



Women and Globalization

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Women and Globalization

Introduction

The current wave of globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, particularly the lives of those women in the developing world. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in many areas of life, including education, employment, health, and civil rights. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank, 57 percent of the 72 million primary school aged children who do not attend school are females. Additionally, girls are four percent less likely than boys to complete primary school (Gender statistics, 2010).

In particular, care for women during maternity is still lacking in many parts of the world. Approximately 529,000 women die annually during pregnancy and childbirth (Gender statistics, 2010). Countries with the lowest maternal mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 live births) include Estonia (2), Singapore (3) and Greece (3), while the highest maternal mortality rates can be found in Chad (1,100), Somalia (1,000) and Sierra Leone (890) (CIA World Factbook).

To help remedy worldwide gender disparities, the [UN's Millennium Development Goals](#) prioritize gender equality and empowerment of women. In particular, Millennium Development Goal Three purports to "promote gender inequality and empower women." As part of the Millennium Goals, the international community, especially the UN, will monitor several indicators of gender equality including the levels of female enrollment at school, participation in the workplace, and representation in decision-making positions and political institutions. Progress on these goals has been uneven, especially for women and girls.

Two key international declarations form the basis for this agenda. As part of its "Decade for Women," the UN published the [Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women](#) in 1985 with the purpose of creating a blueprint for global action to achieve women's equality by the year 2000. Ten years later, the [Fourth World Conference on Women](#), held in Beijing in 1995, issued the [Beijing Platform for Action](#), which was designed to update and invigorate the world community's commitment to gender equality.

These international conferences and documents have served to crystallize the understanding of the unique problems women face worldwide and to promote efforts to address them. More recently, means to monitor the progress of both the understanding of and the struggle to remedy women's problems have been implemented. Other documents deal with specific challenges to women's rights. For example, the [Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#) vows to guarantee women equal rights with men in all spheres of life, including education, employment, health care, suffrage, nationality, and marriage.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly voted to create a new UN entity for gender equality and empowerment of women entitled UN Women (<http://www.unwomen.org/>). Its role is to support intergovernmental bodies in policy formation, help member states implement new standards and regulations, and hold the UN system accountable for gender equality.

This Issue in Depth will examine the effects of globalization on women worldwide, namely on their participation in the economy, representation in the political process, education, health, and sexual slavery. It also will discuss the possibility of globalization's ability to greatly benefit women in the internationalization of the movement for gender equality, and the legal structure that supports this goal and recognizes women's rights as basic human rights.



Participation in the Economy

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank encourage developing countries to use export-led growth to expand their economies. Such globalized economies require a labor force of a size that must include women, but women's employment varies greatly by region. A gender gap exists in employment, with a 24.8 percentage point difference between men and women in the employment-to-population ratio in 2012 (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013).

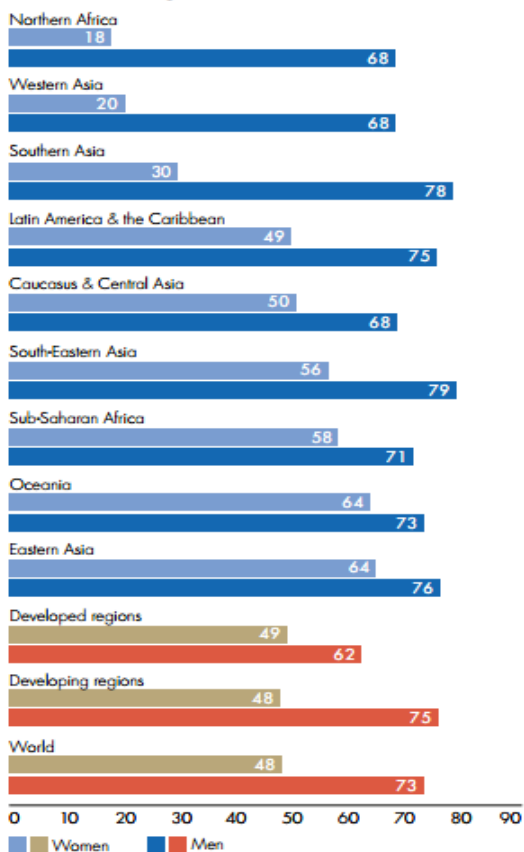
As of 2012, 64 percent of women are in the work force in Eastern Asia and Oceania, the greatest proportion among all regions of the world. In Northern Africa, only 18 percent of women work. The global average is 48 percent (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013).

The vastly different percentages around the world may be attributed to social-cultural factors, such as the belief in many ethnically Arab nations that women do not work, or the tight political control over women in places such as Saudi Arabia.



Similarly, South American women participate in the labor force more as they age, which indicates that they must contribute more income as their household grows following marriage, while women in the Middle East and North Africa drop out of the labor force in great numbers when they marry and have children.

Employment-to-population ratio, women and men, 2012* (Percentage)



* Data for 2012 are preliminary estimates.

(Source: Gender Dimension of Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013)

In addition, a gender wage gap exists all over the world, ranging from a 9.3 percent difference in pay between men and women working full time in Belgium, to a 40 percent difference in South Korea. The United States has an 18 percent gap, close to the average among industrialized countries. The global wage gap can largely be explained by the type of work that women choose to go into (or, for many women, the type of work that is available for them) (Rampell, 2013).

What accounts for these differences within gendered relations? In many cases, cultural barriers, especially in the relationship between women and men within households and communities, impede increased economic participation, or undermine the quality of that participation. For example, even women who work face differential treatment such as wage gaps and segregation into traditionally female industries. Women have historically borne the burden of non-monetized labor, such as child-care and domestic work.

Globalization is changing these norms. The new global developing economies demand women in the monetized as well as non-monetized sectors of work. In fact, globalization has the potential to improve women's economic achievement. Increased employment opportunities for women in non-traditional sectors might enable them to earn and control income, thus providing a source of empowerment and enhancing women's capacity to negotiate their role and status

within the household and society.

Journalist Nadina Al Bedair describes the situation of women in Saudi Arabia with the denial of their human rights: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hK8uo_vvryg (Al Bedair, 2008).

However, increased participation in the work force also implies increased hazards for women. Women's jobs outside the home tend to be the lowest earning, least secure, and most dangerous available in the economy, especially in periods of recession that plague most developing countries.

The following video shows the conditions of women working in Bangladesh. Although they work in hazardous and strenuous conditions, most of these women are willing to work in such environments in order to financially support their families.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wqBRWa0fno> (The National Labor Committee, 2008)

On April 24, 2013, Rana Plaza, a garment factory outside of Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed, killing at least 1,127 workers. Over half of the casualties were women. In Bangladesh, the garment industry is the largest employer of women, a majority of whom live in rural areas where employment is scarce. In addition, these women are often supporting large extended families, and working for the garment industry is often the only option other than working as a farm hand. Jobs in the garment industry do much to elevate the status of women, but they are often left powerless in the face of harassment and dangerous working conditions. The Bangladesh factory collapse is a prime example of how women are often required to take jobs in dangerous industries with little to no recourse of their own. (Uddin, 2013) To read more on the Bangladesh factory collapse, visit <http://www.globalization101.org/manufacturing-after-the-bangladesh-factory-collapse>.

The dearth of labor laws, or ignorance and lack of enforcement of the labor codes in practice, allow for the exploitation of women. In Guatemala, women constitute 80 percent of the textile factory sector, and thousands of mostly indigenous women provide services as domestic servants. In both sectors, women have only a precarious claim on the rights to Guatemala's legally mandated minimum wage, work-week length, leave time, health care under the national social security system, and privacy protections. Often, they are subject to physical and/or sexual abuse, according to [Human Rights Watch](#) (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

In the current economic recession, women in America are increasingly facing unemployment. This video from the Machinists New Network discusses the role of women in the current US economy:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQwK5_N6nAc (Kaniewski, 2009).

Unfortunately, even the global nature of business does not confer universal rights for these women. Many U.S.-based companies, such as Target, The Limited, Wal-Mart, GEAR for Sports, Liz Claiborne, and Lee Jeans, have contracts with Guatemalan factories and continue to honor them even if the factories break explicit company policy, such as physically examining women to determine if they are pregnant and denying health care to employees. According to Human Rights Watch, strengthening legal protection for women laborers and increasing their access to legal recourse might cement increased participation in the work as a positive development for women.

Though globalization may have increased women's vulnerability and dependency, there is still hope that prioritizing women's issues has yielded progress and will continue to do so. As the UN has stated, "*Women have entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, increasing the potential for their ability to participate in economic decision making at various levels, starting with the household*" (United Nations, 2007). Significant changes in the underlying factors threatening to suppress this potential are necessary before serious progress can be made.

Representation in the Political Process

While the goal of gender equality has been lauded in many international agreements, including the Millennium Development Goals, many governments lack meaningful female participation. Increased female representation in

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governmental institutions and decision-making bodies is crucial for the overall empowerment of women, especially their inclusion in decisions about all issues—not just those that are traditionally known as “women’s issues,” such as child and elder care and reproductive health.

The 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women recommended many programs for this purpose, but recent data indicate that the process has been slow and has achieved uneven results worldwide. The Beijing Conference recommended that the international community and civil society (including non-governmental organizations and the private sector) take strategic action in order to reduce inequality between men and women in power-sharing and decision-making.

Many international conferences have agreed to the target of reaching 30 percent representation of women in government. 30 countries reached the 30 percent mark in 2012, including (for one or both houses) Rwanda, Sweden, Cuba, Finland, Argentina, the Netherlands, Denmark, Costa Rica, Spain, Norway, Belgium, Mozambique, Nepal, Iceland, New Zealand, South Africa, Angola, Germany, Uganda, Burundi, Belarus, Tanzania, Guyana, Andorra, Ecuador, and Macedonia. With 17.7 percent representation, the United States has not reached this goal. Rwanda, with 56.3 percent representation, is the only country to have more women than men in parliament. As of January 2013, the world representation of women in parliament was just over 20 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012).

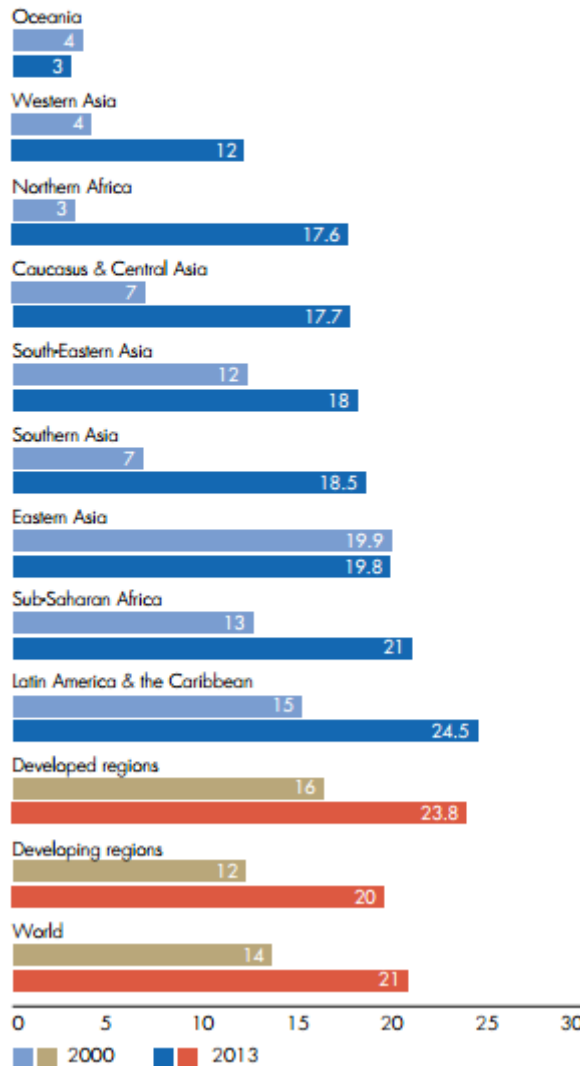
Many of these seats are attributed to political measures such as quotas that were adopted on a voluntary basis. There are 77 countries that have set quotas for women’s political participation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012). The graph displays proportion of seats held by women in 2012 and 2000 (Wall, 2012). By the end of January 2012, women accounted for 19.7 percent of parliamentarians worldwide. This is almost a 75 percent increase since 1995, when women held 11.3 percent of seats worldwide, and a 44 percent increase over the 2000 level (Wall, 2012). However, there are more dimensions to increasing women’s representation than simply seats available to them.

First, the UN admits that it is difficult to produce global estimates of the degree to which women’s positions in public leadership have been increased, and that any quantitative study cannot cover the breadth of women’s involvement in decision making. Secondly, securing parliamentary seats through quotas does not mean that the women who assume these positions are fully prepared for them or are aware that gaining a seat is only the first part of a long process of securing women’s equality. For example, Afghanistan is widely considered one of the most repressive environments for women, but the country still requires 68 of its 249 parliamentary seats be allocated to women. The authors of a study on quotas in Latin America concluded that “Political parties generally treat quotas as ceilings, not floors” (Hymowitz, 2013).

The case of women’s representation in the new Bulgarian parliament is a good example of this problem. Initially, the representation of women in the Bulgarian parliament was credited to the active campaigning by women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the liberal politics of the new political party, the National Movement for Simeon II (NMSII) (a party that called for the return of the monarchy) that won 43 percent of the seats in the 2001 parliamentary election. The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) and the Women’s Alliance for Development campaigned for more women in parliament through rallies and organized meetings with parliamentarians of all the parties.

Women are assuming more power in the world's parliaments, boosted by quota systems

Proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliament, 2000 and 2013 (Percentage)



(Source: Gender Dimension of Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013)
 (Source: Gender Dimension of Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013)

During the 2001 elections, the NMSII campaign accepted the movement's position and placed women in 40 percent of the eligible positions, after the elections in which women secured 26.2 percent of the vote. After the election, however, a BGRF study *"found that women in parliament were not fully prepared for their careers. They did not see themselves representing women's interests, nor did they see themselves as having common interests with each other. NGOs will need to continue to work with the new women parliamentarians to bring women's issues higher up on their agendas."*

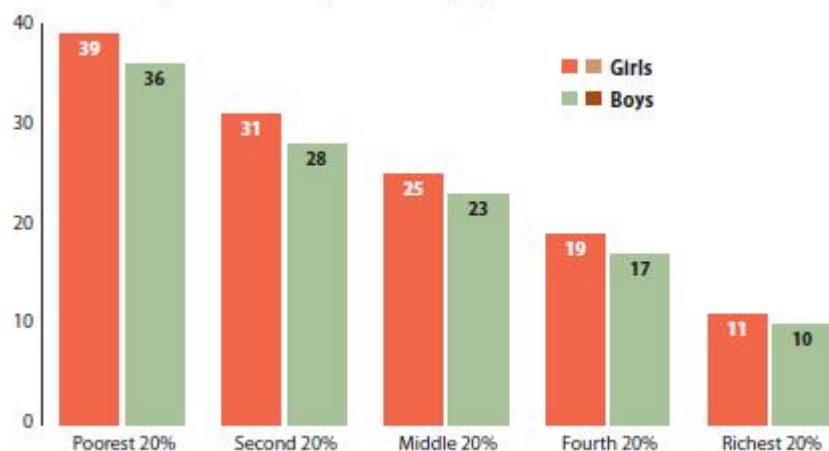
Currently there are female heads of state in 18 countries, a small decrease from previous years. These include the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, as well as the leaders of Argentina, Brazil, Thailand, Liberia, Lithuania, Denmark and Iceland. There were 20 female heads of state worldwide from 2010-2012, the highest number ever (McCullough, 2013). Click [here](#) to view the latest statistics of the percentage of women represented in national parliaments by country in 2013.

Education

While many gains have been made, and more children than ever are now attending primary school (King, 2013), there is still not world-wide gender parity in education. In every income bracket, there are more female children than male children who are not attending school. Girls in the poorest 20 percent of household have the lowest chance of getting an education (Jensen, 2010).

Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia still face many challenges reaching gender parity for primary education, while sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia, and Southern Asia face the biggest challenges for secondary education. On the other hand, Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Asia, and South-Eastern Asia have more girls than boys signed up for secondary school (Jensen, 2010).

Out-of-school children by wealth quintile and area of residence, girls and boys, 42 countries, 2000/2008 (Percentage)



Girls' gross enrollment has increased the fastest in South Asia, especially on the primary level, where gains have been measured at 30 percent. Enrollment gains at the secondary and tertiary level have risen just as fast (King, 2013).

There have been improvements in educating girls at the tertiary level in the developing world, reaching 97 girls per 100 boys. In the CIS countries, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa, and South –Eastern Asia there are more girls than boys enrolled at the tertiary level, but the numbers have not reach parity in other regions (Jensen, 2010).

This inequality does not change in adulthood. Of the 774 million illiterate adults worldwide, 64 percent are women – a statistic virtually unchanged from the early 1990s (*Gender Statistics*, 2010). The UN Millennium Development Goal to promote gender equality and empower women uses education as its target and the measure of gender disparity in education as its indicator of progress. Through the efforts of the international community, the UN hopes to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, in all levels of education no later than 2015.

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Education is crucial because, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), inequality in education is directly correlated to poverty, and its elimination would help alleviate poverty in general. UNESCO also states that female education has spillover effects for society; these effects include improved fertility rates, household and child health, and educational opportunities for the rest of the household. In addition, increased skill levels allow women to participate more in the economy, and increase the economic prosperity of the family. Educated women tend to be healthier, have fewer children, and secure health care and education for their own children, which are all benefits that translate to the community at large.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010 finds that in places of extreme poverty or extremely rural areas, females are less likely to complete any type of schooling (Jensen, 2010). Poverty remains the most important factor in education inequality. According to a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) study of 24 low-income countries, only 34 percent of girls in the poorest-quintile households complete primary school, compared to 72 percent of girls in the richest-quintile households (King, 2013).

To address the failure to provide basic education for all, which is defined as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the [World Education Forum](#) produced the “Education For All” targets, which include ending inequality between males and females in education. The Forum recommended that governments and organizations implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values, and practices.

Several of the world’s poorest countries, located in Sub Saharan Africa, west Asia, and the Arab states, will fail to reach “Education For All” targets, especially gender equality, by the agreed date of 2015. UNESCO’s monitoring team found that norms and values hold females back as much or more than policy. The education of girls is not valued in many societies because they are expected to contribute more at home, while boys should gain skills to work outside the home.

There are region-specific hazards for girls, as well. For example, in South America, the further a school is from a household, the less likely girls are to attend, because travel introduces an increased risk of assault and rape. In parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the public life of a female is so limited that exposure to anything outside the home seems unnecessary.

A World Bank study found that incentive-based enrollment programs can overcome even deeply imbedded cultural resistance. For example, when girls in Bangladesh were offered a small salary for attending and passing school, community protests subsided, or parents affected change, on issues such as female students taught by men and constructing separate latrines for males and females

Malala Yousafzai is an example of a courageous young woman fighting for girls’ education in Pakistan. In January 2009, a Taliban edict banned girls’ education in Pakistan’s Swat Valley. Malala first rose to prominence as a blogger advocating for girls’ education. In October 2012, Yousafzai was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman while boarding her school bus, and was transported to the UK for medical care. After being discharged from the hospital in January 2013, she continued her activism, and gave an affecting speech at the United Nations in July 2013, stating that,

Today, I am focusing on women’s rights and girls’ education because they are suffering the most. There was a time when women activists asked men to stand up for their rights. But this time we will do it by ourselves. I am not telling men to step away from speaking for women’s rights, but I am focusing on women to be independent and fight for themselves. So dear sisters and brothers, now it’s time to speak up. So today, we call upon the world leaders to change their strategic policies in favor of peace and



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prosperity. We call upon the world leaders that all of these deals must protect women and children's rights. A deal that goes against the rights of women is unacceptable.

To see Malala's UN speech in full, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5X70VyiU0g> (BBC Profile, 2013).

Health

Everyone in the developing world remains more susceptible to poor health because of lack of services, or lack of access to services, and a lack of education and information about health issues. Women have additional vulnerabilities, especially malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy complications, cervical and breast cancer, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and genital mutilation. In many cultures, women are the first to take care of the vulnerable, sick, and dying and the last to receive preventative or life saving treatment. Statistically, one in sixty-one women die during pregnancy or childbirth in developing countries, while in the least developed ones one in seventeen die (*Gender Statistics*, 2010).

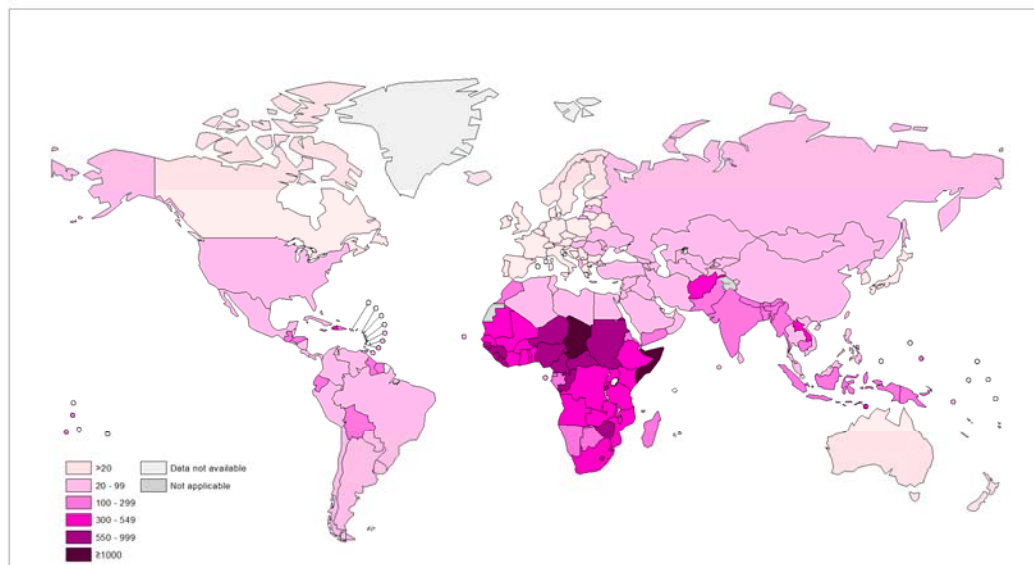
To alleviate these problems, the World Bank emphasizes public education programs that promote healthy lifestyles, eliminate gender discrimination in education and access to services, and prioritize the help for young girls. According to the Bank, investments that improve women's health and nutrition are justified on both economic and humanitarian grounds, because they serve to alleviate poverty and develop human resources.

Maternal health is one of the most important elements in these efforts. The Millennium Development Goals have charged the UN Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) with promoting and monitoring a reduction in maternal mortality by three quarters between 1990 and 2015. Thanks to these efforts, maternal mortality decreased by 47 percent between 1990 and 2010 (Gender dimension of Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013). Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest problem with maternal mortality, with 1,100 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, a figure more than twice as high as in any other region. Sadly, the vast majority of maternal deaths are preventable with proper care and intervention.

Reasons for maternal mortality include delays in seeking medical help, transporting pregnant women to health centers, and receiving medical assistance, and may be attributed to social, cultural, religious, and economic factors. For example, a woman may not alter her lifestyle or workload inside and outside the home, because she cannot afford to and because the expectant father does not alter his, burdening her physically and leaving no time for medical attention, which often requires time and travel to obtain.

A sensitive issue for women's global health is the role of reproductive rights. The Platform for Action takes a definitive stance in defense of such rights, including abortion. Empirical evidence shows that, in all world regions, household size contributes directly to poverty and to the workload borne by women. The percentage of poor women decreases with a corresponding decrease in fertility rate. In addition to being a cause of higher welfare for women, lower fertility rates are also shown to be an effect of other positive indicators of development, especially higher education rates and well-functioning markets for labor and credit.

Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births), 2010



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

Data Source: World Health Organization
Map Production: Public Health Information and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
World Health Organization



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Thus, a woman may want to plan or even terminate a pregnancy, requiring access to birth control and abortion, and information about these options. The Platform for Action calls a well-informed decision on family planning the right of every woman. Unsafe abortions are also a threat to women's health. About 20 million of the 40 to 60 million abortions performed each year in the world are unsafe with negative consequences for women's health, and 18.5 of these unsafe abortions are performed in developing countries. Each year 47,000 women die worldwide as a result of unsafe abortions, and these remain close to 13 percent of all maternal deaths (World Health Organization).

Nevertheless, these issues remain controversial, especially in traditional or religious societies such as Catholic and Muslim countries. At the Beijing Conference, and in the years that followed, the Vatican, Central American countries, and some Muslim countries such as Egypt, opposed the Platform for Action, insisting that information about sexual and reproductive issues should be given to parents to relay to their children, rather than directly to adolescents. They also oppose abortion rights, which the Platform for Action recognizes as a health issue for women. In the United States, the Hyde Amendment prevents foreign aid from funding abortion programs overseas, except in the case of rape and incest.

Another problem that women in particular must face is the HIV/AIDS virus, especially in the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia. In these areas, HIV/AIDS has grown into an epidemic that affects women more adversely than men, because they are less well educated about it and less well protected from it. Women are twice as likely as men to be infected with HIV/AIDS, and in some areas young women are up to six times more likely than men to become infected. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death of women of reproductive age worldwide (Gender dimension of Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013).

UNIFEM has tried to counter the feminization of infection by promoting gender equality: "Gender inequality is fueling the rapid spread of HIV with women divested of control over their lives and their bodies. Many women and girls are not in a position to say no to unwanted sex, nor can they negotiate condom use" (Opala, 2001).

In addition to elevated biological vulnerabilities and cultural restraints on their sexual empowerment, women are at increased risk for contracting HIV for economic reasons: "Financial or material dependence on men means that women

cannot control when, with whom and in what circumstances they have sex; many women have to exchange sex for material favors, for daily survival.” The WHO has in response declared that women have a right to sexuality that does not endanger their lives and uses this principle to guide their work to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Physical and sexual violence against women also poses a significant threat. In 2013, the WHO sponsored the first widespread study of global data on violence against women, and found that it constitutes a ‘global health problem of epidemic proportions.’ Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women, and 38 percent of all women who have been murdered were murdered by an intimate partner. Women who experience physical and/or sexual partner violence are also 1.5 times more likely to acquire a sexually-transmitted infection. During the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly in May 2013, the governments of Belgium, India, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, United States of America, and Zambia - declared violence against women and girls “a major global public health, gender equality and human rights challenge, touching every country and every part of society” (Global and regional estimates of violence against women, 2013).

Finally, some traditional cultural practices impose threats to the health of women, and may be more difficult to change through educational and preventative policies than unhealthy practices that are unrelated to culture, such as nutrition. The [UN Human Rights Commission](#) identifies the practices most threatening to women as:

- female circumcision, known as female genital mutilation to its opponents, which involves the excision of a woman’s external sexual organs;
- other forms of mutilation, such as facial scarring;
- various nutritional taboos;
- traditional practices associated with childbirth;
- the problem of dowries in some parts of the world
- honor killing; and,
- and the consequences of preference for male babies, such as parental neglect and infanticide of female babies.

Several UN agencies and other international bodies, especially the WHO, are actively engaged in efforts to eliminate such practices when they affect the health of women and the female children.

Female genital mutilation is a special focus of many efforts to end violence against women, although the movement to view it as a violation of human rights meets some resistance to what some consider a violation of family and community sanctity. Amnesty International says,

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the cornerstone of the human rights system, asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. It protects the right to security of person and the right not to be subjected to cruel inhuman or degrading treatment — rights which are of direct relevance to the practice of female genital mutilation. The traditional interpretation of these rights has generally failed to encompass forms of violence against women such as domestic violence or female genital mutilation. This arises from a common misconception that states are not responsible for human rights abuses committed within the home or the community.

Human rights campaigns have managed to raise awareness worldwide and promote more specific interpretations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that affirm that female genital mutilation, along with other forms of violence against women and harmful traditional practices, are an assault on the dignity, equality, and bodily integrity of women and an affront to human rights.

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The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 2.45 million trafficking victims who are living in exploitive conditions and another 1.2 million people who are trafficked across and within borders. The U.S. State Departments estimate 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across borders and between 18,000 and 20,000 of those, are trafficked into the United States. These numbers include men, women, and children who are trafficked into forced labor or sexual exploitation, and appear to be on the rise worldwide. Women account for at least 56 percent of all trafficking victims (*Trafficking in persons report*, 2010). Globalization has provided for an easier means of exploiting those living in poverty who are seeking better lives, it also has provided for dramatic improvements in transportation and communications with which to facilitate the physical processing of persons.



The State Department report indicates that women are generally lured into slavery through promises of employment as shopkeepers, maids, nannies, or waitresses in developed countries. Upon arriving, these women are then told they have been purchased by someone and must work as a prostitute to repay the enormous debt they suddenly owe. To ensure that these women do not flee, their “owners” often subject them to beatings, take their documents upon arrival, and keep them under conditions of slavery. These women then either physically cannot go to the authorities or are fearful of being deported, especially if they do not have their documents or the documents were fraudulently obtained through their trafficker.

One of the main contributing factors to this increase in trafficking has been the widespread subjugation of women. Often ethnic minorities or lower class groups are more vulnerable to trafficking, because these women and girls have a very low social status that puts them at risk. Another contributor to the increase in trafficking is political and economic crisis in conflict or post-conflict areas. The breakdown of society and the rule of law have made these displaced populations vulnerable to the lure of a better future or an exit from their current countries.

Trafficking flourishes because it is a lucrative practice, generating from 7 to 12 billion dollars a year. In addition, the highly clandestine nature of the crime of human trafficking ensures that the great majority of human trafficking cases go unreported and culprits remain at large. There are reports that many human traffickers are associated with international criminal organizations and are, therefore, highly mobile and difficult to prosecute. Further complicating matters, sometimes members of the local law enforcement agencies are involved in trafficking. Prosecution is made difficult because victims of trafficking do not testify against traffickers out of fear for their and their family members' lives.

Humantrafficking.org notes, “according to [Family Health International](#) (1999), programs in Asia have started to publicly address the causes of trafficking in women in the area. For instance, Thailand focused on the source of demand for trafficked services, such as the clients of underage sex workers. Through the impetus and lobbying of the National Commission on Women's Affairs (NCWA), Thailand is the first country in the region to pass laws that impose greater penalties on customers than on sellers for involvement in commercial sex with underage partners” (Humantrafficking.org, 2007). While the law has not been applied widely, it provides a possible framework or model for further legislation and enforcement in other countries.

South-East Asia and South Asia are considered to be home to the largest number of internationally trafficked persons, with estimates of 225,000 and 150,000 victims respectively. Several NGOs are also involved in awareness campaigns to draw attention to the causes of trafficking in women; specifically, the NCWA tries to change male sexual norms through a national poster campaign with messages showing a child saying “my father does not visit prostitutes.” A Thai NGO called Development and Education Program for Daughters and Communities aims to prevent women and children from being

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forced into the illegal sex trade or child labor due to outside pressures, lack of education, and limited employment alternatives. The NGO uses a mix of strategies to convince parents about the dangers of the illegal sex trade. Information about HIV and AIDS, brothel conditions, legal penalties, and potential dangers is used to support their arguments.

Perhaps most importantly, the U.S. government has prioritized trafficking as a law-enforcement issue. The United States enacted the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000](#) (TVPA), which strengthens pre-existing criminal penalties in other related laws, affords new protections to trafficking victims, and makes available certain benefits and services to victims of severe forms of trafficking. Under this law, one option that is available to some victims who assist in the prosecution of their traffickers is the "T-Visa" that allows the victim to remain in the United States.

Under the U.S. PROTECT Act, it is now illegal for an American to travel abroad, or for a foreigner to enter the U.S., for the purpose of sex tourism involving children. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act allows the U.S. to use sanctions to discourage trafficking. In addition, NGO- and government-led campaigns such as the [UN's Global Campaign Against Human Trafficking](#) warn millions of potential victims about the dangers of trafficking.

The annual State Department Trafficking in Persons Report provides information on the progress to combat this problem worldwide. The 2010 Report included the first ever country rankings; these ranking are based on government efforts to combat trafficking. Tier 1 countries enact laws that prohibits trafficking, implement human trafficking laws, provide victim protection services, have proactive measures to identify victims, have harsh criminal penalties for traffickers, ensures safe and voluntary repatriation of victims, and other preventative acts. Tier 2 countries do not fully follow these standards, but are trying to combat trafficking. Tier 3 countries do not follow these standards and are not making efforts to improve their standing. Tier 3 countries include Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Iran, Kuwait, Mauritania, Papua New Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

The Rise of NGOs

With the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the 21st century, various organizations have been founded and created to defend the rights of women around the world and to further their advancement.

One exemplary organization, *Women for Women International*, empowers women through education, medical aid, and development. This organization helps women that have recently lived in conflict zone where much of their community resources and growth have been ravaged by war. Upon joining *Women for Women International*, these women undergo a yearlong rehabilitation process where they learn new livelihoods and are educated about political and economic rights.

Women for Women International has empowered women around the world, particularly in Asia and Africa, to become leaders in their own communities. These women encouraged other community members to find their voices and increase involvement in economic and social development. Individual women have rebuilt entire villages, towns and families through the tools given to them by this organization.

The following link to a video contains more information about *Women for Women International*;
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iz6b1VYZhM> (Women for Women International, 2007).

NGOs have been a prime actor in educating women and, as a result, produce some of the greatest political leaders in our global society today. One such example is Marie Elise Gbedo who was the first African woman candidate for the Presidential Elections in Benin in 2001 and 2006. As the Vice President of Beninese Women Lawyers Association, Gbedo inspires a multitude of females in her country and all throughout Africa to take a stance and advocate for women's rights.

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Conclusion

Globalization offers women unprecedented opportunities, but equally new and unique challenges. Gender inequality springs from many sources, and it is often difficult to determine which forms of inequality are being eliminated by the effects of globalization, and which are exacerbated. Work toward eliminating gender inequality in the framework provided by the Beijing Platform for Action has created awareness, monitoring, and alleviation of the externalities that the new global system creates for women.

Progress toward eliminating gender inequality in the future depends on finding and embracing the occasions, mostly in the political and legal realm, where the global approach strengthens women's security and welfare, and fighting the issues, mostly in the economic realm, where women are made worse off by the new global system.

Nastya Buchok

Nastya is 13 years old. She grew up in the shine town, the capital of Karakalpak Republic, Nukus of Uzbekistan. She participated in the Global Connections Tech Age Girl's Project sponsored by the [International Research and Exchanges Board](#). This project "provides encouragement, support, and training to a select group of young computer-oriented girls." The program provides the young women with computer and technology skills, while encouraging them to become leaders and to start projects in their own communities. For their first project, the girls created their own website.



Nastya has excellent English language skills. She filled out this questionnaire about her own experiences and her views of globalization.

1. Has globalization affected your life? **Yes, globalization really affected my life. And I start understanding, that that is very important not just for me, but for other people too. I am another person now and I watch the world from another side and try to change it. I want to teach people on IT, leadership and help them to become big people. My life has changed.**
2. Why did you want to get involved with the Tech Age Girls project? **This project has helped me to become another person, to understand, that women also can be leaders and can build their future themselves. Thanks to the project I found new friends among the participants. And now I see how strong I have changed since last year. I notice that now I prefer to get new knowledge on IT, than playing in the street. And I try to get more and more new and interesting out of this project. I can't imagine my life without Techage-girls project. I get up and think about the project and go to bed thinking about it. It makes my boring life shine. All my friends say that I am another person after the project. And I really want to keep on working at this project.**
3. What do you hope to accomplish with the website? **First of all I want to tell other people about me. I want to find new friends, colleagues and cooperation with organizations; witch would help me to realize my future project. I hope, that my dreams would come true.....**
4. What projects do you plan to do when you are finished the program? **I have some ideas about cooperation with Youth organizations. I think some of them would be really interested to work with me. I wish to open big Learning Centre in My region and continue teaching people in different spheres of IT, web-design and so on. I dream, to work and give my knowledge to the people. But this is just one of my ideas.**
5. How can technology improve the status of women in your country? **Technologies can help women to become leaders in their community and to lead people. They will make their future and be on the same stage with the men. Women have a great opportunity to find new job and new friends using technologies.**

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