

Human Rights, Gender Justice and Social Equality in Society

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Abstract:

Human rights, gender justice, and social equality are connected principles that seek to ensure fair treatment, dignity, and equal opportunities for all people in society. Human Rights-Universal freedoms: Basic rights belong to every person by birth, regardless of background. Legal protection: Laws protect people from discrimination and abuse. Core principles: Treaties like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish equality for all. Gender Justice-Fairness across genders: People of all genders receive fair treatment and equal power. Breaking barriers: Systems work to stop gender violence and the Gender Pay Gap. Equal value: Societies recognize unpaid care work and support equal leadership. Social Equality-Equal access: Everyone has the same access to education, jobs, and health care. Removing systemic bias: Policies fix structural disadvantages for marginalized groups. Shared progress: Fair distribution of resources helps communities grow in a stable way.

Keywords: human rights, gender justice, social equality, society

Introduction

Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights principles. So much so that the first two articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - agreed upon by the United Nations in 1948 - establish that everyone is equally entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration.[1,2,3]

While advances have been made, recent years have also witnessed strong pushbacks, both globally and locally, especially against sexual and reproductive health rights and rights of LGBTIQ+ persons.

The growing 'anti-gender' movement, political populism, and authoritarianism, shrinking space for civil society actors, as well as patriarchal gender norms and power structures are all factors that contribute to this development in different ways. With increasingly complex and extended humanitarian crises and conflicts around the world, the risk that women and LGBTIQ+ persons are victims of discrimination and gender-based violence grows exponentially. The ongoing climate crisis only adds to this, exacerbating already existing gender inequalities in terms of livelihoods, health, and safety.

As a national human rights institution dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights in Denmark and internationally, the Danish Institute for Human Rights works to advance and realize gender justice for all.

This is important, because in all the countries we work, and in all the thematic areas we engage in, gender-based discrimination is widespread, resulting in marginalisation, inequalities, and severe violations of rights-holders' human rights. [4,5,6]

Our approach to gender justice

Through our work, we seek to ensure gender justice. This means that we work to ensure equal rights and non-discrimination, equal access to resources and equal representation and opportunities for all, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Gender justice is both about law and practice. There can be no gender justice without equal rights in law; but these are worth little if state actors implement the law in a discriminatory manner, or if certain groups in society are prevented from enjoying their rights.

Discussion

As such, the promotion and protection of gender justice entails not only the reform of discriminatory laws and policies, but also efforts to counter harmful social norms and practices, institutionalised discrimination, lack of access to resources, services and opportunities, and gender roles and stereotypes arising from patriarchal power relations, thereby addressing the underlying structural barriers that perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.[7,8,9]

Gender is integrated into all our international work, ensuring as a minimum that everybody can benefit equally from our interventions, and that unequal and discriminatory practices and structures are not perpetuated or reproduced. Depending on the context, we also develop and implement strategic gender-related interventions, aimed at delivering concrete outcomes that contribute to increasing gender justice.

In our strategic gender interventions, we aim to take a gender transformative approach, addressing one or several of the three dimensions of recognition, redistribution, and representation.

Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights.

Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights.

In addition, we call for concerted, practical measures to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and to remove the root causes of gender inequality.

To reach our ambitious goals in 2030 with substantive progress by 2020, we ask governments as our primary duty-bearers to:

Repeal discriminatory laws that inhibit the economic ability of women, their ability to obtain credit and own land, to move freely, and to make decisions about their own bodies and health.[10,11,12]

Fully implement existing laws so that, for example, violence against women does not go unpunished.

Enact new laws where no laws exist in specific areas.

Introduce quotas and temporary special measures to support the increased proportion of women parliamentarians and all decision-making bodies.

Invest in statistical capacities and gender statistics to support effective monitoring and evidence-driven decision-making.

We need collaboration with civil society, and a strong women's movement in every country, and in every part of the world. And we need civil society to continue to be the torch-bearers.

The private sector also has a very significant role to play in making game-changing investment in the economic empowerment of women.

Far-reaching changes to employment terms and conditions for women.

Equal pay for men and women by all employers. Where governments are non-compliant they also must take corrective action.

Decent work.

All companies should implement the Women's Empowerment Principles, for example, promote education, training and professional development for women.

Very importantly trade unions must fight convincingly for gender equality. They must become game-changers. They too must undergo an internal transformation and simultaneously fight for gender parity in the workplace and in the world.

Macroeconomic policies should enable State investment in infrastructure, social services and social protection measures in order to reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women and child labour on girls and boys.

The clash between constitutional law and customary law has to be addressed, so as to transform discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, because we cannot create the future we want while we leave patriarchy intact.[13,14,15]

Men and boys must lead in disrupting patriarchy as well as leading their own behaviour change and the positive socialization of boys.

Let me share a few UN Women tips towards dismantling patriarchy. We are giving responsibility to those who sit at the high table.

All men and women decision-makers must take the lead on ending the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies. They must fight for gender parity.

Men and boys must lead on ending violence against women. They must prevent it and see to the successful prosecution of perpetrators.

We need CEOs, Heads of State, and men in general to lead the fight against unequal pay in private and public sector. To refuse pay cheques that are unequal to their counterparts.

Men must refuse to marry children and they must lead the campaign to end female genital mutilation/cutting.

We need men and boys to stand up against videogames that perpetuate stereotypes and expose boys to violence against women, making sexual exploitation a game and something that is normal.[16,17,18]

That is what it means to be a HeForShe: active and lived positive masculinity. We have already seen men and boys taking up this challenge. We thank the Secretary-General for his Network of Male leaders, which is contributing strongly to building a large network of supportive and like-minded male champions.

We ask all of you to mobilize more men and boys to sign up for HeforShe. We still need many more men to step forward. We thank our Permanent Representatives for the action they have taken here at the United Nations Headquarters early this year when they convened their own dialogue on positive masculinity. I thank again the Permanent Representatives of Iceland and Suriname who led this initiative, called the Barbershop Conference.

When all the actions I have mentioned are done together: the enacting, repealing and implementing of laws; the roles of civil society and women, the roles of the private sector, of trade unions, of men and boys, and the combined roles and responsibilities of all leaders –this is what can move us forward in the post-2015 development agenda towards ending poverty and gender inequality. It is in our hands.

In the 20 years after Beijing we have seen slow progress in all the critical areas that were agreed to in the

Beijing Platform for Action.

We have also seen countries that have taken seriously the universality of our mandate. We have seen countries where there are no harmful practices like FGM, who are championing and leading the end of these practices elsewhere. We have seen countries where there is no conflict, such as Finland, championing and leading the promotion of peace and security. We have seen countries in Africa cooperating to defeat Ebola. We appreciate this universality, and see it as important in fighting against violence against women, and indeed throughout our mandate.[18,19,20]

We will know that we have succeeded in our efforts when:

All women have equal rights, and equal access to justice, power, resources and opportunities;

All women and girls live their lives free from all forms of violence and discrimination;

Women can make decisions about their bodies, health and sexuality, free from discrimination, violence and coercion;

All women who work enjoy equal pay for equal work opportunities and equal access to decent work;

Unpaid care work is fairly shared between men and women and no longer presents a barrier for women's and girls' participation in social, political and economic life;

Women have equal voice, participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels, including in peace and security discussions; and

Persistent gender stereotypes about women and men and girls and boys, are not second nature, and discriminatory norms and attitudes and beliefs no longer limit opportunities and outcomes. This is not mission impossible.

Mr. President, this generation, and these Sustainable Development Goals – if not diluted – can go a long way to achieve these changes.

The findings of the Secretary-General's global review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, to be unveiled on 9 March at the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women, provide important lessons for the post-2015 development agenda.

I ask you to join our International Women's Day March on 8 March, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to call for gender parity.[19,20]

Planet 50-50 before 2030. We call on everyone – and especially our leaders – to “Step it up for gender equality”.

Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be central to the new development agenda.

We ask you to protect the goal on gender equality, and the integration of gender perspectives throughout the development framework. Today, on International Women's Day, on behalf of the women of the world, that is what I ask of Member States.

Let us make 2030 an expiry date for gender inequality and to aim to achieve this before 2030, and to make solid and irreversible progress by 2020.

Results

Gender inequality is a global issue and the most pervasive form of inequality that affects both men and women. While some countries have made considerable progress in addressing gender discrimination, the overall situation remains dire.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, the global gender gap remains at 32%, meaning that it would take more than 100 years to achieve parity. This gap is even more pronounced in countries where women and gender-diverse people are disproportionately affected by poverty and social exclusion, such as India, Pakistan, and Yemen.

Gender non-conforming people and trans people are also disproportionately impacted by gender inequality, particularly in terms of access to healthcare, education and economic opportunities.[19]

Conclusion

Gender inequality is a global problem caused by social, cultural, religious, institutional, and economic factors. The most effective way to address gender inequality is by promoting gender equality and equity in all aspects of society. This includes reforming discriminatory laws, creating awareness and education, promoting gender equality in the workplace, and ensuring gender equality in government.[20]

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