



THE BHAWANIPUR  
EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE



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ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

# ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS '25



# UNCSW

# **BESC-AON'25**

## **UNCSW Study Guide**

### **Agenda:**

Beijing+30 - Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with special emphasis on the following critical areas:

1. Women and Health
2. Women in Power and Decision Making

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# 1. Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women** at the BESC Assembly of Nations, 2025.

The agenda for the session is;

“Beijing+30 - Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with special emphasis on the following critical areas:

1. Women and Health
2. Women in Power and Decision Making”

The Rules of Procedure (RoP) we will be following for this session is the [UNA-USA](#) RoP.

This study guide is by no means the end of research, we would very much appreciate it if the members could find new realms in the agenda and bring it forth in the committee. Such research combined with good argumentation and a solid representation of facts is what makes an excellent performance.

In the session, the Executive Board will encourage you to speak as much as possible, because for us, fluency, diction, or oratory skills have very little importance as opposed to the content you deliver.

We are certain that we will be learning from you immensely and we also hope that you all will have an equally enriching experience. In case of any queries feel free to contact us.

We look forward to an exciting and interesting committee, which should certainly be helped by the all-pervasive nature of the issue.

Until Committee,

Regards,

Executive Board

## 2. Introduction to the Committee: UNCSW

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the world's leading intergovernmental body dedicated only to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. It was formed by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of June 21, 1946, as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has been an essential tool in the advancement of women for the past sixty years, expanding recognition of women's rights, documenting women's status country by country, shaping global policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, and ensuring a comprehensive gender perspective in all UN activities.

The CSW's goal is to promote women's rights and gender equality by bringing together governments, UN institutions, NGOs, and other international and regional organizations. ECOSOC expanded the Commission's mandate in 1996 with Resolution 1996/6, deciding that it should play a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as mainstreaming a gender perspective into UN activities.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the world's most powerful policymaking organization devoted only to gender equality and women's empowerment. It is a United Nations organization dedicated to advancing women's political, economic, civic, social, and educational rights.

The CSW also promotes equality, development, and peace, as well as monitoring policy implementation and ensuring that gender problems are addressed within the UN. It can also draw attention to pressing issues, such as the plight of conflict-affected women and girls.

Women make up more than half of the world's population, but they hold barely 1% of its wealth. In certain regions, women still do not have the right to own land, inherit property, earn money, or advance in their careers. The CSW must remember to include males in any suggested solutions for gender equality when recommending actions that the international community may take to shatter gender stereotypes, make wage equality a reality, and ensure better representation of women in decision-making levels of economic life.

## **Mandate and Instruments**

CSW's original purpose, established in 1946, was to provide "recommendations and reports to ECOSOC on advancing women's rights in political, economic, social, and educational spheres... [and]... critical issues demanding prompt action in the field of women's rights." As a result of the UN Decade of Women from 1975 to 1985, as well as the Third and Fourth World Conferences on Women in Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995, this mission has been significantly increased.

Following the Fourth World Conference and the adoption of the BPfA (Beijing Platform for Action), ECOSOC determined that CSW's major role is to incorporate "a gender perspective in policies and programmes," as well as to help ECOSOC and Member States in implementing and achieving the BPfA's goals. This was reemphasized at the General Assembly's 23rd special session in 2000, when the aim of full gender equality was set.

The Commission's principal tasks and responsibilities are specified in the Commission's initial mandate, subsequent extensions, and many ECOSOC decisions on the Commission's working procedures. In order to guarantee coherence with the Council's work, ECOSOC has assessed and broadened these methods of work numerous times in the previous ten years in ECOSOC resolutions 2006/9, 2009/15, and 2013/185.

The goal of these expansions was to establish an effective gender mainstreaming strategy within the UN system and participate in talks with government officials, experts, and non-governmental organizations to identify

gender equality gaps and difficulties. CSW adopts resolutions at its annual sessions, which are then included in an annual report to ECOSOC.

## **3. Understanding Key Concepts**

### **Women Empowerment**

#### **Definition**

Women empowerment is the holistic development of women in all fields which leads to a situation where they have the right to make their own decisions and influence their course of life.

Providing not just economic opportunities but also physical, emotional, mental, social and cultural autonomy. Strengthening them by education and skill development so that they have employment opportunities. Empowering women financially remains the priority as it opens other doors for them.

Adopting the 7 principles of Women Empowerment which are the result of collaboration between the UN Global Compact and UN Women, and are adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles.

They are informed by real-life business practices and input gathered from across the globe. These Principles also can inform other stakeholders, including governments, as they engage with business.

Therefore by endorsing the Women's Empowerment Principles all businesses stand to benefit from greater equality for women. As of now over 3,000 other business leaders around the world have adopted the Women's Empowerment Principles. You can use these Principles to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Subtitled Equality Means Business, the Principles emphasize the 8 business cases for corporate action to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

- Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
- Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination
- Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
- Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women
- Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

### **Strengthening women in all sectors**

It means holistic empowerment of women in all the spheres of social interaction and in their private lives. The first step in the process of empowerment is providing education and health facilities to women and girls. Empowerment can only be ensured if gender equality is promoted in every sphere of social interaction for women, particularly in the workplace.

**In workplace doing the following can work: -**

- Achieving equal pay for work of equal value
- Preventing and ending gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work
- Promoting work–family balance and equal sharing of care responsibilities • Supporting women in business and management
- Building a future of work that works for women

**In terms of social security: -**

- Shift from residual and crisis related safety nets to the development of permanent and sustainable social security systems through the different stages of the life cycle of women, especially in developing countries.
- Increase the role of the state in the design, implementation and monitoring of more progressive social policies and gender-sensitive social policy models concerning poverty eradication, including social protection. • Strengthen the proactive role of the government and its collaboration with civil society, including women's NGOs, working women's forums, in providing appropriate social security systems that reduce risks throughout the life cycle of poor women, including the provision of unemployment insurance when wage labor and public works programmes are insufficient.
- Review the macroeconomic policy approach to full employment as the sole basis for state-based entitlements and extend entitlements to those who are engaged in informal or part-time work as well as for the providers of unpaid caring work.

**In terms of Health: -**

- Recognize the close link between health and poverty, and ensure that effective, accessible and appropriate health services are available to women in poverty.
- Adopt a holistic life cycle approach to the design and implementation of health policies and programmes and ensure that issues, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are not addressed in an isolated way.
- Design and implement health programmes, specifically those concerning reproductive health and reproductive rights, in partnership with civil society.
- Guarantee the provisioning of free and universal basic health and nutritional services, including health and nutrition education, in partnership with NGOs and other civil society organizations throughout the entire life cycle of women.
- Ensure that any genuinely empowering social and economic policy for women contains the basic, minimum, bodily demands for women's nutritional wellbeing, and meet any absolute calorific gap amongst adolescent girls and women through direct state provisioning of supplemental feeding, and especially through initiating core feeding programmes.
- Consider the right to bodily safety and physical privacy of women as an inalienable and fundamental right of special importance to poor women and promote adequate sanitary facilities and basic physical infrastructure for women and allocate adequate resources to that end.

**Strengthening Women's Leadership**

Across the world and across all sectors women's leadership continues to be underrepresented. Women must contend with discriminatory laws, institutions, and attitudes that restrict their leadership and full participation in public life.

Women are also disadvantaged by unequal access to the resources needed to become effective leaders. Young women experience discrimination based both on gender and on age. In particular, critical gaps in funding and resources for education, skills development and mentorship impact the ability of young women to realize their full potential as leaders.

Investing in women's leadership requires a lifecycle approach to strengthening and supporting girls' leadership, adolescent girls' leadership, young women's leadership, and women's leadership. We know that investing in young women's leadership will not only change the trajectory of their future, but that of their communities as well.

UN Women works to strengthen young women's leadership through a number of different approaches. Here are a few examples: -

1. In Eastern and South Africa, the UN Women's Regional Leadership Programme supported the establishment of the Africa Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership, which increased the capacity of local youth to engage in policy making and other political processes.
2. In Rwanda, UN Women facilitated the establishment of Youth Councils and Women Councils, through which youth, including young women, are now actively contributing to the national development agenda.
3. On International Youth Day, 12 August 2016, UN Women launched a Global Network on Young Women Leaders to share experiences and strategies on how to empower other young women and inspire a new generation of leaders.
4. UN Women provides support and funding to youth and youth-led organizations that facilitate young women's leadership and participation.
5. In India, a UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality-supported project 'Making Women's Voices and Votes Count' trained eighteen young women to run and manage information centers that connected women representatives and women's groups across geographically dispersed areas. Through training in the use of communication tools and technology, the young women reached 40,000 rural households and facilitated more than 4,000 claims on entitlements to housing, employment, pensions, health, and food.
6. UN Women works to increase young women's representation and participation in decision-making processes at regional and global forums.

At the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women, the World YWCA, and a coalition of youth-led civil society organizations brought together more than 300 young leaders for the first-ever Youth Forum at CSW on 11-12 March 2016 to engage in advocacy and network building around the priority theme of 'Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development.'

UN Women facilitated the participation of young women leaders and entrepreneurs at the 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum, as part of the Youth Leadership Programme developed and implemented by UNDP with the support of UN Women in the Arab region.



## **Education and skill development of women and girls**

More girls than ever before are going to school. Not only do they learn to read and write, but each year that they remain in school after the primary level, reduces their chance of marrying at too young an age. It increases their prospects for employment, health and overall well-being.

Girls and women have an equal right to a quality education and learning throughout all phases of their lives. Despite progress, as many as 48.1 percent of girls remain out of school in some regions. Gender gaps in primary and secondary enrolment rates have nearly closed, on average. Yet 15 million girls are not in primary school right now, compared to 10 million boys.

In adolescence, higher numbers of girls often drop out of secondary school for reasons including early pregnancy and the expectation that they should contribute to household work. UN Women acts to promote equality in education through the revision of school curricula and policies to counteract gender discrimination, and equal access to vocational education and training as well as information technologies. Together with partners, we have worked on school curriculums and on virtual schools.

Violence against women and girls can take place on their way to school or within educational institutions. According to a Report of the Secretary-General, in the United States, 83 per cent of girls in grades 8 through 11 (aged 12 to 16) have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.

At the same time, education and training can play a significant role in changing harmful and discriminatory gender stereotypes that promote or condone violence against women and girls. To address such issues, UN Women runs educational programmes to promote gender equality and women's rights, revises formal school curricula and policies, and trains teachers, students and parents. They've also worked with partners to develop a non formal educational curriculum against violence and educators, and youth leaders are currently being trained to deliver the curriculum in 12 countries.

Coming of age, youth become gender equality champions in Kyrgyzstan. With the support of UN Women, more than 40 students and several teachers from seven regions of Kyrgyzstan gathered in July 2014 to deepen their knowledge of gender equality. The project, sponsored by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, educates students and teachers about inequality, gender-based violence, violence against women, and crimes such as bride kidnapping and forced early marriage. A total of 15 sets of training for 200 peer educators and 80 teachers from 30 towns and villages throughout Kyrgyzstan are taking place throughout 2014.

Skill development of women and girls in terms of education and other sectors improving their employability is the step every nation should take. Skill development in sectors such as tertiary, quaternary and quinary. As women enter these services and sectors instead of the primary and secondary sector their employability increases.

Making their financial condition better consequently making their social standing better. Skill development such as using a computer, running a small business, innovative and scientific farming techniques, use of machines in small businesses, use of technology particularly the internet to find and create jobs.

## **Advocating for Women's Social and Cultural Empowerment**

Women often experience cultural and social prejudices, especially during the breakdown of law and order that often accompanies transition. One of the most noticeable threats women face is Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), as witnessed in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. SGBV impacts on women's social position by affecting women's health and safety.

Preventing SGBV requires different policies such as bringing perpetrators to justice, ensuring the full implementation of CEDAW and the Security Council's resolutions, as well as developing dialogues and interventions involving both men and women on this issue. Another way in which women can be affected during political transition is by health issues, especially HIV-AIDS caused by SGBV.

Health care remains low for many women, particularly those who are poor or live at the margins of their community. Social, economic and legal factors can increase women's vulnerability to health issues and diseases. As a result, promoting reproductive and maternal healthcare, as well as treating HIV-AIDS is important in the aftermath of political transition.

Education is a fundamental precondition for women's empowerment in all spheres of society, seeing that women's and girls' education translates into "poverty reduction, income growth, economic productivity, social justice and democracy." There exists an obvious gender gap in education; women make-up for two-thirds of the global illiterate. It is thus important to focus post-transition policies on education and scale up its funding in order to strengthen the democratic process.

However, particular attention must also be brought to the content of the curricula and the attitudes of the teachers, so as to ensure that education does not strengthen pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices, but rather serves as an effective catalyst for change. Emphasis must also be placed on the need to overcome cultural barriers and prejudices in order to directly challenge gender discrimination.

Gender equality and women's empowerment only acquires legitimacy if men understand the different incentives they have for respecting and advocating for women's rights. Changing boys and men's attitude towards women, by prevailing over certain traditional barriers (whether religious or cultural) must be done through a gender-sensitive education process. Media can also contribute to this by circulating awareness programs and public opinion campaigns. For example, the UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality has implemented a program in Nepal that aims at broadcasting over 52 episodes of gender sensitive programming on the radio throughout 164 community radio stations in the country.

## **Empowerment of Women in their Private Lives**

Women are gradually making their leadership presence felt in entrepreneurship, administration, education, engineering, health, etc. at regional, national, and global levels.

Women are now resolved to break the traditional glass ceiling that barred them from entering leadership positions even if they possessed requisite skills and talent to occupy them. Women are constantly evolving and

reaching new milestones across a wide spectrum of human activities in modern times. The world has witnessed the advent of women leaders such as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Indra Nooyi, Oprah Winfrey, Theresa May, Christine Lagarde, to name a few.

Any institution, whether it is society or organization, in the present century cannot function effectively without women's equal participation in leadership activities. Women create a perspective that brings competition and collaboration to organizations and teams. In today's world, organizations that are led by inclusive leadership teams make effective decisions that deliver better results. In the twenty-first century, the essential qualities required to lead include the ability to collaborate, connect, empathize and communicate.

All these qualities are feminine in nature and can help build a more sustainable future. Many statistics show that companies led by women have better financial results. Leadership by women is vital to increase the pace of societal transformation at home and in the workplace.

Women leaders are likely to provide an integrated view of work and family, resulting in an engaged and promising personal and professional future. Gender parity in leadership is important because true progress cannot happen without a diversity of perspective in leadership roles.

## **4. Introduction to the Agenda**

**“Beijing+30 - Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with special emphasis on the following critical areas:**

### **1. Women and Health**

### **2. Women in Power and Decision Making”**

Considered the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been reprinted in this special edition, which also includes a copy of the political declaration reached at the 23rd special session of the General Assembly in 2000, which reviewed progress towards the Platform for Action five years after its adoption. The platform aims to remove all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action flagged 12 key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. It also laid out concrete ways for countries to bring about change. UN Women works with governments and partners to ensure such change is real for women and girls around the world.

Women and the environment



Violence against women



The girl child



Women and the economy



Institutional mechanisms



Women and armed conflict



Human rights of women



Education and training of women



Women and poverty



Women in power and decision-making



Women and health



Women and the media



The Platform also sets an agenda for governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to safeguard women's human rights and to ensure that gender is taken into account in all national, regional and international policies and programmes.

Progress on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) is reviewed by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) every five years. To date, five reviews have been conducted – in 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020 – with each review resulting in an outcome document in which countries pledge to continue their efforts towards achieving global commitments relating to the rights of women and girls. The outcome document further outlines priority actions for the coming five years. In 2025, the global community will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

The sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 10 to 21 March 2025. The main focus of the sixty-ninth session will be on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

For the purposes of the simulation we will focus on two of the 12 critical areas as mentioned above

1. Women and Health
2. Women in Power and Decision Making

## Women and Health

Women have different and unequal access to and use of basic health resources, including primary health services for the prevention and treatment of childhood diseases, malnutrition, anaemia, diarrhoeal diseases, communicable diseases, malaria and other tropical diseases and tuberculosis, among others. Women also have different and unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of their health.

In many developing countries, the lack of emergency obstetric services is also of particular concern. Health policies and programmes often perpetuate gender stereotypes and fail to consider socio-economic disparities and other differences among women and may not fully take account of the lack of autonomy of women regarding their health. Women's health is also affected by gender bias in the health system and by the provision of inadequate and inappropriate medical services to women.

Women face many of the same health conditions as men but often experience them differently due to social and economic factors. Poverty, economic dependence, gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited control over their reproductive rights negatively impact women's health. Additionally, unequal access to food, clean water, sanitation, and safe housing—especially in rural and poor urban areas—further burdens women and harms their well-being. Early marriage, pregnancy, and harmful practices like female genital mutilation expose girls to serious health risks. Many adolescent girls lack access to essential health, nutrition, and reproductive services, with their rights to privacy, respect, and informed consent often ignored. They face higher vulnerability to sexual abuse, violence, and exploitation, increasing risks of early pregnancy, HIV, and unsafe abortions. Early childbearing limits girls' education and economic opportunities, with long-term negative effects on their lives and their children's. Additionally, young men are rarely taught to respect women's rights or share responsibility in sexual and reproductive matters.

HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) severely impact women's health, especially adolescent girls and young women. Many lack the power to negotiate safe sex or access prevention and treatment services. Women make up half of all new HIV/AIDS cases, with social vulnerability and unequal gender power dynamics increasing their risk. Beyond health, HIV/AIDS affects women's roles as caregivers and economic providers.

Health issues like STDs must be viewed through a gender lens, yet health data is often not collected or analyzed by sex, age, or socio-economic status, leaving gaps in understanding women's specific needs. Many countries lack updated data on diseases affecting women, and research on women's health is underfunded. Studies often focus on men, ignoring gender differences in conditions like heart disease or drug responses. Clinical trials rarely include women, leading to treatments based on male data without adjustments for women's health needs or proper ethical standards.

*(Please refer to all the strategic objectives of the BPFPA document from C.1-C.5 under the sub section of Women and Health)*

The Beijing Platform for Action reiterates the agreements reached at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)<sup>1</sup>, in particular with regard to women's reproductive health and rights, and added new commitments addressing the right of women to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Taking a holistic and life-cycle approach to women's health, the Beijing Platform for Action proposed actions toward five strategic objectives.

- Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.
- Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health.

- Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues.
- Promote research and disseminating information on women’s health.
- Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women’s health.

**Article 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** commits States parties to take “all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of healthcare in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning” and to “ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the postnatal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.”

**In 2004, the World Health Assembly** adopted its first strategy on reproductive health, intended to help countries stem the serious repercussions of reproductive and sexual ill-health.

The strategy targets five priority aspects of reproductive and sexual health: improving antenatal, delivery, postpartum and newborn care; providing high-quality services for family planning, including infertility services; eliminating unsafe abortion; combating sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, reproductive tract infections, cervical cancer and other gynaecological illness and disease; and promoting sexual health.

**Linking women’s health to control over resources and decision-making**

To address women’s lack of decision-making power in the household and in the community, which can limit their access to health care and negatively affect maternal health outcomes, a number of strategies can be taken, including:

- Parallel initiatives to increase women’s access to and control of resources (credit and savings groups and emergency loan funds through women’s cooperative agricultural production or market activities)
- Initiatives to re-negotiate the balance of power between women and health care providers through staff training or increasing women’s control over who is present during labour and delivery.
- Involving male partners, extended family and community members.

In particular, one initiative in Bolivia, took the following steps:

- Women’s groups were formed to identify problems and solutions;
- Women received literacy training, practice in speaking and information on rights;
- Women raised money from family gardens for emergency loan funds; and
- Women carried out a letter writing campaign to Ministry of Health official for better services.

Improvements included a decline in maternal mortality rates (from 141 per 10,000 births at baseline to 99 post-intervention), natal mortality ratios also improved.

Source: Interagency Gender Working Group & WHO (2005), *A Summary of the ‘So What’ Report*.<sup>52</sup>

**Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) — Good Health and Well-being** — is closely linked to women’s health, as women face distinct health challenges influenced by biological, social, and economic factors. A key target of SDG 3 is reducing global maternal mortality, yet many women, especially in low-income regions, still lack access to quality maternal healthcare, leading to preventable deaths. Additionally, limited access to sexual and reproductive health services exposes women to unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and health risks that further hinder their well-being. Women and girls are also more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases due to gender inequality, limited decision-making power, and exposure to gender-based violence. Achieving SDG 3 requires addressing these systemic barriers to ensure women’s health rights, access to care, and overall well-being are prioritized.

The **Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030)** is a major initiative launched by the **United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO)** to accelerate progress toward

ensuring the health and well-being of women, children, and adolescents worldwide. It aligns closely with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)** and **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**. The strategy builds on previous global efforts, including the 2010-2015 strategy, but broadens its focus to include adolescents and emphasizes equity, rights, and gender equality.

## **Women in Power and Decision Making**

Despite global moves toward democratization, women remain underrepresented in government, especially in executive and legislative roles. The target of 30% women in decision-making positions by 1995, set by the Economic and Social Council, remains unmet, with women holding only about 10% of legislative seats worldwide and even fewer ministerial roles. In some countries, women's representation has even declined. Although women make up half the electorate and have the right to vote and run for office in most nations, they face barriers like discriminatory attitudes, family responsibilities, party structures, and the high cost of political campaigns. Greater female participation in politics helps reshape priorities, address gender-specific issues, and bring new perspectives to mainstream political debates.

With limited access to traditional power structures like political parties, employer groups, and trade unions, women have increasingly turned to non-governmental and grassroots organizations to voice their concerns and influence national and international agendas. Inequality often begins within the family, where unequal power dynamics and the burden of household responsibilities limit women's time and opportunities to engage in public decision-making. Equal sharing of domestic roles would not only improve women's quality of life but also increase their participation in shaping policies and practices that address their needs. Additionally, male-dominated decision-making patterns at the community level further restrict women's equal involvement in political, economic, and social spheres.

Achieving equal power and decision-making requires governments and institutions to apply gender analysis and integrate gender perspectives in policies and programs. Equal representation is vital for empowering women, and in some countries, affirmative action has increased women's participation to over 33% in local and national governments. However, statistical institutions often lack the expertise to properly analyze and present gender-related issues, and existing data and methods remain underused in addressing gender equality in economic and social decision-making.

*(Please refer to all the strategic objectives of the BPPA document G.1 and G.2 under the subsection of Women in Power and Decision Making )*

UN Women's programmes on leadership and participation are guided by a history of international commitments to women's representation. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women upholds women's right to participate in public life. **The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** advocates for equal rights for women to vote, stand for election, and hold public office. **CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23** urges states to review and amend legislation from a gender perspective, and General Recommendation No. 25 suggests measures to increase women's access to decision-making.

UN Women advocates for legislative and constitutional reforms to ensure women's fair access to political spheres—as voters, candidates, elected officials and civil service members. It collaborates with UN country

teams and work with civil society on programmes so that elections uphold women's rights, including to vote and campaign free from electoral violence

**UNDP** works with governments worldwide to combat discriminatory legislation and policies and improve gender equality outcomes in policy making by creating structures and strategic plans to enhance women's political participation and gender equality. **UNDP has facilitated the creation of such systems in many countries, recognizing their essential role in empowering women as parliamentary representatives, supporting the emergence of gender-sensitive parliaments, and adopting gender-sensitive policy and legislative frameworks.**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly **SDG 5: Gender Equality**, emphasize the need for women's full and effective participation in decision-making at all levels. **Target 5.5** specifically calls for ensuring women's equal opportunities for leadership in political, economic, and public life. Increased representation of women in power structures is essential for achieving not only SDG 5 but also goals related to poverty reduction, health, education, and economic growth. Women's participation in decision-making brings diverse perspectives, promotes inclusive policies, and leads to more equitable governance. The SDGs recognize that empowering women and ensuring their leadership roles is not just a human rights issue but a critical driver of sustainable development. Achieving gender balance in decision-making is vital for building resilient, just, and inclusive societies.

Adopted on **December 19, 2011**, **UNGA Resolution 66/130** is a significant international commitment to promoting women's full, equal, and effective participation in political and public life. The resolution acknowledges persistent global challenges that prevent women from accessing leadership roles and decision-making positions, despite their equal rights.

## 5. Case Studies

### Case Study 1: Rwanda – Women in Political Leadership

After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda undertook major reforms to rebuild its society. One standout result: Rwanda now has the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world. As of 2024, women hold over 60% of seats in the lower house. This was achieved through a combination of constitutional quotas, political will, and civil society activism. The government also established structures like the Gender Monitoring Office and a Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion.

**Why it matters:** Rwanda demonstrates how institutional change, when backed by political will, can rapidly close gender gaps in decision-making even in post-conflict societies.

Source - <https://www.parliament.gov.rw/>



## Case Study 2: India – Women’s Health Access Through ASHA Workers

India’s Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) program, launched in 2005 under the National Rural Health Mission, deploys over 1 million women as community health workers. ASHAs are the first point of contact in rural areas, especially for maternal and child health services, including prenatal checkups, vaccinations, and awareness about contraception.

ASHAs were crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic, delivering care in hard-to-reach areas. However, they often face delayed payments, lack of social security, and limited recognition despite doing essential work.

**Why it matters:** This case highlights both the power and precarity of frontline women health workers and the need to formalize and support their roles.

Source - <https://nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=150&lid=226>

## Case Study 3: Sweden – Gender Equality in Leadership

Sweden has long been a leader in gender equality, with policies that promote work-life balance, such as shared parental leave, publicly funded childcare, and corporate board diversity targets. As a result, women hold significant leadership roles in business and politics. In 2022, Sweden elected its first female prime minister, and over 45% of ministers in the government are women.

The private sector is also shifting: Swedish companies like IKEA have gender-balanced leadership teams and track diversity progress publicly.

**Why it matters:** Sweden shows how long-term structural policies can normalize women’s leadership and create supportive ecosystems for work-life integration.

Source - [https://cdn.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/VIRAGE\\_D3.2- National-Report -Sweden.pdf](https://cdn.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/VIRAGE_D3.2- National-Report -Sweden.pdf)

## Case Study 4: Nigeria – Maternal Health Crisis and Community Interventions

Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world estimated at 512 deaths per 100,000 live births (2020). Key causes include limited access to skilled birth attendants, poor infrastructure, and low investment in public health. However, local and international organizations have initiated community-based maternal health programs, such as providing mobile clinics, midwife training, and emergency transport systems in rural areas.

Programs like the Midwives Service Scheme have improved outcomes but face sustainability challenges due to political shifts and inconsistent funding.

**Why it matters:** Nigeria reflects the urgent need to strengthen women’s health systems in developing nations and ensure consistent policy follow-through.

Source - <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2020-11/The%20Inter-Agency%20Humanitarian%20Evaluation%20%28IAHE%29%20on%20Gender%20Equality%20and%20the%20Empowerment%20of%20Women%20and%20Girls%20%28GEEWG%29-Case%20Study%20Nigeria.pdf?>

## Case Study 5: United States – Reversal of Roe v. Wade and Its Impact on Women's Health

In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling, ending federal protection for abortion rights. This significant legal shift has led to restrictive abortion laws in several states, limiting access to reproductive health services for many women. The ruling represents a major setback after five decades of protection for sexual and reproductive health and rights in the U.S.

**Why it matters:** The decision underscores how legal and policy changes can directly affect women's access to essential health services, highlighting the fragility of reproductive rights and the potential for increased health disparities.

Source - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/06/bachelet-us-ruling-dobbs-v-jackson-womens-health-organization?utm>

## 6. External Research Links

1. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995):  
<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>
2. UN Women: The Beijing 12 Critical Areas of Concern Deconstructed:  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories>
3. UN Women Asia Pacific: In Focus – Beijing+30 in Asia Pacific:  
<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/in-focus/2024/03/in-focus-beijing30-in-asia-pacific>
4. United Nations: The Beijing Platform for Action at 30:  
<https://www.un.org/tr/node/22828>
5. Guttmacher Institute: On the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Are Under Attack:  
<https://www.guttmacher.org/2025/03/30th-anniversary-beijing-declaration-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-are-under>
6. UN Women: Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing:  
<https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/250023eng.pdf>
7. IHREC: Plenary Session 1 – Women, Power, and Decision Making:  
[https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/prof\\_siobhan\\_mullally\\_beijing\\_plus\\_20.pdf](https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/prof_siobhan_mullally_beijing_plus_20.pdf)
8. US Women's Caucus: Beijing Platform for Action:  
<https://www.uswomenscaucus.org/beijing-platform-for-action/>
9. OSCE PA-ODIHR Webinar: Ensuring Gender Equality Goals for the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform: <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/2025/osce-pa-odihr-webinar->

[participants-urge-a ction-to-ensure-that-gender-equality-goals-are-realized-for-30th-anniversary-of-beijing-platform](#)

10. The Guardian: Women’s Rights at the UN – Anti-Abortion and Patriarchy Issues:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/mar/22/women-rights-un-anti-abortion-choice-poisson-of-patriarchy-returns>

11. AP News: UN Nations Commit to Speeding Up Gender Equality Action:

<https://apnews.com/article/2e4c0c31cb1e032b7dbd56c943d8bd0b>

12. AP News: UN Says Women’s Rights Are Under Attack 30 Years After Beijing Declaration:

<https://apnews.com/article/b009715ff605ccf47f1b72865c7a27e7>