



**UNITED NATIONS  
COMMISSION ON THE  
STATUS OF WOMEN**

**STUDY GUIDE  
HCCRI IX**



HWA CHONG CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION AND INQUIRY IX

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# INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE

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The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). UNCSW is the main international body advocating for the advancement and equality of women, in socio-economic and cultural aspects.

The Commission consists of one representative from each of the forty-five Member States elected by ECOSOC. Members of the Commission are elected for a period of four years. In addition to the member states, many non-governmental organisations may also participate within the Commission.

While resolutions from the UNCSW are not legally binding, it is still the main body and means of working towards advancing the rights of girls and women, in both developing and developed countries, acting as the main channel for issues regarding the rights of women for the overarching UN to view.<sup>1</sup>

The issue that will be discussed by the UNCSW at HCCRI 2020 is the Question of Treatment towards Women in the Workplace.

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<sup>1</sup> "Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women. Accessed January 31, 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

# THE QUESTION OF TREATMENT TOWARDS WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

At the turn of the 20th century came a cultural wave, encompassing the advancement of the rights of many marginalized groups including women, with their right to work being one of the major focuses. Women working, once considered taboo, is now a convention as women gained the freedom to work and their independence. Today, two out of five employed persons are women.<sup>2</sup>

Treating women equally in the workplace provides innumerable benefits. Creating a workplace supportive of gender diversity attracts female workers, benefiting the company by allowing them to tap the talent pool of the other 50% of the population. Women also contribute different perspectives in an otherwise male-dominant workplace and help to spark creativity, boosting

company performance. According to McKinsey, the most gender-diverse companies are 21% more likely to experience above-average profits,<sup>3</sup> signalling the obvious pros of treating women equally in the workplace. Countries will also benefit from the creation of a more inclusive and gender-diverse workplace and see an increase in the size of the economy by 35% on average simply by taking advantage of the wide range of skills women can offer and increasing the number of women in the workplace.<sup>4</sup> Women who are treated well in the workplace are also more at ease in their workplace and can truly empower themselves to reach their potential without the presence of glass ceilings limiting their career development.

While much progress has been made with most institutionalised forms of work-related gender discrimination having been abolished or illegalised,

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<sup>2</sup> "International Labor Rights Forum." n.d. Women's Rights | International Labor Rights Forum. Accessed December 31, 2019. <https://laborrights.org/issues/women's-rights>.

<sup>3</sup> "7 Benefits of Gender Diversity in the Workplace." Workplace by Facebook. Facebook. Accessed December 31, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/workplace/blog/diversity-in-the-workplace>.

<sup>4</sup> Elliott, Larry. "More Women in the Workplace Could Boost Economy by 35%, Says Christine Lagarde." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, March 1, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/01/more-women-in-the-workplace-could-boost-economy-by-35-says-christine-lagarde>.

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there remains substantial gaps in the treatment of both genders in the workplace. Less tangible issues, such as the 23% wage gap between male and female workers despite being equally competent, have either been sidelined or are much harder to tackle.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, women are regularly disadvantaged at their jobs, with women getting promoted less often than men and women making up a mere 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs,<sup>6</sup> showing the stark underrepresentation of women at the big table. Not only is their career development affected, women are sexually harassed at work by workers of the opposite gender.

Given the suboptimal workplace environment that female workers face, the issue of equitable treatment of both genders at the workplace is a pertinent one. Thus, to tackle the issue, delegates in UNCSW are expected to discuss the key factors hindering the equal treatment of women in the workplace and discuss possible means to achieve the goal of equitable treatment of both genders at the workplace in council to reach a consensus on this complex issue.

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<sup>5</sup> Schroeder, M., & Stohl, R. (n.d.). Arms Control Today. Retrieved December 10, 2019, from <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006-06/features/small-arms-large-problem-international-threat-small-arms-proliferation-misuse>.

<sup>6</sup> Warner, Judith, Nora Ellmann, and Diana Boesch. "The Women's Leadership Gap." Center for American Progress, November 20, 2018.

## II. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

### HISTORY OF WORKPLACE RIGHTS

There has been significant progress and improvements made in terms of the treatment of women in the workplace. In ancient times, women largely worked in the agriculture sector, tending to the fields and harvesting their crops and were rarely able to access the same jobs as men. Women working in high-skilled jobs was taboo and men were largely seen as the superior gender. However, in the Age of Enlightenment, societal beliefs towards women began to change and they were seen to be as equally competent as men. During the Industrial Revolution, women began entering the workforce, working laborious jobs in factories to support the economic growth globally. In the periods during the two World Wars, women were drafted into the workforce, working in professions such as nursing and industry to support the war effort.<sup>7</sup>

Over the years, female participation in the workforce has become a common phenomenon with close to equal percentages of both genders participating in the workforce in the modern world, highlighting the leaps and bounds made in the empowerment

of women. However, despite such achievements, there remains significant obstacles in achieving the goal of equitable treatment of both genders in the workplace.

Contrary to popular belief, workplace inequity towards women stemmed from women being perceived as needing protection, rather than being inferior to men.<sup>8</sup> Around the turn of the early 20th century, the role of women in society began to shift from being a second breadwinner to being a homemaker. Even as technology and the overall quality of life improved, little was done to address the proportion of women in workplaces. After events such as World War II which left many job vacancies which women filled up, these women often returned to jobs traditionally taken up by females such as nursing.<sup>9</sup> Even in the 1980s, most women continued to pursue lower-paying jobs despite legislation being put in place to prevent discrimination in industries based on gender. In recent years, the cultural shift has brought about a much needed revolution in the workforce where women are more widely accepted in more diverse jobs.

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<sup>7</sup> Hur, Johnson. "History of Women in the Workforce." From Ancient Rome To Present Time, November 17, 2017. <https://bebusinessed.com/history/history-of-women-in-the-workforce/>.

<sup>8</sup> Hannan, Michael T., and Melvin Kranzberg. 2017. "Women in the Workforce." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. June 2, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-work-organization-648000/Women-in-the-workforce>.

<sup>9</sup> Field, Kelly. "Why Are Women Still Choosing the Lowest-Paying Jobs?" The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, January 25, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/01/why-are-women-still-choosing-the-lowest-paying-jobs/551414/>.



## RELEVANT TREATIES AND DECLARATIONS

### *Significant Domestic Actions Taken*

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is ratified in India,<sup>10</sup> protecting women against sexual harassment at the workplace. Despite this being a first in the male-dominated country, many employers have failed to enforce this rule despite stern warnings from legal bodies. While such legislation is commendable for a country which has been patriarchal for the bulk of its modern history, the arbitrary nature of the issue, compared to more concrete aspects of workplace discrimination such as remuneration means that tackling it with overarching policies is less efficient.

### *International Actions Taken*

In 1974, the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) is ratified in the USA,<sup>11</sup> promoting educational equity by illegalising discrimination in educational institutions based on gender, opening up opportunities for women to come into contact with new pools of knowledge. This ensures that girls will not be influenced into going down certain paths based on what educational institutes think is ideal for a girl, but rather are given full agency as their male counterparts would be.

Remuneration is defined as money paid for a work or a service. In 1953, as a first step, the Equal Remuneration Convention under the International Labour Organization (ILO) came into force,<sup>12</sup> ensuring that for the same

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<sup>10</sup> "Handbook On Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013." Government of India Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015. [https://www.iitk.ac.in/wc/data/Handbook on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace.pdf](https://www.iitk.ac.in/wc/data/Handbook%20on%20Sexual%20Harassment%20of%20Women%20at%20Workplace.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> "Women's Educational Equity Act." 2018. Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. November 23, 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's\\_Educational\\_Equity\\_Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's_Educational_Equity_Act).

<sup>12</sup> "C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)." n.d. Convention C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). International Labour Organization. Accessed December 31, 2019. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C100](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C100).

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amount of work in the same industry, both men and women will receive the same amount of financial compensation. To facilitate this, metrics to determine wage and a means of bargaining were introduced.

In 1994, the Maternity Protection Act under the ILO came into force,<sup>13</sup> ensuring that both pregnant women and women who have just given birth will not be unfairly retrenched or denied health leave on the basis of being deemed a liability. Due to pregnant employees and mothers of young children often being perceived as liabilities due to the need to take time off to take care of their children, the act ensures that employees cannot retrench them on that basis.

At this point in time, three key documents have been put in place to protect the work rights of women: ILO Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111),<sup>14</sup> and Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), but the effectiveness of implementation still leaves much to be desired, especially in developing countries with weaker enforcement. Even in countries where these documents have been enforced, women still do not enjoy full work equity due to cultural notions that may not have been institutionalised, and as such are often more arbitrary and harder to tackle.

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<sup>13</sup> "Maternity Protection Act 1979," 1979. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/1883/Maternity Protection Act.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/1883/Maternity%20Protection%20Act.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> "C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)." Convention C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Accessed February 10, 2020. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312256](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312256).

## III. SCOPE OF DEBATE

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

While institutionalised sexism in the workplace has been abolished in most parts of the world, more intangible forms of sexism in the workplace such as objectification and physical assaults are still prevalent in many nations. As such, women still face sexual harassment at their workplace, with a survey conducted by the group Stop Street Harassment in the United States of America showing that 81% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lives.<sup>15</sup> Such behaviour has profound impacts on the workers affected and is detrimental to their wellbeing. Anxiety, stress and inability to work at ease are just a few effects of the trauma these female workers have to suffer.<sup>16</sup>

Although legislation is largely in place to punish such acts, most acts of sexual harassment go unknown and unreported. According to a study by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2018, 85% of Australian women over the age of 15 have experienced sexual harassment but only 17% reported such behaviour and made complaints.<sup>17</sup> Such behaviour boils down to a few reasons: fear of retaliation and a masculine culture that permits sexual harassment.

Women often fear retaliation by the harasser or the organisation, which could alienate them and harm their future career prospects. Another reason is that many organisations have a highly masculine culture where some men use the subjugation of women as a way to relate to other men and prove their masculinity, while reinforcing a woman's lower status. To prevent further alienation, women may play along with such inappropriate behaviour. These reasons boil down to the root which is the mistrust of female workers in the organisation and its ability to deal properly with sexual harassment complaints fairly. The same study found that 45% of people who made a formal report said that no changes occurred at their organisation as a result of the complaint,<sup>18</sup> highlighting the hopelessness these victims feel regarding the effectiveness of the reporting systems in place.

Such phenomena mostly occur due to the insufficient focus by employers towards such issues. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the United States of America, although 70% of employers provide sexual harassment training and 98% of companies have sexual harassment policies,<sup>19</sup> most of such training is not taken seriously and the policies are obsolete.

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<sup>15</sup> North, Anna. "Measuring #MeToo: More than 80 Percent of Women Have Been Sexually Harassed or Assaulted." Vox. Vox, February 21, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/2/21/17036438/sexual-harassment-me-too-assault-hollywood>.

<sup>16</sup> "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace." Advocacy Center for Employment Law, January 28, 2020. <https://www.employmentadvocacy.com/blog/2019/08/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/>.

<sup>17</sup> Murphy, Katharine. "Human Rights Commission Finds 71% of Australians Have Been Sexually Harassed." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, September 11, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/12/human-rights-commission-finds-71-of-australians-have-been-sexually-harassed>.

<sup>18</sup> Refer to footnote 17

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, Stephanie K., Jessica F. Kirk, and Ksenia Keplinger. "Why We Fail to Report Sexual Harassment." Harvard Business Review, October 4, 2016. <https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-we-fail-to-report-sexual-harassment>.

With insufficient focus on treating sexual harassment cases seriously without bias by employers, it is unsurprising sexual harassment in the workplace remains rampant. Such a situation is further worsened in conservative countries where women are not sufficiently protected by law from such behaviour, often facing unfair retrenchment or demotion when standing up against sexual harassment. Thus, delegates are reminded to consider the current workplace culture and come up with solutions that are able to ensure such behaviour is dealt with seriously to allow workers to regain trust in the organisation.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Before women even join the workforce, they already face discrimination. At the entry level, women are less likely to be employed in positions of high authority. The 2019 Women in the Workplace study done by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org found that 62% of manager positions were held by men compared to 38% for women.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, progress at the top is constrained by a “broken rung” in career development for women. The biggest obstacle women face on the path to senior leadership is at the first step up to manager. The same study shows that for every 100 men promoted and hired to manager, only 72 women are promoted and hired. This gender gap results in more women getting stuck at the entry level, and

fewer women becoming managers. This is largely due to the stereotypes that women are less ambitious and are less able to prioritise their work as they may raise and care for their families in the future,<sup>21</sup> contributing to the belief that hiring and developing female workers are a waste of resources.

This early inequality has a long-term impact on the talent pipeline. Since men significantly outnumber women at the managerial level, there are fewer women to hire or promote to higher leadership positions, leading to the number of women decreasing at every subsequent level. At the top rungs in the company hierarchy, the C-suite which consists of executive-level managers in a company, the gender inequality is even more pronounced. Women only take up 21% of these positions,<sup>22</sup> highlighting the lack of diversity at the highest levels of an organisation. This leads to the company suffering from a “hollow middle” phenomenon with the middle to top rungs of leadership in the company dominated by men. With women being underrepresented at all levels of a company, their voices and concerns are not heard and thus they are unable to improve their wellbeing in the company. Having their job development limited due to their employers’ bias is also unfair treatment for women who are as equally competent as men at a job.

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<sup>20</sup> “Women in the Workplace 2019.” McKinsey & Company, October 2019. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-in-the-workplace-2019>.

<sup>21</sup> “The ‘Motherhood Penalty’ Is Real, and It Costs Women \$16,000 a Year in Lost Wages.” CNBC. CNBC, March 25, 2019. <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/25/the-motherhood-penalty-costs-women-16000-a-year-in-lost-wages.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Refer to footnote 18

However, most companies are not actively conscious of such bias and in economic perspectives it is undeniable that female workers who raise families tend to lose work productivity as they take maternity leave to care for their newborn children. Thus, delegates need to consider the reasons for the career of female workers being disadvantaged and brainstorm for solutions that encourage companies to change their decision-making as well as address the problems in mindset.

### MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity leave, a period of absence for women from work granted to a mother before and after the birth of a child is a right guaranteed in most countries. Maternity leave allows expectant mothers as well as those who had just given birth to a child to have sufficient rest and time to care for their child in a crucial stage of the child's development. It also stands as a protective barrier for pregnant female workers, preventing them from losing their jobs while raising a family.

However, in a study done by the International Labour Organisation in 2014, among the 185 countries and territories studied, only 53% meet the ILO standard of at least 14 weeks' leave.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, a large majority of female workers are still not adequately protected in practice for income loss during maternity. Only 34.4% of the

employed women are legally entitled to cash benefits during maternity leave on a mandatory basis.<sup>24</sup> This creates an added financial burden for expectant mothers who are in the workforce and they may end up working without taking maternity leave in order to support themselves, which is detrimental to their overall wellbeing.

Another reason female workers may not use their maternity leave is the pressure from their employers as many are treated unfairly or put at a disadvantage due to their absence. For example, taking maternity leave may affect the female worker's future career development and affect their chances of promotion. Some are demoted upon their return without reason and others may have their job restructured without prior discussion or consent.<sup>25</sup> Thus, women are unable to care for their children to the best of their abilities at a crucial stage while they care for their child when juggling work, affecting their overall wellbeing and in turn reducing work productivity in the end as female workers are unable to focus on their work. It also forces female workers to think twice before considering starting a family and may end up prioritising their work over raising a family due to the potential negative impacts on their career.

It is worth noting that the reason why female workers are less likely to be

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<sup>23</sup> "Maternity and Paternity at Work." International Labour Organisation. Accessed December 31, 2019. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_242617.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_242617.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Refer to footnote 23

<sup>25</sup> Zarina, Ivona HidegAnja KrsticRaymond TrauTanya. "Do Longer Maternity Leaves Hurt Women's Careers?" Harvard Business Review, September 14, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2018/09/do-longer-maternity-leaves-hurt-womens-careers>.

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hired or are treated less favourably in terms of career development is due to the considerations of female workers taking maternity leave and prioritising raising a family in the future, thus not fully utilising the company's resources as they may become a liability. Thus, delegates should consider solutions on how to change the mindsets of such companies towards female workers in order to ensure they are fairly treated and can raise a family at ease.

### UPBRINGING OF WOMEN

Traditionally, in the past, women were raised to believe that they would eventually grow up to become homemakers. However, despite women making up close to half of the workforce in less than a century, the traditional views of women as less competent workers have not changed as quickly. According to the 2018 LeanIn.Org and McKinsey Women in the Workplace study, 36% of women have had their judgement questioned in their area of expertise.<sup>26</sup> This is a simple example illustrating the gender dynamics of the society girls are brought up in today. A study done under The Guardian's research on "The Gender Gap" highlights how children as young as six can be influenced by stereotypes such as the idea that brilliance or giftedness are more common in men. When questioned

about the intelligence of their respective genders, 65% of boys selected their own gender as compared to 48% of girls.<sup>27</sup> Given the prejudice towards women still exists in educational institutions today, girls/women are raised to feel inferior to their male counterparts. Despite making up more than half of the labor force in the United States and earning almost 60% of advanced degrees,<sup>28</sup> they buy into gender stereotypes that create a bleak image of themselves, setting women back professionally as they may not be able to perform as well.

A lack of self-confidence as a direct result of their upbringing continues to manifest in women's career choices. Additionally, the societal perceptions of work suitable for women are gradually transmitted to the people. This leads to various job sectors consistently being underrepresented by the female gender. For example, in STEM fields which are traditionally male-dominated, women represent only 28% of US workers employed in STEM fields.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, new research done by the American Economic Association identifies that women are shying away from certain professions, due to the lack of confidence in their ability to compete in fields that men are stereotypically believed to perform more strongly in, such as science,

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<sup>26</sup> "Women in the Workplace 2018." McKinsey & Company, October 2018. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-in-the-workplace-2018>.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, Nicola. 2017. "Girls Believe Brilliance Is a Male Trait, Research into Gender Stereotypes Shows." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media. January 27, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jan/26/girls-believe-brilliance-is-a-male-trait-research-into-gender-stereotypes-shows>.

<sup>28</sup> Stych, Anne. "Women Earn the Majority of Advanced Degrees." bizjournals.com, October 9, 2018. <https://www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2018/10/women-earn-the-majority-of-advanced-degrees.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Silva, Vitor. "8 Statistics and Facts about Women in STEM - Built By Me." Built By Me - STEM Learning, June 4, 2019. <https://www.builtbyme.com/statistics-facts-women-in-stem/>.

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math, and technology.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, when women do choose to enter male-dominated fields, they may also face ill-treatment in the workplace such as sexual harassment and are given fewer leadership and career advancement opportunities as compared to men, who are believed to have more potential and are more competent, although such beliefs do not hold water.

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<sup>30</sup> Ranehill, Eva, Andreas Born, and Anna Sunburn. "American Economic Association." American Economic Association. American Economic Association, November 2018. [https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2019/preliminary/665?q=eNqrVipOLS7OzM8LqSxIVbKqhnGVrJQMIWp1IBKLi\\_OTgRwIHawS1KJcXAgrJbESKpSZmwphIWWmloO0FxUUXDAFTATAegsS00CyRkqIXDBuoh4V](https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2019/preliminary/665?q=eNqrVipOLS7OzM8LqSxIVbKqhnGVrJQMIWp1IBKLi_OTgRwIHawS1KJcXAgrJbESKpSZmwphIWWmloO0FxUUXDAFTATAegsS00CyRkqIXDBuoh4V).

## V. POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

### SENSITISATION OF MEN AT THE WORKPLACE

Given that workplace culture plays a major role in how men treat their female coworkers, changing the mindsets of employees as a whole is likely to reduce the frequency of sexual harassment cases. With the majority of workers in most workplaces still being men, it remains crucial to involve such an important stakeholder in the issue of treating women in the workplace. By educating men on the negative effects of sexual harassment and evoking a sense of empathy, men would be less likely to make off-handed comments that they now know would be considered sexual harassment, in hopes of making their female counterparts feel less uncomfortable. For example, unconscious bias training can be conducted to raise awareness of such issues and allow workers who may have been ignorant and unaware of their bias to take note. Procter & Gamble organises workshops called Men Advocating Real Change (MARC) where participants identify gender biases through activities and dialogues as part of the company's #WeSeeEqual program to advance gender equality.<sup>31</sup> However, in cultures where men see women as inferior, this solution may not be the most effective. Thus, delegates are encouraged to consider how workers, especially men,

who are currently still the majority in most companies, especially in higher positions of authority can be educated to better understand how to treat workers of both genders neutrally and without bias.

### RESTRUCTURING SEXUAL HARASSMENT REPORTING SYSTEMS IN COMPANIES

For cases of sexual harassment to be prevented or tackled, the codification of any existing sets of rules must take place. The rules are to ensure that men who may or may not be aware of their actions will have a set of guidelines to follow. Compared to education and sensitisation of men, which admittedly tackles the root issue, is more intangible, a written set of guidelines allows reports of sexual harassment to hold more weight, given that the definition of harassment is much clearer. The enforcement of the code of conduct, however, lies on the companies, and governments must ensure that the code is properly enforced. With many conservative nations still having patriarchal countries, governments and companies may require financial incentives centred around a carrot-and-stick system to ensure proper enforcement. Companies can also foster an inclusive and respectful culture to provide the necessary support for those

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<sup>31</sup> Kit, Tang See. "At P&G, Promoting Equality at the Workplace Includes Getting Men to Recognise Gender Bias." CNA, November 26, 2019. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/p-g-promoting-equality-gender-bias-at-the-workplace-12123926>.

who wish to report such cases. Mozilla rewrote their community participation guidelines and outlined the reporting process in order to allow employees to be aware of the steps to take to report such cases and ensure the perpetrators are held accountable for their actions and suffer its consequences.<sup>32</sup> Such measures allow employees to regain trust in these systems to hold the culprits in the workplace accountable, creating a safe working environment for female workers.

### DESTIGMATISATION OF MOTHERHOOD

For many companies, the perceived liability of motherhood comes in both the form of time and money, with maternity leave causing the company to have a minor decrease in overall productivity, and paid maternity leave causing further financial strain. To negate these perceived losses which often cause mothers and women to have reduced prospects of promotion, a higher risk of retrenchment and stunted career development, governments can provide financial assistance to companies. This can come in the form of subsidies for insurance for mothers with newborns, or tax reductions for companies that meet a quota for mothers in higher positions, negating the perceived losses that companies see in hiring mothers, and as such incentivise the employment and promotion of mothers. Local authorities can also mandate a standardised duration of maternity leave for companies to adhere to to ensure

the protection of expectant mothers at work. Companies can also play their part in becoming more welcoming and inclusive by providing childcare services or simply setting clear guidelines to ensure these female workers are not unfairly treated or discriminated against by taking maternity leave.

### INCREASING CAREER MOBILITY FOR WOMEN

Male-dominated fields, with STEM in particular, have much higher salaries than female-dominated fields, such as nursing. This becomes the main contributing factor to the perceived wage gap. To counter this, there have to be solutions that tackle both the male-female ratio itself, and the social notions causing the ratio. With quotas that are already in place in some countries to ensure that there is a minimum percentage of women present in male-dominated fields, financial incentives could again be provided to companies to expand their job opportunities to more women, for example, in the form of subsidised taxes. The cultural and social notions which cause women to take up “softer” jobs such as nursing can also be dealt with through national education, mobilising women to be able to even consider employment in higher-paying sectors by having the skill sets that match the employers’ needs. Dealing with the root issue, while more intangible, will have a heavier impact in socially conservative nations, where women are often raised to be homemakers rather than breadwinners,

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<sup>32</sup> “Holding Corporations Accountable For Pay Inequality In America: Full Policy.” Kamala Harris For The People. Accessed December 31, 2019. <https://kamalaharris.org/policies/equal-pay/full-policy/>.

and as such will increase the percentage of women in the job market and ensure equal job opportunity for both genders.

Conversely, the controversy surrounding “affirmative action” may arise. Women who enter higher positions of power may be treated as if they did not enter solely via merit, but also due to quotas, which could stir discussion over whether there is workplace inequality, reducing effectiveness in workplace dynamics between higher-ups and subordinates who feel as if their superior is not deserving of her position.

Thus, delegates are reminded to consider the pros and cons of the solution carefully and propose sensible and realistic solutions in council.

## CURRENTLY PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Kamala Harris, formerly a presidential candidate for the 2020 Presidential Elections in the United States of America and a fierce advocate for equal rights for women, proposed the Equal Pay Certificate policy as part of her agenda in her presidential campaign. The policy states that for every 1% gap in pay between genders that exists after accounting for differences in job titles, experience, and performance, companies will be fined at 1% of their average daily profits

during their last fiscal year. American companies will be required to obtain Equal Pay Certification from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and renew it every 2 years.<sup>33</sup> Such a policy marks a change as it shifts the burden from employees to companies to prove they do not discriminate and instead treat workers of both genders equally.

The proposal by Harris is not the first of its kind. It has been put into force by Iceland, with new legislation passed in 2018 stating that any public or private body in Iceland employing more than 25 people has to show certification by an accredited auditor that their pay management system complies with a national equal pay standard modelled on the international ISO environmental management standards, signifying that its workers are paid equal wages for work of equal value. Organisations that fail to comply with the regulations will face daily fines.<sup>34</sup>

Other than proposing new solutions, delegates are welcome to analyse and improve on existing solutions or newly proposed solutions during debate in council for more fruitful discussion.

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<sup>33</sup> “Holding Corporations Accountable For Pay Inequality In America: Full Policy.” Kamala Harris For The People. Accessed December 31, 2019. <https://kamalaharris.org/policies/equal-pay/full-policy/>.

<sup>34</sup> Henley, Jon. “Equality Won’t Happen by Itself”: How Iceland Got Tough on Gender Pay Gap.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, February 20, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/20/iceland-equal-pay-law-gender-gap-women-jobs-equality>.

## VI. QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

*How can the cultural norms of countries be overcome in regards to the career and educational choices of women?*

*How can current education and workplace systems change to encourage women to break the “glass ceiling”?*

*How can current legal systems be improved to ensure that women face protection from unfair retrenchment or demotion due to their gender?*

*How can organisations make changes to allow employees to regain trust in their processing of sexual harassment and gender discrimination cases?*

*How will the stigma towards motherhood be tackled? Are “soft” solutions or legal frameworks more viable?*

## VII. CONCLUSION

For this topic, delegates will have to make a distinction between the tangible aspects (i.e. equal remuneration) and intangible aspects (e.g. sexual harassment), and consider that as a non-legally binding council, resolutions must incentivise states to put initiatives in place that go past simple legislation and instead tackle cultural norms. The cultural background that continues to perpetuate the discrimination towards women due to motherhood and sexual harassment at their workplace must be addressed. Due to the complex nature of this issue, delegates should consider a variety of soft and hard measures in order to tackle the issue adequately. Good luck to all delegates and chin up!

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