

5. Future Challenges and Opportunities in Advancing Women and Child Rights

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Abstract:

Just by virtue of being human, everyone has the right to some fundamental freedoms. These are essential rights that cannot be arbitrarily taken away. Every person of the globe is entitled to human rights, regardless of their origin, sex, nationality, religion, language, or any other status. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written and ratified in 1948 as a result of the horrors and massive death toll during World War II, which gave rise to human rights. Therefore, human rights are inseparable, interconnected, and dependent upon one another.

These are unalienable and universal rights. In this chapter, we have examined how human rights are not just fundamental rights but also a duty that the state must fulfill in order to enable its citizens to enjoy and safeguard these rights. This chapter focuses on women and children, two of society's most vulnerable sections who have been denied human rights since ancient times. Vulnerable groups are those that are weak and poorly protected by nature or due to long-standing norms, and whose rights have repeatedly been infringed by the dominant segment of society.

The United Nations was the first to demonstrate concern for the protection of women's rights and also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a treaty law. This served as a global bill of women's rights. It emphasized women's rights and gender equality. The rights of women in Indian society and their evolution in light of internationally ratified treaty law are also the main topics of this article. This research also addresses "Children," another vulnerable segment of the population. Children's civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights are outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, an internationally ratified treaty law. As a result, our article will address not only the idea of human rights but also the weaker segments of society and how human rights serve as a standard to guarantee social fairness.

Keywords:

UDHR, United Nation's Convention, Women, Children, Social Justice, Economic Growth, Economic Development, Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP), International Labour Organization (ILO).

5.1 Introduction:

“The seeds of success in every nation on Earth are best planted in women and children.”

---- Joyce Banda¹

We are all entitled to human rights. These include the right to live free from violence and discrimination; to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn an equal wage.² Peace and security, economic expansion, and sustainable development all depend on gender equality. It can contribute to the development of a society in which women and children have equal access to resources and opportunities and where everyone is free and equal. The rights of women and children are significant because they are essential to a country's growth and to the establishment of a fair and just society. “The empowerment of women should be at the heart of public policy,” added Djibouti’s representative, drawing attention to the close link between gender equality and sustainable development.³ *“The empowerment of women and girls and gender equality is not just a goal in itself, but a key to sustainable development, economic growth, and peace and security,”* the UN states. According to research, when women's rights are respected and given due consideration, society improves for everyone.

The Ministry recognizes that incidence of crime against women cannot be controlled unless mindsets of people, in general, are made to change. There are many reasons behind increasing crimes against women such as unequal economic, social and political status of women, patriarchal mindsets etc.⁴ Gender bias has indeed a negative impact on women and children’s access to numerous resources, including education, healthcare, ownership of property, and decision-making in both the family and the public sphere.⁵ The way that criminal law regards violence against women and children is one example of how gender prejudice permeates legislative responses to gender violence.

¹ Brainy Quote, *Women and Children Quotes*, <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/women-and-children-quotes> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024).

² Amnesty International, *Women’s Rights*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/womens-rights/> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 9:36 AM).

³ U.N. GAOR, 76th Sess., 5th mtg., U.N. Doc. GA/SHC/4317 (Oct. 4, 2021), <https://press.un.org/en/2021/gashc4317.doc.htm> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 10:59 AM).

⁴ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, *Press Release* (July 19, 2019), <https://pib.gov.in/pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1579546> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 10:11 AM).

⁵ *Women and Children: The Human Rights Relationship 2007-2008*, Conference Overview (Dec. 9-10, 2007), <https://www.wcwonline.org/Women-and-Children-The-Human-Rights-Relationship/women-and-children-the-human-rights-relationship> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 10:51 AM).

Education is a fundamental human right and a crucial tool for sustainable human capacity development, which can advance the economic growth of a country.⁶ Ensuring that all girls and young women receive a quality education is their human right, a global development priority, and a strategic priority for the World Bank.⁷ Human rights law obliges States to do certain things and to refrain from doing others. For example, States have an obligation to provide every individual with the opportunity for education.⁸ However, they also have an obligation to oppose any action that would lead to a group of people being denied the opportunity to exercise that right on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. Amartya Sen, often referred to as the father of the concept of ‘human development’, reminds us of a quote by H.G. Wells, where he said that “*human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe*”. Sen. maintains that “*if we continue to leave vast sections of the people of the world outside the orbit of education, we make the world not only less just, but also less secure*”. To Sen, the gender aspect of education is a direct link between illiteracy and women’s security.⁹

Practically every area of government policy – from education to public health – affects children to some degree. Short-sighted policymaking that fails to take children into account has a negative impact on the future of all members of society.¹⁰ The attainment of quality education is regarded as the foundation for improving people’s lives and pursuing sustainable development.¹¹ In addition to international human rights standards, regional human rights treaties, too, include crucial provisions aimed at promoting and protecting women’s human rights.¹²

There are people who believe that we do not need feminism today, but nothing could be further from the truth.¹³ For generations, women have fought for equality and against

⁶ Alexis Zickafoose et al., *Barriers and Challenges Affecting Quality Education (Sustainable Development Goal #4) in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030*, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/7/2657> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 11:27 AM).

⁷ World Bank, *Girls’ Education*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 11:37 AM).

⁸ U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), *Women’s and Children’s Rights* (Sept. 22, 2010), https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Women-Children_final.pdf (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 10:34 AM).

⁹ Azza Karam, *Education as the Pathway Towards Gender Equality*, U.N. Chronicle (Dec. 19, 2013), <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/education-pathway-towards-gender-equality> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 11:37 AM).

¹⁰ UNICEF, *Child Rights and Why They Matter*, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/child-rights-why-they-matter> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 11:05 AM).

¹¹ **Addressing Gender Disparities in Education and Employment**, (Sept. 9, 2022), <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/617fc7ac-82b0-4b2f-be83-5a14d825caf4/content> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 12:10 PM).

¹² **Women’s Rights are Human Rights**, (Nov. 25, 2014), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Events/WHRD/WomenRightsAreHR.pdf> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 11:05 AM).

¹³ **Feminism and Women’s Rights Movements**, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/feminism-and-women-s-rights-movements> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 2:30 PM).

oppression. While some of these battles have been partially won, such as equal access to education and the right to vote, women continue to face disproportionately high rates of discrimination and violence in many spheres of life. Women's empowerment is an essential factor that works for the betterment and development of society, community, and country.¹⁴

The world needs an additional USD 360 billion per year for developing countries to address gender equality under the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁵ Transformative change toward gender equality requires a concerted effort. This involves further investments, further changes in law and policies, further interventions to shift social and gender norms, and further audacity to change power relations between men and women.¹⁶

5.2 Current Landscape of Women's and Child Rights:

Global development organizations are increasingly turning to social norms, including gender norms, as a new area of investment in contexts where progress on gender equality is slow, has stalled or is backsliding.¹⁷ Both official data and scientific evidence have shown that gender violence and the impact it has on children is an important social problem and ways of preventing it do not appear to be working.¹⁸

According to Justice Misra Rangnath, who delivered the order in *Sheela Barse & Others v. Union of India*,¹⁹ children are regarded national assets, and it is the state's duty to make sure that their personalities develop properly. In India, the age range 0-14 year's accounts for roughly 26.16 percent of the population.²⁰ The development of a country is reliant on its children. They require organized care and opportunities for socialization in order to reach

¹⁴ Baydahi Roy, **Women's Empowerment in India, from Ancient Period to Modern Time Period**, (Nov. 16, 2022),

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/scatteredthoughts/womens-empowerment-in-india-from-ancient-period-to-modern-time-period-46689/> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 2:45 PM).

¹⁵ **Five Things to Accelerate Women's Economic Empowerment**, (Feb. 23, 2024),

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/02/five-things-to-accelerate-womens-economic-empowerment> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 2:58 PM).

¹⁶ **Gender Equality and Development +10 #AccelerateEquality**,

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/brief/gender-equality-at-a-crossroads> (last visited Nov. 14, 2024, 3:17 PM).

¹⁷ Tara Patricia Cookson, Lorena Fuentes, Maria Klara Kuss, & Jennifer Bitterly, Ladysmith Discussion Paper No. 42, **Social Norms, Gender, and Development: A Review of Research and Practice**, (Sept. 2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/discussion-paper-social-norms-gender-and-development-a-review-of-research-and-practice-en.pdf> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 10:57 AM).

¹⁸ Carme Montserrat, Marta Garcia-Molsosa, Anna Planas-Lladó, & Pere Soler-Masó, **Children's Understandings of Gender-Based Violence at Home: The Role School Can Play in Child Disclosure**, (May 2022), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740922000676> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 10:57 AM).

¹⁹ AIR 1986 SC 1773.

²⁰ **Ministry Of Statistics And Programme Implementation, Un World Population PROSPECTS 2019**, <https://statisticstimes.com/demographics/country/india-population.php> (last visited March 3, 2021, 10:00 PM).

human status. Their development should take into account all dimensions, such as cognitive and emotional development, as well as the strengthening of love, affections, and security, among other things.²¹ Child labor is a public health issue with negative outcomes that demands special attention. A multidisciplinary approach is needed to tackle child labor issues. Per ILO, poverty is a major single cause behind child labor. Lack of affordable schools and affordable education is another major factor to force children to work.²²

5.3 Future Challenges in Advancing Women and Child Rights:

5.3.1 Digital Task Being Challenging for Women's and Children's:

Nowadays, when the internet is present in every sector of our lives like in (education, information, shopping, etc), adolescents are fascinated by the opportunities of the new technologies.²³ Young people use mobile phones and the internet to readily obtain information, communicate more effectively and widely, and engage in social interactions—all of which can be done anywhere, at any time. All of these advantages come with new technologies, but there are also risks for students in school and college. In this virtual world, the majority of today's generation goes in the wrong directions instead of using the internet for creative and educational purposes. They attempt to access pornography, engage in online bullying, stalk others through electronic media, and more.

In India, only 40% of individuals can perform basic digital tasks, complicating efforts to protect children from online threats.²⁴ Digital technologies do not exist in a vacuum. They can be a powerful tool for advancing human progress and contribute greatly to the promotion and protection of human rights.²⁵ The recent COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to increasing our reliance on digital technologies in our everyday activities, consolidating internet access as a new fundamental human right.²⁶

²¹ Chandra Gupt, S. Sanon, *Working Children: A Sociological Analysis* (Aph Publishing Corp., 1998).

²² Amir Radfar, Seyed Ahmad Ahmadi Asgharzadeh, Fernando Quesada, & Irina Filip, **Challenges and Perspectives of Child Labor**, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6198592/> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 10:57 AM).

²³ Shashank Mittal, **Legal Challenges of Cyber bullying and Online Harassment: A Comparative Analysis**, *Int'l J. Multidisciplinary Rsch.*, <https://www.ijfmr.com/papers/2024/2/19295.pdf> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 12:41 PM).

²⁴ **In the Digital Age: Protecting Children Online While Ensuring Their Right to Access Information**, <https://pwnonlyias.com/mains-answer-writing/in-the-digital-age-protecting-children-online-while-ensuring-their-right-to-access-information-presents-complex-challenges-critically-examine-the-various-approaches-adopted-globally-to-address-this-2/> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 12:54 PM).

²⁵ **OHCHR and Privacy in the Digital Age**, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/privacy-in-the-digital-age> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 12:28 PM).

²⁶ **Gender-Based Violence: Combating Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls**, (Nov. 25, 2022), https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/combating_cyber_violence_against_women_and_girls.pdf (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 12:54 PM).

Regardless of one's identity or status, digital platforms have frequently been praised for providing equal chances for public self-expression. However, not everyone is welcome online. A variety of violent and exclusionary discourses and ideologies have found a home in the digital sphere, where they may be freely expressed and spread without consequence.

5.3.2 Impact of Economic Divides on Women and Children's Rights:

“Gender equality is more than a moral issue; it is a vital economic issue. For the global economy to reach its potential, we need to create conditions in which all women can reach their potential.”

— **Former IMF Economic Counsellor Maurice Obstfeld, March 23, 2017 (IMF 2017)**²⁷.

Women have struggled in every historical epoch and in every part of the world for equal treatment. In the early part of this century, the right of women to receive an education, to obtain paid employment, to enter professions, to vote and to stand for elections were all highly contested issues.²⁸ Women make up a little over half the world's population, but their contribution to measured economic activity, growth, and well-being is far below its potential, with serious macroeconomic consequences.²⁹ Despite tremendous advancements in recent decades, gender inequality appears to have stalled and labour markets around the world continue to be segregated along gender lines. The majority of unpaid labour is performed by women, and when they do work for pay, they are disproportionately employed in the informal economy and among the poor. Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) has continued to lag behind male involvement. In comparison to their male coworkers, they too experience notable pay disparities. Women's possibilities for paid work are limited in many countries by discrimination and labour market inefficiencies, and there are still few women in top positions and in entrepreneurship.

In order to make progress towards gender equality and effectively empower women in their daily lives, standards set by international conventions must be translated into national constitutions and then incorporated into domestic legislative frameworks.³⁰ Income

²⁷ Ata Can Bertay, Ljubica Dordevic, & Can Sever, **Gender Inequality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Industry**, (June 30, 2020), file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/wpia2020119-print-pdf.pdf (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 9:38 AM).

²⁸ **Module 4: Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of Women**, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 10:27 AM).

²⁹ Katrin Elborgh-Woytek, Monique Newiak, Kalpana Kochhar, Stefania Fabrizio, Kangni Kpodar, Philippe Wingender, Benedict Clements, & Gerd Schwartz, **Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity**, Int'l Monetary Fund, Strategy, Policy, & Rev. Dep't, & Fiscal Aff. Dep't, (Sept. 20, 2013), <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2013/sdn1310.pdf> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 10:00 AM).

³⁰ **The Impact of Family Law on Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries**, (Apr. 10, 2018), <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264279322-7-en.pdf?expires=1731906123&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7A38C7421F8A5340732D53D4CB7DD644> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 10:21 AM).

inequality between countries has improved, yet income inequality within countries has improved worse. Today, 71 percent of the world's population lives in countries where inequality has grown.³¹ This is particularly crucial as within-country disparities are the ones that individuals experience on a daily, monthly, and annual basis. This is how people evaluate and contrast themselves with their family members, neighbors, and the general public. The majority of wealthy nations and certain middle-income nations, such as China and India, have seen increases in income disparity since 1990. Cross-country data on the gender pay gap is patchy, but the most complete source in terms of coverage is the United Nation's International Labour Organization (ILO).³²

5.3.3 Risks Particular to Gender in Displacement Situations:

Climate change and displacement are increasingly interconnected.³³ Compared to men, women and children are over 14 times more likely to be killed by climate fueled disasters.³⁴ Inequality of gender in the climate crisis Gender inequality is made worse by climate change, which makes women especially susceptible to climate-related risks. Women may have less control over household decisions about how to lessen and deal with the effects of climate change, including whether to leave the house, because of socio-cultural norms. Men are also exposed to structural vulnerabilities as a result of climate change. Suicide risk and the possibility of using unhealthy coping mechanisms are both increased when one's livelihood is lost during a crisis.

However, it is not only humans who are at the receiving end of the climate crisis but also the world around them, which includes other species, infrastructure, and access to food, health, and sanitation³⁵ Infectious illness outbreaks, rising food shortages, and infrastructure degradation have all been connected to climate change, and these factors have a direct effect on people's quality of life. However, social conventions and roles one assumes exacerbate the likelihood of these impacts, and gender becomes a major component in the distribution of these repercussions as a crucial marker of such roles. Women will face the greatest challenges as climate change worsens due to these and numerous other variables. Actually, there are special clauses in the Paris Climate Agreement to guarantee that women are

³¹ United Nations, *shaping our Future Together Inequality – Bridging the Divide*, <https://www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 10:16 AM).

³² Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Joe Hasell, & Max Roser, *Economic Inequality by Gender*, (Mar. 2018), <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 9:47 AM).

³³ **Climate Change and Displacement**, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/climate-change-and-displacement> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 8:58 AM).

³⁴ **Gender, Displacement, and Climate Change**, (Oct. 30, 2022), <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5f21565b4.pdf> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 8:46 AM)..

³⁵ **Climate Change and Women: A Crisis Within a Crisis**, (Sept. 2, 2022), <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/climate-change-and-women> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 8:54 AM).

assisted in navigating the risks associated with climate change.³⁶ It is important to remember, however, that women are not only vulnerable to climate change but they are also effective actors or agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation.³⁷ Women frequently possess a wealth of information and experience that can be applied to disaster relief, climate change adaptation, and mitigation plans.

Furthermore, women are in a good position to contribute to livelihood strategies that are adjusted to the changing environmental realities because of their roles as custodians of natural and home resources in households and communities.

5.3.4 Environmental and Economic Challenges:

Women will be involved and their perspectives reflected in the policies and programmes for environment, conservation and restoration. Considering the impact of environmental factors on their livelihoods, women's participation will be ensured in the conservation of the environment and control of environmental degradation.³⁸ We work to increase women's economic opportunities and decision-making power.

An extensive body of research shows that when women earn an income and control their earnings, their children are more likely to attend school, their families are healthier, their self-worth improves; and their household incomes grow—along with the global economy.³⁹

Strategies to empower women economically should ensure equal rights and opportunities, promote work-life balance, improve access to resources, and challenge societal norms. The UN Economic and Social Council advocates for comprehensive strategies aligned with SDGs. This includes eradicating discriminatory laws and promoting equitable distribution of resources through gender-responsive budgeting.⁴⁰ Historically, climate change scientists, researchers and policymakers have struggled with how to make the vital connections

³⁶ Joe McCarthy, **Understanding Why Climate Change Impacts Women More Than Men**, (Mar. 6, 2020), <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-climate-change-affects-women/> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 9:26 AM).

³⁷ **Women, Gender Equality, and Climate Change**, (Oct. 9, 2009), https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 9:04 AM).

³⁸ Afsana A. Sama, **Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges**, (June 26, 2017), https://ijip.in/wp-content/uploads/ArticlesPDF/article_49c50312449493700491e54fb3ed7f1e.pdf (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 9:24 AM).

³⁹ **Women's Economic Empowerment**, <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/our-work/programs/gender-equality/womens-economic-power#:~:text=An%20extensive%20body%20of%20research,along%20with%20the%20global%20economy> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 9:21 AM).

⁴⁰ Tihitina Girma, **Women's Economic Empowerment: A Critical Catalyst for SDG Achievement**, (July 25, 2024), <https://www.undp.org/africa/blog/womens-economic-empowerment-critical-catalyst-sdg-achievement> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 9:40 AM).

between gender, social equity, and climate change.⁴¹ It's time to discuss the different effects of climate change and the connections between women's empowerment and successful, worldwide climate action, as an increasing amount of data and research shows their obvious correlation. Women's participation will be ensured in shaping economic and social policies. Their contributions in all sectors, including home-based work, will be recognized, and policies will be updated to reflect their roles accurately.

5.3.5 There Are Critical Gaps in Child-Related SDG Data:

“A nation’s children are its supremely important asset and nation’s future lies in their proper development. An investment in children is indeed an investment in future. A healthy and educated child of today is the active and intelligent citizen of tomorrow.”

- **Rabindra Nath Tagore**⁴²

A critical element of the 2030 Agenda is the commitment to “leave no one behind,” especially those in vulnerable situations.⁴³ Children are included in this. In order to guarantee equality and lessen disparities, states pledged to leave no one behind. This included doing away with discriminatory laws, policies, and practices. This principle offers a starting point for defending and advancing children's rights and is based on the human rights precepts of equality, dignity, and nondiscrimination. Despite dramatic improvements in survival, nutrition, and education over recent decades, today's children face an uncertain future.⁴⁴ Children's health and future are at risk in every nation due to factors like climate change, ecological degradation, population migration, violence, widespread inequality, and predatory business practices.

Due to limited data availability, there is much that remains unknown about how close or far we are from reaching the 48 child-related SDG targets: On average, national-level data are available for nearly half of these indicators.⁴⁵ Due in part to the fact that the majority of monitoring in high-income nations depends on administrative data systems that are unique to their countries, there is a bigger deficiency of child-related data that satisfies international standards than data quality in low-income countries. This dual issue, which is a general lack

⁴¹ **Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change Are Interconnected**, (Feb. 28, 2022), [no link provided] (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 1:14 PM).

⁴² N.K. Chakrabarti, *Juvenile Deviations and Protection in the Context of the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986*, 25(1-3) *Indian J. Criminology & Crim.* 6, 6-14 (2004).

⁴³ **Child Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways**, (May 11, 2020), https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26130Child_Rights_2030_Agenda_HLP_F_2020.pdf (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 9:27 AM).

⁴⁴ Helen Clark, Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Anshu Banerjee, Stefan Peterson, Sarah L. Dalglis, & Shanthi Ameratunga, **A Future for the World's Children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission**, (May 21, 2020), [https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736\(19\)32540-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(19)32540-1/fulltext) (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 9:27 AM).

⁴⁵ **Progress on Children's Well-being: Centring Child Rights in the 2030 Agenda – For Every Child, A Sustainable Future**, (Sept. 17, 2023), <https://data.unicef.org/resources/sdg-report-2023/> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 9:27 AM).

of data availability and a lack of high-quality data, makes it difficult to monitor children's development and spot those who are falling behind.

5.3.6 Status of Women Globally:

Explore key data and facts on the economic empowerment of women.⁴⁶ These figures highlight the vital role that economic empowerment plays in promoting gender equality and promoting sustainable development, ranging from workforce trends and income discrepancies to entrepreneurship and financial resource accessibility.

A. Poverty: Gender equality is a powerful catalyst for reducing poverty and driving sustainable development. By ensuring equal access to opportunities and decision-making for all, societies can create healthier and just economies.⁴⁷ Gender inequality has been a crucial social issue in India for centuries.⁴⁸ Despite the Indian Constitution granting equal rights to men and women, women face significant disadvantages in various aspects when viewed across the country's population. One in ten women lives in extreme poverty (10.3%). By 2030, 8% of women—around 342 million—may still earn less than \$2.15 per day, predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa.

B. Social Protection: Gender inequalities lead to limited social protection for women, with 73.5% of employed women lacking coverage like pensions and maternity benefits. Too many girls and women are still held back by social norms and traditional school practices influencing their educational right and opportunities. But we know that their education is the most powerful investment to make for our collective future.⁴⁹

C. Food Security: The concept of food security has evolved significantly over the past few decades.⁵⁰ Food insecurity remains a significant problem in India, especially among women and children.⁵¹ Because of its huge population and widespread poverty and malnutrition, food security is a big challenge in India. There is ample evidence to suggest a strong correlation between gender inequality and food and nutrition insecurity, yet the policy

⁴⁶ **Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment**, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 10:00 AM).

⁴⁷ **How Can Gender Equality Reduce Poverty?** (Feb. 28, 2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/02/how-can-gender-equality-reduce-poverty> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 10:56 AM).

⁴⁸ **Gender Inequality in India – Causes & Solutions**, (June 2, 2024), <https://www.cry.org/blog/gender-inequality/> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 10:52 AM).

⁴⁹ **Her Education, Our Future: UNESCO Fast-Tracking Girl's and Women's Education**, <https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education/her-education-our-future> (last visited Nov. 15, 2024, 10:00 AM)..

⁵⁰ Fiona H. McKay, Preethi John, Alice Sims, Gaganjot Kaur, & Jyotsna Kaushal, **Documenting the Food Insecurity Experiences and Nutritional Status of Women in India: Study Protocol**, (May 26, 2020), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7312776/> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 2:41 PM).

⁵¹ Hannah E. Payne et al., **Factors Associated with Food Insecurity Among Women and Children in Rural Rajasthan, India**, (2016), <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/253135/?ln=en&v=pdf> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 2:52 PM).

discourse around food and nutrition security in India has largely been gender blind.⁵² The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) says that about 189 million people in India are undernourished.⁵³ Women face higher food insecurity than men, with 31.9% of women affected, especially among marginalized groups such as older women, indigenous populations, and rural residents. Empowering women is crucial in addressing hunger and food insecurity, as it not only improves their own lives but also benefits their families and communities.⁵⁴ According to United Nations, there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India that make up a quarter of the world's undernourished population. In addition, roughly 43% of children in India are chronically undernourished.⁵⁵

D. Water and Sanitation: Progress towards gender equality is essential to meet existing development goals.⁵⁶ Women bear most of the water collection burden (70%) in households without access, impacting their menstrual hygiene and sanitation needs. “The latest data from WHO shows a stark reality: 1.4 million lives are lost each year due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene,” said Dr Maria Neira, WHO Director, Environment, Climate Change and Health Department.⁵⁷ Globally, 29% of the population does not have access to a safely managed water source (United Nations Children's Fund and World Health Organization, 2019). Inadequate access to WaSH services is responsible for 9.1% of the global disease burden and 6.3% of all deaths worldwide.⁵⁸

E. Financial Access: Access to financial services gives opportunities for generating income, accumulating assets, and participating more fully in economic activities, thereby promoting social and economic empowerment.⁵⁹ According to the World Bank's

⁵² Nitya Rao, Mamata Pradhan, & Devesh Roy, **Gender Justice and Food Security in India: A Review**, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Discussion Paper 01600 (Jan. 2017), <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0277a4a7-d62c-43e6-be36-9707d2ccaf27/content> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 3:00 PM).

⁵³ Sadhana Kala, **World Food Day: Right to Food and Women in India**, (Oct. 16, 2024), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/methink/world-food-day-right-to-food-and-women-in-india/> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 2:28 PM).

⁵⁴ **4 Reasons Women and Children Experience Food Insecurity Differently**, (Mar. 30, 2023), <https://www.technoserve.org/blog/hunger-women-and-children/> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 2:36 PM).

⁵⁵ **Food Security in India**, *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, (Nov. 15, 2024),

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_security_in_India (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 3:07 PM).

⁵⁶ Sue Cavill, **How Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Can Help Accelerate Progress on Gender Equality**, (July 14, 2023), <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/blog/how-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-can-help-accelerate-progress-on-gender-equality> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 10:37 AM).

⁵⁷ **Women and Girls Bear Brunt of Water and Sanitation Crisis – New UNICEF-WHO Report**, (July 6, 2023), <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2023-women-and-girls-bear-brunt-of-water-and-sanitation-crisis---new-unicef-who-report> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 9:59 AM).

⁵⁸ **Drinking Water and the Implications for Gender Equity and Empowerment: A Systematic Review of Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence**, 247 *Int'l J. Hygiene & Env'tl. Health* (Jan. 2023), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1438463922001274> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 10:25 AM).

⁵⁹ **Financial Inclusion of Women: Current Evidence from India**, (Aug. 17, 2023), <https://www.orfonline.org/research/financial-inclusion-of-women-current-evidence-from-india> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 11:17 AM).

2012 World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development, closing these gender gaps matters for development and policymaking.⁶⁰ Increased economic productivity, better development results for the following generation, and more representative institutions and policies are all possible with greater gender equality. Women are less likely to have bank accounts, with a 6% gender gap in developing countries, though the gap is closing globally.

F. Digital Access: One of the fundamental components of the United Nations' sustainable development 2030 agenda is quality education. It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Digital technologies have emerged as an essential tool to achieve this goal.⁶¹ The development of information technology, especially in the form of mobile technology, has brought revolutionary changes in various fields of life, including education.⁶² Socio-economic barriers have been identified as leading factors impacting student success and should be addressed by higher education institutions. A student's place of residence is a socioeconomic factor that could serve as a geographical learning barrier or education desert.⁶³ 37% of women are offline, meaning 259 million fewer women have internet access compared to men. Infrastructure development is one of the essential components in enhancing the quality of education in rural areas. Access to proper infrastructure can help to overcome the challenges of distance and isolation, which are prevalent in rural areas.⁶⁴ Education is the key to a brighter future, but access to quality education is still a challenge for many rural students.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Ana Revenga & Sudhir Shetty, **Empowering Women is Smart Economics**, 49(1) *Finance & Dev.* (Mar. 2012), <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm> (last visited Nov. 19, 2024, 11:36 PM).

⁶¹ Abid Haleem et al., **Understanding the Role of Digital Technologies in Education: A Review**, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666412722000137> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 2:20 PM).

⁶² Liza Husnita et al., **The Role of Mobile Technology in Improving Accessibility and Quality of Learning**, *Al-Fikrah J. Mgmt. Educ.* (Dec. 2023), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377216787_The_Role_of_Mobile_Technology_in_Improving_Accessibility_and_Quality_of_Learning (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 12:19 PM).

⁶³ Jamir Williams, **Addressing Education Deserts with Online and Mobile Learning**, (Aug. 11, 2023), <https://www.instructure.com/resources/blog/addressing-education-deserts-online-and-mobile-learning#:~:text=Breaking%20Geographical%20Barriers%20with%20Online%20Learning,-When%20considering%20an&text=With%20online%20learning%2C%20students%20can,multiple%20obligations%20outside%20their%20education> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 12:10 AM)..

⁶⁴ **Enhancing the Quality of Education in Rural Areas of India: Strategies and Best Practices**, (May 15, 2023), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/enhancing-the-quality-of-education-in-rural-areas-of-india-strategies-and-best-practices/> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 12:24 PM).

⁶⁵ **How to Make Education More Accessible in Rural Areas**, (Sept. 27, 2024), <https://www.perfecttutor.in/blog-details/how-to-make-education-more-accessible-in-rural-areas> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 2:12 PM).

5.4 Conclusion:

India, a country rich in diversity and culture, has made notable strides in women empowerment over the past decades. As we stand in 2024, the journey towards gender equality continues to evolve, with significant achievements and persistent challenges shaping the landscape.⁶⁶ This article explored the current status of women's empowerment and child rights and their position in India, emphasizing the advancements, challenges, and initiatives being taken to pave the way for a more inclusive future.

Effective strategies require a multi-dimensional approach, addressing not just access to education for both but also quality, retention, and outcomes. Incorporating life skills and vocational training can enhance the relevance and appeal of education for girls. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive strategies and collaborative efforts from governments, policymakers, civil society organizations, and communities. Investments in girls' education, targeted interventions addressing cultural and structural barriers, and advocacy for gender-sensitive policies are imperative to overcome the limitations of social reform in women's education and achieve substantial progress towards gender equality in education.⁶⁷

Partnerships between governments, NGOs, and private sectors can mobilize resources and create innovative solutions. These collaborations can support scholarship programs, establish safe school environments, and provide mentorship opportunities. Prioritizing funding for girls' education, especially in marginalized communities, can bridge the gap. Initiatives like free education, distribution of learning materials, and incentives for families can reduce financial barriers. Addressing societal norms and discriminatory practices through community engagement and sensitization programs is crucial. Encouraging female role models and involving local leaders in advocacy can shift mindsets and promote acceptance. Policies that focus on issues like early marriage, gender-based violence, and reproductive health education can create an enabling environment. Governments should ensure these policies are backed by robust implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Leveraging technology to deliver education to remote areas or to those who cannot attend traditional schools can significantly impact women's access to education.

⁶⁶ Julee Sinha, *Women Empowerment in India in 2024: Progress, Challenges, and Future Prospects*, available at

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/women-empowerment-india-2024-progress-challenges-future-julee-sinha-b4kff/> (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 12:14 PM).

⁶⁷ Dr. Parul Shah, *The Impact of Social Reform on Women's Education: Challenges and Advancing Gender Equality*, available at

[https://www.gapbodhitaru.org/res/articles/\(421-427\)%20THE%20IMPACT%20OF%20SOCIAL%20REFORM%20ON%20WOMEN%20%E2%80%98S%20EDUCATION%20CHALLENGES%20AND%20ADVANCING%20GENDER%20EQUALITY.pdf](https://www.gapbodhitaru.org/res/articles/(421-427)%20THE%20IMPACT%20OF%20SOCIAL%20REFORM%20ON%20WOMEN%20%E2%80%98S%20EDUCATION%20CHALLENGES%20AND%20ADVANCING%20GENDER%20EQUALITY.pdf) (last visited Nov. 18, 2024, 12:10 AM).