits men and women possess or should possess, linked to appropriate gender-based expectations.

Unpaid Care Burden:

Unpaid care work is essential to the functioning of the economy but often goes uncounted and unrecognized. Globally, women, particularly those from low-income, migrant, and racialized groups, perform more than three-quarters of unpaid care and domestic work.

Lack of Legal Documentation (IDs):

Unequal access to identification limits women's economic opportunities even when life is not disrupted by a global health pandemic. Proof of identity is necessary, for example, to sign an employment contract, open a bank account, or borrow from a financial institution. The gender gap for the unregistered population has been found to be particularly large in low-income countries where it can correlate with legal barriers.

Social and Cultural Norms:

The traditionally imposed role of women as unpaid household managers hampers their educational and employment opportunities due to limited time and decision-making capacity. Furthermore, in specific contexts, cultural norms dominated by men restrict women to certain types of work, which affects their employment opportunities. Furthermore, cultural norms often place women in a vulnerable position, making them susceptible to corruption, which in turn limits their access to essential services such as health, education, and employment

IMPACTS:

Female Labour Force Participation:

Around the world, finding a job is much tougher for women than it is for men. When women are employed, they tend to work in low-quality jobs in vulnerable conditions, and there is little improvement forecast in the near future. Female labor force participation rate, representation in leadership positions, and access to education and healthcare significantly impact economic development indicators. Furthermore, the female labor force participation rate, indicating the percentage of women actively engaged in the workforce, correlates with GDP growth and human development.

Increased Vulnerability:

The global gap in pay between men and women puts women at greater risk of facing severe poverty. Women may sometimes have greater job security because they are unfairly being paid less than their male counterparts, but women are also more vulnerable during economic recessions because of their employment in precarious (often informal or part-time) positions of employment.

Macroeconomic Impacts:

There is a loss of social services which includes government cutbacks in health, education, and childcare forcing women to absorb these tasks via unpaid domestic labor. Government cutbacks in health, education, and childcare force women to absorb these tasks via unpaid domestic labor.

Socio-political Impacts:

Low female participation in jobs and businesses makes them a weak class of society, as they have less influence in the decision-making process at all levels. The main beneficiaries of the demotion of women are men. So, the perpetuation of a cycle of inadequate representation of women and the absence of solutions to their problems is inevitable because their perspectives are not reflected in policy formation and implementation. Moreover, women's dependence on men causes depression, which percolates in families. A woman's mental and physical health is important not only for her family, but societal well-being is also linked to her emancipation. The persistent ignorance of women's economic rights will show the backwardness of that society.

Lack of Education:

Female students also face discrimination in classrooms and educational institutions, affecting their academic performance and self-esteem. Therefore, they may lack role models and mentors who can inspire and support them in pursuing education and careers. The absence of female teachers and leaders in educational institutions and communities can limit girls' aspirations and hinder their progress. Limited access to higher education and vocational training programs restricts women from pursuing advanced degrees and securing well-paying jobs. The lack of female teachers and the predominance of male teachers are making parents sensitive about their daughters.

QARMA (Questions A Resolution Must Answer)

- 1. What action can be taken to reduce vulnerability faced by women due to their deteriorating economic rights?**
- 2. How can governments make sure that every woman has their own legal identity?**
- 3. What strategies should be developed to make sure that women get equal economic rights digitally?**
- 4. What campaigns could be funded to get over the stereotypes and their restrictions on women?**
- 5. How can legal frameworks be strengthened to close the gender gap economically?**



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