



Empowering Women Across Borders: A Study On Equality And Inclusion

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Abstract:

This paper explores the multifaceted dimensions of women's empowerment and gender equality across various cultural and socio-economic contexts through The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It was adopted by the United Nations in 1979, and serves as a foundational international treaty aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women worldwide. This paper explores the impact of CEDAW in transforming legal frameworks, fostering social change, and enhancing women's rights. By obligating signatory nations to eliminate discrimination against women in all forms, CEDAW provides a comprehensive framework for addressing issues such as violence against women, economic inequality, and political participation. It is instrumental in reshaping societal norms and legal frameworks, driving systemic change that empowers women and promotes their fundamental rights on a global scale. The paper will discuss in detail the barriers that women face, including legal, economic, and social challenges, and highlights successful strategies implemented in different countries to promote gender equity at International Level.

Key Words: *Convention, Discrimination, Rights, Women and United Nation*

Introduction

Crime against women is a significant issue globally, encompassing various forms of violence, discrimination, and exploitation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), about 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, primarily by an intimate partner. UN Women (2020) reports that around 650 million women and girls alive today were married before the age of 18, a practice that often leads to early pregnancy and increased risk of domestic violence. The Global Burden of Disease Study (WHO, 2019) indicates that nearly 1 in 5 women have experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetime. In many countries, sexual harassment in public spaces is prevalent, with studies showing that over 80% of women have faced such harassment (Hollaback, 2019).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020) estimates that women and girls make up 49% of detected trafficking victims globally, primarily for sexual exploitation. According to the UN (2018), around 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017, with over half of these murders occurring in intimate partner relationships. Gender-based violence has significant economic costs, with estimates suggesting that it costs economies between 1.2% to 3.7% of GDP, including healthcare, legal costs, and lost productivity (World Bank, 2020). Many countries have laws addressing violence against women, but enforcement and implementation often vary widely; only about 40% of countries have comprehensive laws on domestic violence (UN Women, 2019). Gender norms and stereotypes contribute to the prevalence of violence against women, with societies exhibiting strong gender inequality often seeing higher rates of violence (Peterman et al., 2020).

Efforts to combat these issues include international treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and various global campaigns aimed at raising awareness and promoting women's rights (UN Women, 2020). However, the challenge remains substantial, requiring continued advocacy and action at all levels of society. Discrimination, by its very nature, means

unfair treatment of a person or group for any reason, such as being a girl or a boy, belonging to a particular race or religion, or having different abilities (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2021). When people are discriminated against, they cannot enjoy their rights. Discrimination against girls and women means directly or indirectly treating them differently from boys and men in a way that prevents them from enjoying their rights. There are generally two types of discrimination against women and girls: direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination against girls and women is generally easier to recognize, as it is quite obvious; for example, in some countries, women cannot legally own property, are forbidden by law to take certain jobs, or community customs may not permit girls to pursue higher education (World Bank, 2020). Indirect discrimination can be more difficult to recognize; it refers to situations that may appear unbiased but result in unequal treatment of girls and women. For example, a job for a police officer may have minimum height and weight criteria that women may find difficult to fulfill (OHCHR, 2021).

In addition, there may be secondary schools that equally admit both girls and boys but are situated far from their communities. If parents in those communities feel it is unsafe for their daughters to walk the long distance to school, they may choose to send only their sons (Peterman et al., 2020). As children, girls are often treated differently from male children in terms of nutrition and healthcare. When limited food or financial resources are available, those insufficient means are often allocated unevenly in favour of male offspring. This imbalance results in insufficient care afforded to girls and women and is a significant reason for the high levels of child malnutrition (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Historical Perspective

The need of the hour is empowerment of women. Empowerment essentially means decentralization of authority and power. It aims at getting participation of deprived sections of people in decision-making process. It means giving voice for voiceless. Empowerment may mean equal status to women to develop her. Man should give women opportunity and freedom to develop her. Women empowerment looks at basic woman rights and attempts on organising to attain them. Women empowerment can influence not only their own lives but also the lives of man and children. Women empowerment may enhance their self-confidence and their ability and willingness to challenge oppression. Women empowerment aims at eliminating discrimination and challenging gender inequality. Therefore, the basic rights of women must be secured in order to ensure overall development of the women section of the society and ultimately the nation development. Concept of human right must be a matter familiar to the women. Human rights are those inalienable rights to which every human being is entitled merely because he is born as a human being. They are inherent to all human beings, irrespective of nationality, residence, language, origin, sex, colour and any other status. Everyone is equally entitled to human rights without any discrimination. Human Rights has become a established reality since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, which has as its central concern, reaffirmed its faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. In other words, human rights being eternal part of nature of human beings are essential for individuals to develop their personality, their human qualities, their intelligence, talent and conscience and to enable them to satisfy their spiritual and other higher needs. There are inalienable rights which belong equally to all members of human family and as such, should be protected by the rule of law. Discrimination on the basis of sex and inequality between men and women nullifies and impairs the enjoyment of rights and the full advancement of women and girls worldwide. Displacement arising from armed conflict, persecution and other serious human rights violations can intensify this discrimination and inequality. In order to ensure women empowerment and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women UNO along with other various Declarations and Conventions has passed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The 20th century has witnessed the awakening of the world to the idea that human rights are universal. As a consequence of the Second World War, there was a growing conviction that “how human beings are treated anywhere concerns everyone, everywhere” leading to the adoption of the United Nations Charter which was signed on 26 June 1945. The Charter declared that promoting respect for human rights was a principle purpose of the United Nations. This purpose of the United Nations was carried forward by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) which defined the content of human rights and was adopted on December 1948. But it is with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in December 1979 that universal standards were set for women’s equality.

Objective of the Convention

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is the international women's rights treaty spells out women's rights and obliges governments to ensure respect for these rights. It provides the framework for advocating for women's human rights. It sets the standards in international law for achieving gender equality; both normatively, and also more practically, in terms of setting out the concrete steps governments need to take to eliminate discrimination against women in their countries. Among the international human rights treaties, the Convention takes an important place in bringing the female half of humanity into the focus of human rights concerns. The spirit of the Convention is rooted in the goals of the United Nations as set out in the preamble; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity, and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women. The present Convention spells out the meaning of equality and how it can be achieved. In so doing, the Convention establishes not only an international bill of rights for women, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights.

In its preamble, the Convention explicitly acknowledges that "extensive discrimination against women continues to exist", and emphasizes that such discrimination "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity". As defined in article 1, discrimination is understood as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. The Convention gives positive affirmation to the principle of equality by requiring States parties to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Basic Provisions of the Convention

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

- (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;
- (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;
- (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;
- (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;
- (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;
- (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;
- (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Article 4

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

Article 5

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Article 6

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

Article 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband. 2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

Article 10

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this

aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

(g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

(f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph I of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Article 13

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) The right to family benefits;
- (b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;
- (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

- (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
- (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
- (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
- (d) 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;
- (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;
- (f) To participate in all community activities;
- (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes; To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

Article 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.

3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same right to enter into marriage;
- (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
- (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
- (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
- (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

Analysis of Basic Provisions of the Convention

The Convention defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. This definition includes both direct and indirect discrimination against women, be it intentional or unintentional, in respect of law or practice, in all aspects of public and private life. Direct discrimination is intended to discriminate against women and constitutes apparent exclusion, distinction or restriction of rights of women as compared to men. Indirect discrimination occurs when apparently neutral legal standards or policies which do not seek to discriminate lead to consequences that, without justification, affect the enjoyment of rights by women disproportionately, simply because they are women. The fact that the Convention addresses both direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women makes it a unique instrument in international law for the achievement of genuine (both formal and substantive) equality between men and women.

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- To ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

Article 1 prohibits any distinction on the basis of sex that impairs women's human rights in the political, economic, social, cultural, and civil or any other field. Art 2 ensures that states parties will pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women by all appropriate means and without delay, including through law reform. In art 3, states parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including implementing legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, and to guarantee their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. Article 4 permits states parties to employ temporary special measures to advance women's equality, and to recognise the special function of maternity. Article 5 requires states parties to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes and promote the sharing of family responsibilities. Article 6 contends with the exploitation of women through prostitution and trafficking. Article 7 guarantees non-discrimination against women within the political and public life of the state's parties. Article 8 ensures the opportunity for women to represent their governments at the international level. Article 9 provides for non-discrimination on the basis of nationality for women and their children. Article 10 requires equality in education. Article 11 addresses the right to work, equality in employment conditions and sexual harassment in the workplace. Article 12 concerns health care, including reproductive health services. In art 13, states parties agree to eliminate discrimination in other areas of economic and social life, family benefits, bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 14 highlights the special needs of rural women. Article 15 focuses on equality within the legal system. Article 16 deals with equality in marriage and family relations.

The legal status of women receives the broadest attention. Concern over the basic rights of political participation has not diminished since the adoption of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. Its provisions, therefore, are restated in article 7 of the present document, whereby women are guaranteed the rights to vote, to hold public office and to exercise public functions. This includes equal rights for women to represent their countries at the international level. The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women adopted in 1957 is integrated under article 9 providing for the statehood of women, irrespective of their marital status. The Convention, thereby, draws attention to the fact that often women's legal status has been linked to marriage, making them dependent on their husband's nationality rather than individuals in their own right. Articles 10, 11 and 13, respectively, affirm women's rights to non-discrimination in education, employment and economic and social activities. These demands are given special emphasis with regard to the situation of rural women, whose particular struggles and vital economic contributions, as noted in article 14, warrant more attention in policy planning. Article 15 asserts the full equality of women in civil and business matters, demanding that all instruments directed at restricting women's legal capacity shall be deemed null and void. Finally, in article 16, the Convention returns to the issue of marriage and family relations, asserting the equal rights and obligations of women and men with regard to choice of spouse, parenthood, personal rights and command over property.

Apart from civil rights issues, the Convention also devotes major attention to a most vital concern of women, namely their reproductive rights. The preamble sets the tone by stating that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination. The link between discrimination and women's reproductive role is a matter of recurrent concern in the Convention. For example, it advocates, in article 5 about a proper understanding of maternity as a social function, demanding fully shared responsibility for child-rearing by both sexes. Accordingly, provisions for maternity protection and child-care are proclaimed as essential rights and are incorporated into all areas of the Convention, whether dealing with employment, family law, health care or education. Society's obligation extends to offering social services, especially child-care facilities, which allow individuals to combine family responsibilities with work and participation in public life. Special measures for maternity protection are recommended and shall not be considered discriminatory. The Convention also affirms women's right to reproductive choice. Notably, it is the only human rights treaty to mention family planning. States parties are obliged to include advice on family planning in the education process and to develop family codes that guarantee women's rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights.

Modus-Operandi of Functioning of the Convention

The Convention establishes a treaty body, entitled the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the purpose of considering progress made in its implementation. The Committee is composed of 23 experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention elected by the States parties from among their nationals, but who serve in their personal capacity. In elections, States parties are directed to give consideration to equitable geographical distribution and representation of different forms of civilization as well as the principal legal systems. Members are elected by secret ballot at meetings of States parties for a renewable four-year-term. The Committee's primary means of considering progress in implementation is through the consideration of reports which the Convention obliges States parties to undertake to submit on the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention. Initial reports are to be submitted within one year after the entry into force of the Convention for that State, and thereafter at least every four years, and further whenever the Committee so requests.

State Parties to the Convention are obligated to submit a report on the legislative, judicial, and administrative or other measures they have adopted to implement the Convention within a year of its ratification and then at least every four years after this. The reports are reviewed by the UN CEDAW Committee. The report is followed by a one day constructive dialogue in Geneva between the Committee and

a country delegation to discuss the status of women in the respective country. Based on the CEDAW reports and discussions, the UN CEDAW Committee issues country-specific Concluding Observations to guide the respective State Party to further advance implementation of the Convention.

Article 18 establishes the reporting mechanism for the states parties to indicate their progress in implementing the Convention to the Committee. Article 19 enables the Committee to establish its own rules of procedure. Article 20 limits the number of weeks during which the Committee is permitted to meet annually. Article 21 assigns the Committee's reporting obligations to the UN Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly. Article 22 specifies the relationship between the Committee and the other specialised agencies of the UN. Articles 23–30 include terms similar to those in other human rights treaties, such as the mechanism for joining the Convention; the stipulation that any provision in national or international law that provides greater protection for women's equality will prevail; the position that reservations that are 'incompatible with the object and purpose' of Convention are impermissible; a mechanism for the resolution of disputes about how states parties interpret or apply the Convention; and authentication of Convention in the six official languages of the UN.

Optional Protocol to the Convention

An Optional Protocol is another kind of international agreement, like a treaty. It is connected to a convention. Optional Protocols include things that may not have been covered fully in that convention. The Optional Protocol to the Convention is an international document that adds to the Convention. In December 2000, an Optional Protocol to the Convention entered into force.

It lets girls and women (alone or in a group) make a complaint to the CEDAW Committee if their rights have been violated. It also allows the CEDAW Committee to investigate a situation if there have been serious and widespread violations of girls' and women's rights. This way the Optional Protocol to CEDAW further protects the rights of girls and women. The Optional Protocol to the Convention also provides two implementation procedures which are available where a State is a party to both the Convention and the Protocol: the individual communications procedure and the inquiry procedure. This Protocol provides the Committee with competence to consider complaints from individuals or groups of individuals where certain preconditions are fulfilled, most importantly where domestic remedies have been exhausted.

Conclusion

Women need to be empowered and men need to be oriented about their obligations towards women. Women continue to be exploited. The position is same everywhere wherever developed, the developing or under developed. Women play major roles during various stages of their life as a daughter, wife, mother and sister, etc. In spite of her contribution to human beings, she still belongs to a backward class on account of various social, political, economic and psychological barriers and impediments. Many of the wrongs that are done to women have been encouraged by superstitions. The birth of a girl child is considered unfortunate and in some states the custom of female infanticide is practiced. Girls are still not educated in many parts of our country. They are rare married off at an early age as the custom of child marriage still continues in rural areas. What is needed is the effective implementation of the Convention and fulfilment of the obligations set out in the Convention by the government of the member states for the very reason that the Conventions about human rights are promises between governments that they will treat the people who live in their countries in a particular manner. A convention sets standards or rules that must be followed to protect human rights. Conventions can also be called treaties, covenants, international agreements or legal instruments. When a country ratifies a convention, it often changes its own laws so that the goal of the convention can be reached. Conventions put a legal obligation on governments to do all they can to respect the rights in it. The Convention says that governments should do all they can so that girls and women are treated equally. Governments must make sure that nothing stops girls and women from enjoying their rights.

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