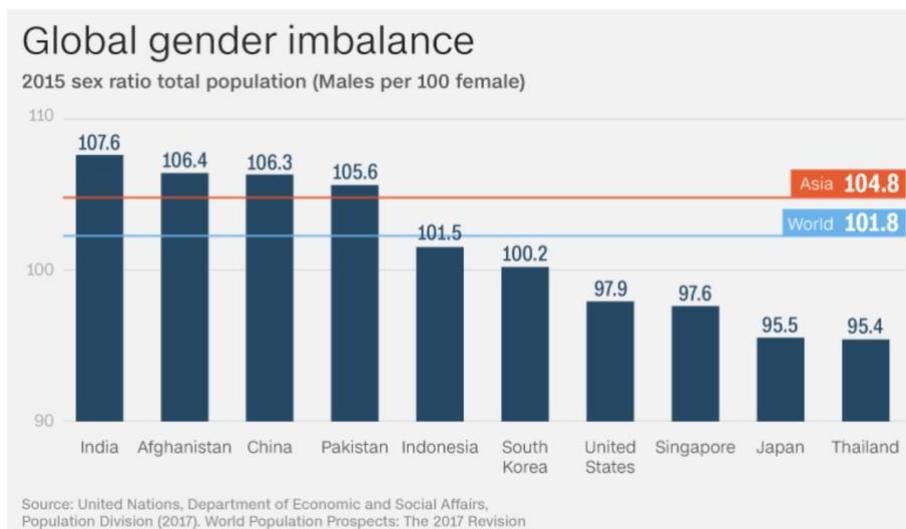


FORUM:	Advisory Panel
ISSUE:	Measures to Reduce Gendered Violence and Foster Gender Equality in India
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Introduction

India is the world's second-most populous country and the most populous democracy located in South Asia. However, India's high preference for sons over daughters led to a massive gender gap, ranking India as the fifth country with the most skewed ratio of boys to girls at birth: for every 107 boys

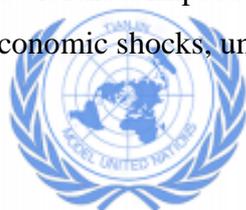
born, there are only 100 girls in India. More than half of people in India reported that they would try for another child until they have a boy, showing that the norm of son-preference is deeply entrenched in the Indian society. Besides gender imbalance, there are other several issues regarding gender in India, including gendered violence and gender inequality. An average of 26 crimes are committed against women every hour in India, and approximately 30% of Indian women have experienced physical violence since 15. Additionally, the 2017 World Economic Forum report shows that India is one of the countries with the least number of females participating economically, rising health issues and high mortality rates, and limited access to education.



Global gender imbalance comparison among nine countries

Background

The outbreak of COVID-19 made the situation worse for women and girls in India, intensifying gender inequality and violence. Impacts of COVID-19 include increased violence against women, domestic violence, economic shocks, unpaid work, conflicts, and discrimination especially against



women migrants. Gendered violence, especially domestic violence, increased significantly after the outbreak of the pandemic due to movement restrictions and isolation with abusers. Additionally, with more people spending their time on online platforms, online forms of violence such as cyberstalking and harassment against women and girls increased. The economic and social stresses that resulted from COVID-19 increased sexual exploitation, putting essential and informal workers such as doctors, nurses, and street vendors at higher risk of violence. In India, where nationwide lockdown was established on March 25, 2020, numerous domestic violence victims were trapped with their abusers. Since the lockdown, the National Commission for Women (NCW), a body of the government of India, has received over 2000 complaints from women every month, with 25% of them regarding domestic violence.

Besides gendered violence, gender inequality can also be found in economic sectors. The pandemic resulted in more women being unpaid in insecure labor markets. More than half of the women population in India work in the informal economy, where workers are not protected by the state. This leads them into poverty. Lockdowns and social distancing measures increased the unpaid care work and domestic load for women, and detrimental economic impacts are intensified in developing countries. There are also fewer social protections for health insurance. Women also lose their occupations faster than men and have fewer alternatives to receive income. Furthermore, the gender norms of viewing women as cheap labor forces increased the demand for women in unpaid childcare and domestic work, especially in rural regions. Although migrants became necessary as a response to COVID-19, women migrant workers such as doctors, nurses, and essential workers encounter gender-specific restrictions in migration policies and are more exposed to sexual and economic exploitation. They face stricter movement measures and abuses within India and across borders.

Problems Raised

Decline in the Indian Economy

The Indian economy is rapidly growing. However, the economic growth of India is limited by gendered violence, gender inequality, and gender-based norms that place women in inferior positions. Indian women and girls are poorly treated in India, and India is also regarded as one of the most dangerous countries for women to live in. Statistics show that gender discrimination in India directly leads to limitations in the Indian economy. For the past decade, while the Indian GDP increased by 6%, female labor participation decreased 7%, from 34% to 27%. The decrease in the female employment rate is mainly attributed to rising fears of sexual violence and poor treatment of women in workforces, such as lower wages compared to those of men workers. Indeed, India is still far from achieving gender equality, with significantly less economic opportunity and participation for women compared to other countries. For better progress in India, more women should gain fair economic opportunities. However, the gender



inequality issue in India prevents many women's active economic participation and further leads to the decline in the Indian economy.

Increasing Crimes against Women

India has recently seen a drastic rise in the number of criminal cases against women, particularly due to the situation in the pandemic era. Crimes against women in India are increasing annually. Statistics showed that crimes against women increased by 24.7% from 2008 to 2012. Women and girls in India are at higher risks of various brutal



Indian women call for end of crimes against women

crimes such as rapes, dowry deaths, and honor killings. Although many sexual crimes are unreported, statistics showed over 400,000 crimes against women in 2019, with 87 rapes a day. Although crimes against women are increasing every year, there has been little success in resolving the deteriorating situation. Victims of violence continue to be vulnerable to crimes, and prosecutions against criminals are rare with the tradition of victim blaming. Thus, many cases remain unreported. With the lack of effort in alleviating the issue, brutal crimes are continuing across India.

International Actions

UNICEF India's 2018-2022 Country Program

UNICEF India's 2018-2022 Country Program has been established as a response to people suffering from deprivations, particularly gender-based deprivations for Indian children. The strategies of this program work for gender equality and protection for the victims of gendered violence, including health, nutrition, education, child protection, hygiene management, social policy, and disaster risk reduction for women. To improve the health of children in India, this program aims to reduce female mortality and advocates equal care for both boys and girls. Also, it promotes more equitable eating practices to improve nutrition for women and girls. To improve the education system in India, the program enables more gender-responsive curriculums and ensures that textbooks do not contain gender



stereotypes. Additionally, this program works towards ending child marriage and allows access to hygiene management for the protection of Indian children. Lastly, UNICEF India's 2018-2022 Country program supports women's leadership and participation in Indian society. It supports Indian government to develop gender-responsive cash transfer programs and women leaders in local government.

UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women (UNiTE campaign)

Because of the increase in domestic violence after the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations responded with the establishment of UNiTE campaign. The UNiTE campaign is led by the UN Secretary-General and is managed by the UN Women, a United Nations entity working for the empowerment of women. This campaign targets to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. It works with governments, civil society, organizations, citizens, media, and other sectors of the United Nations to end gendered violence. The efforts will accelerate concrete policy responses to gendered violence and promote no tolerance of gendered violence in every society. In addition, all governments are advised to undertake policy actions under four areas: fund, prevent, respond, and collect. The UNiTE campaign aims to end gendered violence in the context of COVID-19 until 2030 around the world.

Key Players

India

The Indian government, especially the Ministry of Women and Child Development, has worked for the administration of regulations and laws to help women and children in India. The Indian government aimed for the empowerment of women with numerous policies, programs, and legislation, but women's inequality is still a huge



Partnership for gender equality

problem in India. Although India has already approved various international conventions and human rights instruments that commit to equal rights of men and women, Indian women and girls would not be able to escape from poor treatments if social stereotypes remain. Since the fundamental causes for gender



discrimination in India are related to social and economic structure, the Indian government aims to create an environment where women can fully develop in Indian society.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

USAID works with the Indian government to promote programs that enable the Indian people to solve social inequalities and provide equal access to health care, water and sanitation, education, nutrition, and sustainable livelihoods. With the Indian government, USAID expanded access to health care as a response to gendered violence and to empower adolescent girls. To reduce domestic violence, USAID educates children of the negative effects of harmful gender norms and provided avenues to them. Health care was brought to more than 10 million people suffering from poverty and USAID also gave self-employment opportunities for 100,000 women for a more equitable society in India. Moreover, USAID focused on increasing women's participation in the clean energy sector which was traditionally occupied by men. USAID works to provide internship and research opportunities for women engineers to promote women's empowerment in India. Additionally, USAID works to increase access to education, water, sanitation, and promote women's empowerment.

UN Women

UN Women works closely with the Indian government and civil society to overcome gender inequality in India. UN Women supports women farmers and manual scavengers to enhance women's economic status in India. Also, UN Women works to end gendered violence in India by training peacekeepers to stop all forms of sexual violence, including domestic violence. To bring gender equality, UN Women advocates for more women to participate in politics and advocates for policies that reflect the needs of women.



UN Women advocates for gender equality in India

Possible Solutions

Equal Access to Education

One of the short-term solutions to solve gendered violence and gender inequality in India is to provide equal education for everyone regardless of gender. Providing more women with education will ensure that they will have more opportunities for jobs, healthcare, and legal protections. By providing equal access to education for both genders, more women will be able to improve their economic status and acknowledge the necessity to enjoy equal rights with men. Currently, most of the children not attending schools in India are girls.

Statistics from 2011 showed that while 82% of boys are literate, only 65% of girls are. Although education for girls have shown some degree of improvement with 10% more girls enrolled in secondary school in 2019 than in 2011, there are still many Indian girls who do not have access to the same quality education as boys. The inequality between education is more common in lower-income families, which



Indian girls getting education

shows that poverty prevents more Indian girls to access quality education. However, since education can protect more girls from child marriage and unemployment, with expanded education, more women would be able to control their own lives.

Changing gender-based social norms and practices

The underlying reason behind the gendered violence and inequality in India is the traditional social norms that remain until now. Patrilineality and patrilocality are the main reasons for the continuing gender inequality in India. Preference for sons led to poor treatments and environments for daughters, such as the dowry system that undermines women. The dowry system is when the bride's family gives durable goods and property to the groom's family and is performed across all regions and classes in India. This system gives a huge burden on the bride's family. Dowry-related violence also occurs to demand more payments. This system puts women in worse conditions since they are taken less care of by their parents and are at higher risk of domestic violence. The long-term solution to reduce gendered violence and foster gender equality in India is to change the perception of women in the Indian society. Gender-based norms and practices need to be eliminated, and citizens should realize that women should be treated equally to men.



Glossary

Gendered Violence

Gendered violence, or Gender-based violence, is violence directed to an individual based on his or her gender identity. Gendered violence can be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological.

Gender inequality

Social process by which people are treated differently based on one's gender identity.

Domestic violence

Violence within home

Patrilineality

Inheritance through male descendants

Patrilocality

Married couples living with or near the husband's parents

The Dowry System

Property that the bride's family gives to the groom's family

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