

**WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT:

Who is a woman?

A woman is a person/feminine gender who has reached the age of puberty. At this stage, she is a potential mother, wife, and a home Manager at least when she has reached eighteen years.

At the home front she becomes a mother, teacher, friend and caretaker of her husband and her children.

At the office, she exercises her managerial skills in the home to effect the lives of others and the well - being of the society.

Note before with illustration of the girl-child when she is growing up until she reaches the age of puberty, when the breasts start swelling out and she eventually starts menstruating ready for motherhood.

Womanhood is being defined in some dictionaries and encyclopedia's like quoting, The Thesaurus, Medical, Legal, Encyclopedia, Wikipedia, as;

1. The state or time of being a woman.
2. The composite of qualities thought to be appropriate to or representative of women.
3. Women considered as a group.

Harcourt H.M. (2011) defines womanhood as;

1. The state of being a woman
2. Traditional womanly qualities
3. Womankind.

DEFINITION OF WOMANHOOD:

How does the Bible define femininity?

Women they say face many lies against true womanhood to the extent that there is often great confusion about what it even means to be a woman. Some say that womanhood is casting off "enslavement to a husband and climbing a corporate ladder in the workplace, politics, or some other professional area. Some say that womanhood is only doing work at home, period. Some say that womanhood is defined by wearing fashionable cloths, make-up, jewelry etc."

For others, womanhood is defined b having children, and in some cases, how many children one has; women will always find themselves

chasing an elusive identity and dream unless they embrace who God made them to be according to the Bible.

Peter exhorts husbands to treat their wives in an understanding way because they are different being women and men need to understand this (1 Peter 3:7). Women shouldn't be yelled at, threatened physically, or intimidated by men. They should be treated with sensitivity, care, and respect. Women shouldn't have to compete with men in terms of toughness for their strength is different.

HOW DOES THE QURAN DEFINE WOMANHOOD?

The worth of a woman, or man, what is a woman/what is a man has been defined in many ways throughout history and across societies . One of the ways that, unfortunately, society has defined what it means to be a woman, or to be a successful woman, has to do with how she looks. We are in a society where women are pretty much defined by the way they look, and how successful they are is determined by how attractive and beautiful they can be for men.

Allah tells us that women do not need to fall to that standard, women don't need to be an object. Allah tells us that a woman's worth is defined by her relationship with HIM, and not by her relationship to any of His creation. So, women are told by Allah as Muslim women they should cover themselves. And by covering, what is irrelevant is covered- that is, the body (the external beauty).

Because what really matters in a woman's self-worth, is the character of a woman and her relationship with Allah.

The tenets of Islam are based wholly on nature. This is because Islam is the religion of nature. The laws Islam requires us to follow are, infact our own instinctive human requirements expressed in legal

terms. And the teachings of Islam with respect to women are no exception. They too are based on nature.

Modern, psychological, biological and anatomical research proves women to be more passive than man. This is why their maker has fashioned them. The nature of their womanhood is the special part they have to play in society, demand that they should be just as they have been made- that is, relatively delicate as compared to men.

It is this fact of nature on which Islamic teachings have been based. Because of women's delicate constitution, Islam teaches men to be gentle with them. That way they will not lose heart or become too despondent to perform their special duties in life. Women are not like iron and steel ribs: they are fragile and delicate. It is best to let them be in their natural state.

WOMEN'S PRIMARY ROLE IN THE FAMILY:

Fabian S., writes

In colonial times, families were large, and every member of the family had an important role in helping to provide everything that the family needed. The men hunted and farmed and may be, worked at a trade. The women cared for the children, cared for the garden, and made candles, soap, and other necessities. They also cared for the livestock, cleaned and spun wool for clothing, and made medicines for the family.

There were some added hardship for women who lived in America at that time. Women had very few rights related to either their family or their property. In the eyes of the law, women were almost invisible. They had no legal rights. Women could not own or inherit property. Once a woman is married, she had even fewer rights. Married women could not sign contracts, their money was not even their own.

Women and children were treated like property that belonged to their husband. Women were not even expected to speak up in public usually their husbands spoke for them.

This was the law at the time, because laws in the American colonies were usually based on what the colonists had been accustomed to back in England- English common law. Under English common law, a woman was not viewed as a person with separate rights either.

Haifa al- Hababi is Saudi Arabia's first female political candidate. She is the first female to register as a candidate in the history of Saudi Arabian election. The 37 year old Architect and Professor broke the rules. She campaigned with her face uncovered and regularly dons bright colours- rare in a country where most women favour black, neck to feet abayas in public.

The trend of things are changing rapidly all over the world in regards to women's changing roles both in the family and in public life.

When asked how she saw the whole exercise, she replied, "I ' m not looking at it as a woman or a man- I'm looking at it as an equal. For me, its an opportunity for the whole country to participate.

In old Saudi Arabia, women are dependent on a male guardian who are allowed to make some of the most basic life decisions for them, can't drive themselves and have a very limited role in shaping the destiny of Saudi Arabia.

In 2011, former King Abdullah made a Royal decree to allow women to vote in municipal elections.

A good number of women today vie for political offices in Saudi Arabia. This is not only a positive step but a paradigm shift in the country's history.

Analysts say that nearly 130,000 women registered to vote for the first time, according to the pro-women's rights Baladi campaign- a tiny proportion of the 10 million people who live in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute Monarchy and so unused to democracy- a mere 500,000 men are registered and they have been allowed to vote in municipal elections for a decade already.

Still change is coming. Women make up a quarter of the country's Shura council, an unelected body appointed by the king that can propose laws but cannot pass them. And now they can vote legally.

All these changes are happening today because of educational awareness and upholding of the fundamental rights of women. The old Saudi also protected women's right.

CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN'S PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT.

Women are not just one group among various disempowered subsets of society (the poor, ethnic minorities, and so on): they are a crosscutting category of individuals that overlaps with all these other groups.

Household and interfamilial relations are a central locus of women's disempowerment in a way that is not true for other disadvantaged groups. This means that efforts at empowering women must be especially cognizant of the household- level implications of broader policy action.

It can be argued that while empowerment in general requires institutional transformation, women's empowerment requires systemic transformation not just of any institutions, but especially of those supporting patriarchal structures.

THE MAJOR CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN'S PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Lack of access to good and qualitative education.
2. Unequal and restrained access to employment.
3. Lack of will and constraint to political participation.
4. Early marriage.
5. Widow's rites.
6. Female Genital Mutilation etc.

Going down through this further will lead us to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Document) and Various Women's International Conferences.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

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.

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.

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in political and public life- including the right to vote and to stand for election- as well as education, health, and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES.

The founding United Nations Charter (1945) included a provision for equality between men and women (charter III, article 8) subsequently, from 1945 to 1975 various female officials within the United Nations and leaders of women's movements on the global stage attempted to turn these principles into action. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution (resolution 3010) that 1975 should be International Women's Year. In December 1975, the UN General Assembly passed a further resolution (resolution 31/136) that 1976-1985 should be the "Decade for Women".

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, MEXICO CITY, 1975.

The first world conference on women was held in Mexico City in 1975. it resulted in the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their contribution to Development and Peace.

SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, COPENHAGEN, 1980.

The second world conference on women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. The conference agreed that the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an important milestone. The Copenhagen Conference also acknowledged the gap between rights being secured for women and women's ability to exercise those rights. It was also agreed that it was action on the three areas of equal access to education, employment opportunities, and adequate health care services are essential to achieve the goals set put in Mexico.

THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, NAIROBI, 1985.

The third world conference on women was held in Nairobi in 1985. The Nairobi conference set out areas by which progress in women's equality could be measured; constitutional and legal measures; equality in social participation; equality in political participation; and decision-making. The conference also acknowledged that women need to participate in all areas of human activity, not just those areas that relate to gender.

PRECEDING THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, BEIJING, 1995.

Delegates had prepared a Declaration and platform for Action aimed at achieving greater equality and opportunity for women. In fallout from pre-conference meetings, the Holy See publicly disagreed with positions outlined in the United States and other nations concerning abortion, reproductive rights, and other sensitive issues.

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The Fourth World Conference on the status of women was held in Beijing, China from 4th-15th September, 1995. The government and peoples of the world once again negotiated consensus in the way and means of improving the equality of life of women. Discussion at the Beijing Conference was on women and Development with a view to applying gender perspectives to national, regional and global issues.

Yet still today, there are existing constraints on the role of women generally and these have their origin in the traditional interpretation of socio-cultural attitudes and the gender based division of labour between the sexes. Women were thought to be incapable of full participation as citizens in various political and educational systems. These issues needed to be addressed.

THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION.

The communiqué or document that was produced from the Beijing Conference is known as the Beijing Platform for Action.

The mission statement are as follows;

i. The platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the 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. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider, national and international communities.

Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development. A sustained and long term commitment is essential, so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

2. The Platform For Action reaffirms the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the platform seeks to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle.

3. The Platform for Action emphasizes that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender-equality around the world. It respects and values the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and recognizes that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment.

4. The Platform for Action requires immediate and concerted action by all to create a peaceful, just and humane world based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principle of equality for all people of all ages and from all walks of life and to this end recognizes that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice

5. The success of the Platform for Action will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, International Organizations and institution at all levels. It will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, and private sources for the advancement of women, financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, sub-regional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women.

Whelan S. (2002), Minister for International Cooperation at the second meeting of the High level Group on Education for All, Abuja, Nigeria, November 19, 2002 writes, "The time has come to focus accelerating progress on girls education, and the ways and means to achieve gender equality".

The first of the Education for All target dates is to eliminate gender disparities by 2005. That is also the date for achieving a Millenium Development Goal. But reports then shows that they could not met this target.

Through this report also shows that girls clearly remain at a disadvantage especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Overall then, only 86 to 153 countries achieved gender parity in primary education. Only 18 others then, appeared to be within striking distance of the target, but perhaps not by 2005. The rest are even further from the target, and half of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Education for girls can be directly linked to longer, healthier lives for women and their children, higher family incomes and increased agricultural production.

On our own views, we can say that the time has come to focus on accelerating program on girls education, and the ways and means to achieve gender equality.

The goal of achieving gender equality in education by 2015 was about making education for girls truly equal to education for boys.

Education for both girls and boys must be equally accessible, safe and worthwhile.

WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Pattanaik and Swain (2007) writes; "Give us good mothers and I shall give you a good nation."

Development is inevitable for bringing change in a society. The present day society is the metamorphosis of the primordial civilization having undergone a plethora of development processes. Change is the

essence of life and without development its (change) reality is like a daydream. It has become a buzzword and reference to this term has become the order of the day for politicians, public men, administrations, policy planners and economists in a democratic set up. Also, it provides an acid test for the success and failure of a government.

In the present approach to development, greater emphasis is placed on political will to usher in socio- economic development linked to quality of life facilitating and increasing participation of people in the decision-making process, equitable distribution of national income and creating a society which is genuinely harmonious and free from want and deprivation.

There are two approaches concerning gender issues, which is through the writing of Bosserup (1970) who was a pioneer to unfold the field of gender and development. One of the approaches called Women In Development (WID) focusing on integrating women in the mainstream of development. Irrespective of the nature and form of society, women have always been its integral and inseparable part. This reality notwithstanding, they hardly get their due to them. The very word women invariably says a long history of dependence and subjugation.

For centuries, women who constitute half of the humanity have been suppressed, oppressed and treated as subordinates and not equal to their male counterparts in different fields of activity. In almost all respects they are the largest excluded category.

The Human Development Report (1995) revealed statistical data of women all around the world that women have only 1/10th of the global income. They own 1/100th of the means of production. Nearly 70 percent of the women live below the poverty line.

In most of the countries women work approximately twice the unpaid time men do. Rural women produce more than 55 percent of all food grown in developing countries.

The value of women's unpaid housework and community work is estimated at 35 percent of GDP worldwide. HIV is increasingly affecting women and about 42 percent of the estimated cases are those of women.

Again 20 million unsafe abortions are performed every year resulting in the deaths of about 70,000 women. They constitute almost invariably then a small minority of those holding elected offices. In 1980, they made up of just over 10 percent of the world's parliamentarians.

A conference of the non-aligned and other developing countries on the "Role of women in Development" was held in New Delhi, India, from 8th to 11th April, 1985. Rajiv Gandhi the Prime Minister of India then, in his inaugural speech over the conference focused that "The Role of Women in Developing Countries is very crucial to the rate at which a country develops and in many ways is an indicator as to how well the country is developing ." He lauded women as the social conscience of a country.

Again, he was of the view that women hold our societies together. In developing countries women have been active in all fields and specially they have risen to prominent places in the political field. Women are equal in every way whether it is their spiritual urge, whether it is political ideals, historically in sacrifices, in heroism, there has been no shortcomings, there have been no difference just because of sex. Women have risen to the highest levels of sacrifice and heroism.

This is evident he says, from all our freedom struggles. So, women must be allowed full freedom of action and full movement. But male superiority has become in a way, a vested interest like all vested interests, is damaging to humanity. And all of us - men and women must fight this with all our strength.

Participation in the mainstream of life was again highlighted by the then Union Minister of Social and Women's Welfare, Maragatham Chandrasekhar in her address to the conference. She stated that one of the most important task before us is to inculcate the spirit of confidence and the desire amongst women, to achieve their own potential. Again she was of the view that the problem of women cannot be divorced from those of men and it is our common problem to see that women are brought into the forefront to enable them participate in the mainstream of national life.

She also proposed to have a comprehensive account of the shortfalls in the achievement to uplift women in the women's Decade. In this context, she recognized the co-operation of men as an essential part.

The momentous words of the late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Ghandi on women, "Women's emancipation or equality is part of our general development plans but government action can be neither effective nor adequate unless women themselves become more aware of their rights and the corresponding responsibilities". This reminds us the initiatives from amongst the women.

In India the 73rd amendment of the Constitution was regarded as watershed in the history of the state initiatives in regard to empowerment of rural women. It has indicated a paradigm shift in the approach of the Indian state towards women. Earlier women were generally regarded as objects of development only. This amendment made women the subjects of development and an indispensable part of

the decision-making process. Women are instrumental to development. Its repercussions has stimulated greater integration and induction of women in the development process.

Women constitute half of the existing human resource worldwide and are disguised heroines of the drama of life. Their versatile role throughout their lifetime fetched the accolade of perpetual devaluation of women in the patriarchal set up. Their perceived secondary role mostly confined to the four walls of the house further propagated the subservient position of women to men.

Development programmes are being geared up for the cause of women. The carnival of "women's Development Decade," International Women's Day, " Women's Empowerment Year," etc are intended to glorify the grandeur of womanhood and provided impetus to accelerate development strategies for self development of women which exerts a strong influence on the growth of their personality. It is now realized that unless her interests and creativity are provided platform for growth and expansion, her decision-making capacity, ethics and morals which govern her life, fashion and her individual personality will be affected which would have a negative impact on the society as a whole.

In all the fields of life which affect women directly or indirectly or in areas where women are participants though at the peripheral level. It is vital to appreciate the fact that women have to enter to the zone of recognition and have to be provided with adequate skills, training an confidence building measures for their total development and empowerment.

WHAT IS FEMINISM?

Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social and economic equality to men. Synonyms to the word are: the

women's movement, the feminist movement, women's liberation, female emancipation, women's rights; informal women's lib, "a longtime advocate of feminism."

It is a multidisciplinary approach to sex and gender equality understood through social theories and political activism. Historically, feminism has evolved from the critical examination of inequality, between the sexes to a more nuanced focus on the social and performative constructions of gender and sexuality.

Feminist theory now aims to interrogate gender inequalities and to effect change in areas where gender and sexuality politics create power inequity, intellectual and academic discussion of these inequalities allows our students to go into the world aware of injustices and to work toward changing unhealthy gender dynamics in any scenario.

Feminist political activists campaign in areas such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, fairness, social justice, and work place issues such as family medical leave, equal pay, sexual harassment and discrimination..

Anytime stereotyping, objectification, infringements of human rights, or gender or sexuality-based oppression occurs, it's a feminist issue.

Balliet B.J. and Mcdaniel P. (1998) state that feminism has embraced a wide range of political ideas and strategies, associating its critique of gender oppression with the insights of other powerful political analyses such as liberalism, socialism and Marxism.

Feminists have encountered conflicts and problems as they have attempted to build a movement to end sexism and to eradicate discrimination based on gender.

The Declaration of sentiments and Resolutions marks the formal beginning of an organized women's rights movement in the United states. At an 1848 meeting called to consider "the social, civil and religious condition and rights of women, " Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and other organizers used the Declaration of Independence as a model for the Seneca Falls Declaration.

AN EXPOSE ON THE DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE SENECA FALLS.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer,

while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men-both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues of wealth and distinction which he considers most honourable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in church, as well as state but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any Public participation in the affairs of the church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavoured in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation-in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, and petition the state and National legislatures, and endeavour to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

RESOLUTIONS

Whereas, the great precept of nature is conceded to be, that "man shall pursue his own true and substantial happiness. "Blackstone in his Commentaries remarks, that this law of Nature being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries and at all times; no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this, and such of them as are valid, derive all their force, and all their validity, and all their authority, mediately and immediately, from this original; therefore.

Resolved, that such laws as conflict, in any way, with the true and substantial happiness of woman, are contrary to the great precept of nature and of no validity, for this is "superior in obligation to any other."

Resolved, that all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature, and therefore of no force or authority.

Resolved, That woman is man's equal was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.

Resolved. That the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.

Resolved. That inasmuch as man, while claiming for himself intellectual superiority, does accord to woman moral superiority, it is pre-eminently his duty to encourage her to speak and teach, as she has an opportunity, in all religious assemblies.

Resolved. That the same amount of virtue, delicacy, and refinement of behaviour that is required of woman in the social state should also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

Resolved. That the objection of indelicacy and impropriety, which is so often brought against woman when she addresses a public audience, comes with a very ill-grace from those who encourage, by their attendance her appearance on the stage, in the consent, or in feats of the circus.

Resolved. That woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits which corrupt customs and perverted application of the scriptures have marked out for her, and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her great Creator has assigned her. Good. Applicable in all other religions of the world.

Resolved. That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.

Resolve. That the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities.

Resolved, therefore, that, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities, and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held; and this being a self-evident truth growing out of the divinely implanted principles of human nature, and any custom or authority adverse to it, whether modern or wearing the hoary sanction of antiquity, is to be regarded as a self-evident false hood, and at war with mankind.

At the last session Lucretia Mott offered and spoke to the following resolution:

Resolved, that the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce.

INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN KEY DECISION MAKING POLICIES.

Women's economic empowerment is a pre-requisite for sustainable development. Achieving women's economic empowerment

requires sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. Women must have more equitable access to assets and services; infrastructure programmes should be designed to benefit the poor, both men and women, and employment opportunities must be improved while increasing recognition of women's vast unpaid work. Innovative approaches and partnerships include increased dialogue among development actors improved co-ordination amongst donors and support for women organizing at the national and global level.

I have already written part of this caption, earlier in this text, that is the world conferences on the status of women and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The socio-economic position of women in societies negatively affects their participation. Typically, women earn less than men and the sexual division of labour in society also imposes burdens on women that are not normally faced by men. Women often face a triple burden when participating in politics. They have a responsibility to their work or profession, to their family, and if they become involved in politics they are effectively taking on a third full-time job. Most societies fail to organize in a manner that enables both men and women with families to share these responsibilities, particularly considering that child upbringing responsibilities tend to fall disproportionately on women.

The concept of women's empowerment can be distinguished from others by two defining features. The first is process, Naila and Zoe (1997). None of the other concepts explicitly focuses on processes of change-toward greater equality, or greater freedom of choice and action.

The second is agency: in other words, women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change that is being described or measured. Thus, hypothetically there could be an improvement in gender equality by various measures, but unless the intervening processes involved women as agents of that change rather than merely as its beneficiaries, we would not consider it empowerment. However desirable, it would merely be an improvement in outcomes from one point in time to another.

A definition proposed by Naila serves as a good reference point for conceptualizing and measuring women empowerment. It contains both the process and agency elements, and also implicitly distinguishes "empowerment" from the general concept of "power" as exercised by dominant individuals or groups. Naila (2001) defines empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."

This fits well within the broad definition of empowerment as "the expansion of life" in the World Bank's empowerment sourcebook. (Deepa 2002).

Much of the literature also emphasizes the importance of resources. We see resources, however, not as a feature of empowerment per se but as catalysts for empowerment, as "enabling factors" that can foster an empowerment process.

This distinction may be useful in the context of policy and evaluation. In particular, many of the variables that have traditionally been used as proxies for employments, such as education and employment, might be better described as enabling factors, resources, or sources of empowerment, Sunita K. (2000a).

The second component noted above, agency, is at the heart of many conceptualizations of empowerment. Among the various concepts

and terms we encountered in the literature on empowerment, "agency" probably comes closest to capturing what the majority of writers see as the essence of empowerment. It encompasses the ability to formulate strategic choices and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes.

The importance of agency in the discourse on empowerment emerges from the rejection of "top-down" approaches to development. At the institutional and aggregate levels, this concept emphasizes popular participation and social inclusion. At the micro level, it is embodied in the idea of self-efficacy and the significance given to the individual women's realization that she can be an agent of change in her own life. In many ways, the emphasis on agency in the literature on women's empowerment is comparable to the emphasis in the overall empowerment literature on generating demand for information and accountability and on facilitating inclusion, participation, and mobilization of those who are in disadvantaged positions.

Agency as the essence of women's empowerment does not imply that all improvements in the position of women must be brought about through the actions of women alone, or that it is the responsibility of individual women to empower themselves. There is ample justification for governments and multilateral organizations to promote policies that strengthen gender equality through various means, including legal and political reform, and to mount interventions that give women (and other socially excluded groups) greater access to resources. The question is whether it is useful to describe all actions taken towards that end as "empowerment". We would suggest that it is not.

There are many examples in the literature showing that women's access to resources does not necessarily lead to their greater control over resources, that changes in legal statutes often have little influence on practice and that female political leaders do not always work to promote women's interests: Thus while resources-economic, social, and

political are often critical in ensuring that women are empowered, they are not by themselves sufficient without women's individual or collective ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interest, resources cannot bring about empowerment.

WOMEN LEADERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Women's empowerment has been identified as an essential commitment in the development goals of national governments and international agencies. It is important, therefore, to establish a consensus regarding what this concept means. If governments and agencies are to be held accountable for achieving this goal, then clear, systematic framework and indicators for measuring changes in women's empowerment are needed to assess the effectiveness of policy and programmatic efforts.

Some of the writers quoted here characterize women's empowerment as the enhancement of women's ability to make strategic life choices. While employing a multiplicity of terms, the literature focuses on two essential elements, process and agency, which we suggest should be treated as defining features that distinguish empowerment from related concepts such as gender equality.

Significant progress has been made in developing operational measures of the concept providing useful guidance to those who want to track changes in women's empowerment as a critical component in the achievement of poverty reduction, human rights, and the Millennium Development Goals.

Arguments based on human rights consideration have been important in establishing that women's empowerment must be considered from a universalist perspective; thus, measures of

empowerment must involve standards that lie outside localized gender systems.

Empirical research has established that women's empowerment has multiple dimensions, which do not necessarily evolve simultaneously. Measurement schemes must therefore extend beyond single indicators or indices. Empowerment also operate at multiple levels of aggregation, and analyses at the micro, meso, and macro levels are needed to assess the impact of program and policy efforts. Furthermore, the path to empowerment for women may be through individual behaviour, normative change or collective action.

Women Presidents and Prime Ministers in the 21st Century

As at 14 October 2014, 25 women around the world had held office as President since 1 January 2000, and 31 as Prime Minister.

There are a total of 193 countries who are members of the United Nations, then.

The list below does not include hereditary heads of state or the prime ministers of dependent, autonomous or semi-autonomous territories, nor women who were in 'acting' roles for a few weeks/months but did not go on to secure the relevant office on a permanent basis.

Presidents

Country	Name	In Office
Argentina	Christina Fernandez de Kirchner	2007 -
Bosnia	Borjana Kristo	2007 - 2011
Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	2011 -
Central African Republic	Catherine Samba-Panza	2014 -
Chile	Michelle Bachelet	2006 - 2010
		2014 -
Costa Rica	Laura Chinchilla	2010 - 2014
Finland	Tarja Halonen	2000 - 2012
India	Pratibha Patil	2007 - 2012
Indonesia	Megawati Sukarnoputri	2001 - 2004
Ireland	Mary McAleese	1997 - 2011
Kosovo	Atifete Jahjaga	2011 -
Kyrgyzstan	Roza Otunbayeva	2010 - 2012
Latvia	Vaira Vike-Freiberga	1999 - 2007
Liberia	Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson	2006 -
Lithuania	Dalia Grybauskaitė	2009 - 2014

Malawi	Joyce Banda	2012 - 2014
Malta	Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca	2014 -
Panama	Mireya Moscoso Rodrigez	1999 - 2004
Philippines	Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	2001 - 2010
Serbia	Natasa Micic	2002 - 2004
South Korea	Park Geun-hye	2013 -
Sri Lanka	Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga	1994 - 2005
Switzerland	Micheline Calmy-Rey	2007, 2011
Switzerland	Doris Leuthard	2010
Switzerland	Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf	2012

Prime Ministers

Country	Name	In Office
Australia	Julia Gillard	2010 - 2013
Bangladesh	Begum Khaleda Zia	2001 - 2006
Bangladesh	(Sheikh) Hasina Wajed	2009 -
Croatia	Jadranka Kosor	2009 - 2011
Denmark	Helle Thorning-Schmidt	2011 -
Germany	Angela Merkel	2005 -
Finland	Anneli Jäätteenmäki	2003 -
Finland	Mari Kiviniemi	2010 - 2011
Haiti	Michèle Pierre-Louis	2008 - 2009
Iceland	Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir	2009 - 2013
Jamaica	Portia Simpson-Miller	2012 -
Latvia	Laimdota Straujuma	2014 -
Mali	Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé	2011 - 2012
Moldova	Zinaida Grecianîi	2008 - 2009
Mozambique	Luísa Días Diogo	2004 - 2010
New Zealand	Helen Clark	1999 - 2008
Norway	Erna Solberg	2013 -
Peru	Beatriz Merino Lucero	2003
Peru	Rosario del Pilar Fernández Figueroa	2011
Peru	Ana Rosario Jara Velasquez	2014 -
Poland	Ewa Kopacz	2014 -
São Tomé & Príncipe	Maria das Neves Ceita Batista de Sousa	2002 - 2004
São Tomé & Príncipe	Maria de Carvalho Silveira	2005 - 2007
Senegal	Mame Madior Boye	2001 - 2002
Senegal	Aminata Touré	2013 - 2014
Slovakia	Iveta Radičová	2010 - 2012
Slovenia	Alenka Bratušek	2013
South Korea	Han Myung-sook	2006 - 2007
Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra	2011 - 2014
Trinidad & Tobago	Kamla Persad-Bissessar	2010 -
Ukraine	Yuliya Tymoshenko	2005, 2006,

2007 - 2010

This list is correct (so far as we know) as at 14 October, 2014.

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Session 1 (Discussions)

Girl- Child Education

The girl-child is a female human being from the time of birth to 18 years of age. It covers the stages of nursery

- i. 0-5 years (Nursery)
- ii. 6 - 12 years (primary)
- iii. 12-18) years (secondary)

During these stages, the young child is completely under the care of the parents or guardian. It is the period her character and personality are built and development.

Education for the girl-Child is important for many reasons. Basically, education is a fundamental human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Education for the girl-child is a means through which she acquires desirable skills, knowledge, attitudes and realizes her potentials for self actualization and thus, becomes a functional member of her society.

WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF EDUCATION ON THE GIRL CHILD?

Education will develop her to think critically about various issues of life and helps her take decisions about them as well as making her free from bias, prejudice, superstition and blind beliefs. (explain in detail).

However, education has not necessarily been a priority for the girl-child right from the primitive African society. This was due to some cultural beliefs been held by the illiterate members of the society, as well as poverty.

The girl-child was associated and attached to the kitchen rather than going to school. Education was almost a taboo and if the girl-child was sent to school, the best and highest level she was allowed to attain was primary level or junior level.

Parents felt it was better to prepare the girl-child for marriage rather than schooling which they believe was a waste of resources.

Researchers have found a positive correlation which exists between the enrollment of the girl-child in school and the gross national product (GDP) and increase in life expectancy.

Rapid socio-economic development of a nation has also been observed to depend on the caliber of women and their education. This is because education bestows on the girl-child a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills.

Educating the girl-child helps to produce mothers who are educated and who will in turn educate their children and care for them. A saying has it than "when you educate a man, you educate a person, but educate a woman, you educate a nation"

This is because the education of every child starts from the family and the mother is the first teacher. The World Bank estimates that each additional year of formal education that a mother completes, translates to her children staying in school, an additional one-third to one-half of a year. This in effect creates an inter-generational education benefits.

First among them is that educated women would promote education for all children without gender discrimination. This is an analytical view. It is not always the case that educated women will like to stand for the fundamental human rights of others irrespective of their races, creed or others.

According to the International Centre for Research on Women, the education that a girl-child receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry and is a critical factor in reducing the prevalence of child marriage.

Moreover, the World Bank estimates that an additional year of schooling for 1,000 women helps to prevent two maternal deaths. Women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure that their children are immunized, are better informed

about their children's nutritional requirements and adopt improved sanitation practices.

As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished.

Girl-child education is the most effective and preventive weapon against the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is because education ranks among the most powerful tool for reducing girls' vulnerability. It slows and reduces the spread of HIV/AIDS by contributing to female economic dependence, delayed marriages, family planning, work outside the home, as well as greater information about the disease and how to prevent it. Girl-child education therefore translates to better health for the children, reduction in child morbidity and mortality, thus, triggering off a smooth achievement of all the other developmental goals in a sustainable manner.

Studies link education to economic growth. Education contributes to improved productivity which leads to higher income and improved productivity which leads to higher income and improved economic performance. Educating the girl-child is therefore one of the most effective ways for ending poverty in developing nation like Nigeria.

The benefits of educating a girl-child among others include increased number of women with jobs and higher earnings as well as other benefits that last many generations and enhances environmental awareness.

Education for the girl-child breaks the shell of ignorance and opens that of self discovery. Realizing the full potentials endowed in her, the girl-child discovers that she can be a medical doctor, lawyer, teacher, engineer, politician, banker, journalist etc.

Nigerian women are only interested in their families irrespective of the positions that they held as representatives in the senate, House of Representatives, Ministers, Commissioners, Wives of Presidents, Ministers and otherwise. It is highly shameful and disgracing according to all the United Nations Conventions, Declarations etc on Women's empowerment and Positive affirmative action on women.

The girl-child needs education to help her to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to advance her status; this includes knowledge for social interaction, self improvement and status advancement. She is therefore prepared to face the realities in the society. Education improves her managerial abilities, thus, she acquires good leadership skills. It further broadens her outlook in terms of marriage, child upbringing, house keeping and relationships in the society. Through education, the girl-child becomes a skilled man- power which enriches and equips her with better standards and makes her an asset in terms of human resource and technological development.

Education empowers the girl-child to be self reliant in national development. She gets a better job placement into various industries and places of work which helps her to earn proper and good remuneration. It further enables the girl-child to contribute to innovation and creativity in various fields of endeavour that stem up the economic growth of the nation at all levels. The effect is a curb in unemployment and underdevelopment. The girl-child equipped with proper education has the ability to play women's natural roles better, as well as attain higher developments when given position of higher responsibilities.

She thus, becomes a good steward in the homes, marriage and work place. She gets to improve her income, health and well being of other individuals.

Education is a great asset. It is a powerful "tide that lifts all boats." It enables larger number of citizens to share in the growth process, thus, reducing inequality. An educated and skilled workforce is one of the pillars of the knowledge based economy, while illiteracy is one of the strongest predictor of poverty. Girl-child education is therefore crucial for sustainable development of any nation.

Countries like Nigeria that do not give adequate attention to educate the girl-child are usually characterized with mass illiterates and are ill-equipped to deal with life situations around them. This is because limited knowledge works against sustainable development.

The backbone of every societal development is education and the importance of girl-child education to nation building and sustainable development cannot be over-emphasized.

To promote girl child education in African and Asian and Middle East countries for national development, their governments should support these campaigns through funding and sensitization of the grassroots. There is need to partner with practical organizations that support the promotion of the education of the girl child. The Child Rights Act And The Convention On The Rights Of The Child should also be strengthened and its implementation ensured in all the continents mentioned to checkmate indiscriminate child abuses and gender disparity.

The challenges that surround the girl-child in the area of education call for radical functional strategies. A committed government is needed to move the cause of the girl-child education from paper to reality.