



Forum: Sustainable Development Goals 10

Issue: Addressing the issue of Discrimination against Gender, Age and Ethnicity

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Introduction

Discrimination is by no means a new issue, it has existed for thousands of years, ever since humans lived on this planet some have viewed themselves as superior to others, and have tried to impose their ideals on others. From Trans-Atlantic slavery, to women having to fight hard for suffrage, to Apartheid, discrimination has been a prevalent part of society. The three major types of discrimination that this issue examines are the issues of gender, ethnic and age discrimination.

Gender discrimination has been common in many parts of the world for a very long time. Women were expected to work at home, be good wives, mothers and caretakers- not people who are free to pursue their passions and interests. Although many problems have been tackled in the past centuries, such as voting rights and equal pay, women have continued to face injustice within corrupt systems silently. The patriarchal system and mindsets ingrained within many minds today allow sexist issues to continue in many communities to this day. Despite the topic of sexism to be highlighted and focused upon women, men face sexism just as commonly. Young boys and men frequently face toxic masculinity and stereotypes which confine and limit their roles in society as well as instruct them how to live their lives despite our generations creating new boundaries everyday. A prominent example of gender discrimination in the modern world can be found in the education systems of many nations, as less than 40% of countries offer girls and boys equal access to education. It has been found that by offering universal education to all people, at an equal standard, over 400 million people could be lifted up from poverty, and its greatest impact will be on women and girls who would not have received any proper education before.

In addition to this, age discrimination has become more of a prevalent issue in modern society, as senior citizens find it more difficult to find employment, healthcare and insurance services. In 2012, the percentage of people of the ages 65-74 that were in the US workforce was a mere 27%; a rise from years prior. The difficulty of finding employment may be understandable, as younger people are better suited to doing certain jobs, and employers are always looking for the most suitable candidates for jobs, with little chance of them hiring older people that can be a liability to the company because of their



physical and mental abilities or any conditions that they may have developed in old age. However, for older citizens that are able to prove that they are not a liability to a company, and are just as suitable for a younger candidate, the choice of the younger candidate over them will be quite a blatant act of ageism, as age is the sole reason for the decision not to hire them.

Discrimination has been an issue that has taken many strides towards a proper solution, however, it is still very prevalent in our society, and to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative for proper solutions to be drafted for this issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Discrimination:

Discrimination refers to unfair or unequal treatment of an individual, or a group of people on the basis of who they are or the beliefs they hold. According to Amnesty International, the act of discrimination occurs when a person is unable to enjoy their human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment. Discrimination can happen on the basis of ethnicity, economic and social class, religion, gender, age etc. This issue will be focusing on discrimination based on gender, age and ethnicity.

Prejudice:

Prejudice is a baseless- without any proof- and usually negative attitude to people that belong to a certain group, which leads to negative connotations and stereotypes being formed for these people, with a tendency to discriminate against these people. Prejudice can have a strong influence on how people interact with others, especially with those who do not fit their image of that particular group.

Gender Discrimination

Gender is the socially constructed characteristics of men and women, and the perception of gender is different in different communities. Gender discrimination is the unequal or disadvantageous treatment of a person the basis of their gender, and a specific society's stereotypes and prejudices about gender. In many regions across the world, there are laws, traditions and beliefs that deny people of different genders the same rights. For example, women cannot dress as they like in Saudi Arabia, and in Equatorial Guinea, women need their husbands' signature to get a loan.

Age Discrimination:

Age is the method by which humans quantify how long someone has lived for, and age discrimination is when a person is treated unfairly and put at a disadvantage because of their age, in many countries age discrimination is legal, as banks can limit the services that are offered to older people, people over the



age of 75 are barred from driving and employers can impose a compulsory retirement age that can be justified for specific roles. Sometimes a law like this is necessary, as older people whose mental and physical health has deteriorated may pose a threat to themselves and other citizens by doing activities like driving, or may negatively impact a company's activities by continuing to work. However, it can be considered discrimination when someone that is older can prove they have no disabilities that prevent them from doing a task, but still aren't allowed to do that task due to their age.

Ethnic Discrimination/ Racism:

An ethnicity is a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language and features similar to these. It differs from race, as a race is determined based on the physical traits of a person, namely the colour of their skin, while ethnicity is based more on the features that a person chooses to identify with. Ethnic discrimination or racism is prejudice or discrimination directed against a person/ a group of people on the basis of their racial or ethnic group. This typically happens against groups that are a minority; a group of people that share similar characteristics from birth, making their group smaller than other groups in society, causing society to discriminate against them and treat them unfairly.

Direct Discrimination:

Direct discrimination is when an explicit distinction is made between different people that results in individuals from certain groups being unable to exercise their rights. Direct discrimination can happen because:

- You have a protected characteristic- age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation
- Someone thinks that you have a protected characteristic (Discrimination by perception)
- You are connected to someone with a protected characteristic (Discrimination by association)

Indirect Discrimination:

This is when a law, policy or practice is presented as being neutral to all groups of people, but unfairly disadvantages a specific group of people. For indirect discrimination to have happened:

- There needs to be a law or a practice that is applying to everyone equally
- The policy must disadvantage people with a specific protected characteristic in comparison to people that do not possess that characteristic
- There is no justified reason for why the practice, law or policy should be applied despite the disadvantage to people with a protected characteristic.



Background Information

Trans-Atlantic Slavery

Throughout the 17th and the 18th century, hundreds of thousands of African slaves were forced to aid the establishment of colonies in the Americas. These people were forced to work as indentured servants, in households and plantations, and as labour in the tobacco, cotton and rice industries, mainly on large plantations. As slaves, they were forced to work extremely long hours and received no compensation for the work they did.

The slave owners viewed African slaves as beings that were inferior to themselves, and to other humans. The laws that had been put in place in the Americas and Europe to ensure that people had their basic rights did not apply to the slaves that had been brought from the African continent, as they were not the same nationality nor ethnicity as the white, American population. To slave owners, slaves were quite a common commodity, and they were a good investment that could easily be obtained at a slave auction. Moreover, they believed that the slaves they purchased were theirs for life, similar to owning a house or land, and that any of their children and descendants would also be considered slaves, fit for them to use in any way. This dehumanised the African ethnicity to something that was considered less than human, and more similar to an object that could easily be born and discarded by those of European descent- who were seen to be a superior race to the Africans.

Campaign for Women's Suffrage

In the 19th century, in the UK, although there had been some advances in women's rights, women were not recognized and held equally to men. In particular, they did not have the right to vote in Parliamentary elections.

The campaign for women's suffrage in the US began in the decades before the Civil War. During the 1820s and 1830s, most states had given the right to all white men regardless of how much money or property they had. It took activists and reformers nearly a 100 years to win the right to vote, and the campaign wasn't easy: Disagreements over strategies threatened to cripple the movement more than once. On August 18, 1920, however, the 19th Amendment of the Constitution finally established that American women would deserve all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, just like men.

Holding conferences to discuss the issues of gender and racial discrimination

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, where it was recognized that many women faced additional barriers when it came to the enjoyment of their human rights because of such



factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or socioeconomic class or because they were indigenous people, migrants, including women migrant workers, displaced women or refugees.

The Expert Group Meeting on "Gender and Racial Discrimination" which was held in Croatia from 21- 24 November 2000. This was attended by 13 experts from different regions, and 33 observers from Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

General discussion at the meeting included:

- Disadvantages, obstacles and difficulties women face in the enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights. This coming as a result of the intersection of racial and sex discrimination both in the public and private domain;
- Measures to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and their specific effects on women and girls, and provision of remedies and redress.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Black Lives Matter Movement

Black Lives Matter is a social and political movement that advocates for non-violent civil protesting against police violence, brutality and racial discrimination of black people within the United States of America. The wider movement advocates as well for numerous other policy changes that are considered to be black liberation and fights for justice to be served equally to black people. The movement first began back in July 2013, through the use of a hashtag #blacklivesmatter on social media following the acquittal of George Zimmerman who had shot and killed the black African-American teen Trayon Martin. The movement further gained national recognition after the publicized deaths of two more African-Americans in 2014, which led to protests and civil unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, near St Louis in New York City.

The movement was thrust back into the spotlight in the country's news headlines following the unlawful, unjustified killing of a black man named George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota by police officer Derek Chauvin. The protests that began due to this gained global attention as it became a global movement following protests not only in America but all over the world in many major cities. An estimated 15-26 million Americans joined the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, thus making it one of the largest civil movements in US History.

Some of the core principles of BLM include:

- Working as a collective group of liberators that believe in an inclusive and spacious movement.



- Ensuring the building of civil movement that is capable of bringing everyone to the front lines along with making sure society as a whole moves beyond the narrow nationalism that often prevails in Black Communities.
- Affirming the lives of Blacks who are queer, trans, disabled, undocumented, and women, along the gender spectrum. Mainly focusing around those individuals marginalized within Black liberation movements.
- Working towards a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted racially for demise, violence and injustice.
- Affirming of humanity and the contributions made to society by black people along with the resilience shown by them in the face of deadly oppression.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women:

- Gender inequality is pervasive all around the world with women lacking access to decent employment and having to endure gender wage gaps.
- Girls and women alike are regularly denied access to quality education and healthcare worldwide.
- In 2010, the UN's General Assembly formed the body, UN Women and with it the member states a historic step towards accelerating the United Nation's goals on the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- The formation of the entity merged and built upon the work of four parts of the UN system that exclusively focused on gender equality and women empowerment.
- The four divisions that it merged include:

Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)

- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW),
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI),
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
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- The entity helps support UN Member States with setting global standards for achieving gender equality alongside also working with governments to design laws, policies and programmes. This helps to ensure the standards are implemented with efficiency and all women and girls worldwide will be able to benefit.



- It works globally to ensure the SDGs become a reality for all women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation actively across all aspects of life.

Focuses on four strategies which have been prioritized:

- Women must be able to lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems
- Women must have income security as well as decent work and economic autonomy
- All women be able to live a life free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls should be able to contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience. They should also be able benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters, conflict and humanitarian action.

Ku Klux Klan (KKK)

KKK is one of the most oldest and infamous American hate groups, one with a long and violent history. While predominantly African Americans have been the primary targets of Ku Klux Klan attacks, they have also racially discriminated against many other groups. These include Jews, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQ community amongst many other minority groups along with the likes of also Catholics being attacked until recently.

KKK is known to consist of white supremists, being first established in 1865 and by 1870 extending into almost every southern state. Here by the late 1860s, the first Klan grew in popularity, and sought to overthrow the Republican state governments in the area. They used voter intimidation and targeted their violence at African-American leaders and politicians. The members made their own colourful costumes, robes, masks and conical hats especially designed to be terrifying and in order to hide their identities during these times. Congress, however did later pass legislations that were designed to control Klan terrorism such as ones inacted by the KKK, but by then the organisation had already seen its primary objective fulfilled. This was to restore and establish white supremacy across America, especially in the South which happened through Democratic victories in state legislatures across the region in the 1870s. This was followed with a period of decline with many of its chapters in the South being suppressed by 1871, through the likes of federal law enforcements.



After suffering from a period of decline, the KKK were once again brought to the spotlight when white protestant nativist groups revived the Klan known as the second Klan in 1915, in Georgia; only consisting of a few members. In the early 1920s the organisation started to gather momentum again, this time flourishing nationwide across urban areas such as the West and the Midwest regions. They took inspiration from D.W. Griffith's 1915 film: The birth of a Nation; which idolized ideas from the first Klan's formation in the 1860s. This was followed with significant violence such as the burning of crosses, staging rallies, parades and marches along with once again intensified defaming and denouncing of Catholics, Jews, African-Americans and organized labour. This "second generation" klan was fueled by growing hostility towards the surge of immigration that America experienced during this time, in the early 20th Century; along with fears of communist revolution towards these white supremacists. A burning cross was made the organisation's symbol and was paraded around the country in rallies. By this point of time, it reached its peak in the early 20s with Klan membership exceeding 4 million people worldwide.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1619	The first African slaves reached the English colonies in the Americas, landing in Virginia
July 19-20 1848	First women's rights convention held in New York
1861-1865	The American Civil war is fought, with differing views on slavery being key factors to why the war was fought
January 31, 1865	Slavery was abolished in the USA
1893	New Zealand becomes the first country in the world to grant women's suffrage
August 18, 1920	A change was made to the US constitution, allowing members of any gender to vote
August 28, 1955	A boy named Emmett Till was brutally murdered, murderers are not sentenced for their crime- this case brings international attention to the civil rights movement
June 10, 1963	President John F Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act, prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination



August 28, 1963	Around 250,000 people take part in a march on Washington, and Martin Luther King Jr delivers his “I have a dream” speech
July 2, 1964	President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, preventing employment discrimination due to race, color, sex, religion or national origin
December 15, 1967	Act was passed to prohibit employment discrimination of anyone over 40 years old
September 20, 1973	Billie Jean King beats a male tennis player in straight sets
April 1992	After police were not convicted of violating the rights of an African American man, Rodney King, riots started in the city where almost \$1 billion of damages were done
2008	Barack Obama becomes first African American president
2016	Hillary Clinton becomes the first female presidential nominee in America
2020	The killing of George Floyd sparked Black Lives Matter protests across the world

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Resolution on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women (A/RES/72/162)
- Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security (S/RES/1325)
- 1904 (XVIII). United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/18/1904)
- Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (A/RES/72/162)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The UK’s Anti-Discriminatory Laws

The UK like many nations around the world have specific discriminatory laws that have been put in place to protect its citizens and residents. These laws include protection from discrimination:



- At work
- In school or education
- As a consumer of goods
- When using public services
- When buying or renting property
- As a member of a private club/association

All citizens of the UK are protected under the Equality Act of 2010.

In the UK it is illegal to discriminate against any individual because of their age, gender reassignment, being married or with a partner, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race (colour, nationality, ethnic background or origin), religion/belief, gender or sexual orientation.

In the UK if you are disabled, you are to have the same rights as other workers/peers. Employers should ensure that 'reasonable adjustments' are made to help any disabled employees and job applicants.

These adjustments must be met in relation to:

- application forms, for example providing forms in Braille or audio formats;
- aptitude tests, for example giving extra time to complete the tests;
- interview arrangements, such as providing wheelchair access, communicator support
- making sure the workplace has the right facilities and equipment for disabled workers or someone offered a job
- terms of employment, including pay

Legislative Measures

Many nations have taken legislative measures against discrimination, especially against the discrimination of different ethnicities- racism. States including Greece, Bolivia and Chile have enacted measures that make discrimination on the basis of race punishable by law. Moreover, states have tried to make historically marginalised groups more included in their societies and have enacted policies and laws to help these groups have a better representation in the society they live in. For example, Uruguay has adopted a law on affirmative action policies to ensure equal access to higher education and to the public labour market, with a quota of at least 8 per cent for people of African descent, and Spain has enacted a law to assist any African communities in Spain in memory of the acts committed in Trans-Atlantic Slavery.



Possible Solutions

Different forms of systemic discrimination can be rooted out, as systemic discrimination is a major factor for continued high rates of discrimination. Systemic discrimination is when discrimination takes place due to a business practice, a policy in the workplace or a policy that is maintained by the government. Systemic racism is especially harmful when present in higher authorities such as law enforcers, as it has become quite common place to see police forces racially profile people of colour, and are much more likely to arrest innocent people of colour than those of European descent. Re-examining policies and laws as well as providing more training to law enforcers so that they can do their jobs in a much fairer and more effective manner are all very important steps that can be taken to reduce discrimination around the world.

It is important that there is discourse between people of a variety of genders, age groups and ethnicities. It is important that these groups speak to each other from an equal standing, sharing their experiences, views and beliefs so that others can understand them better. In addition to discourse, activities that multiple groups of people, those of different genders, ages and races, can equally participate in can be employed to improve the relations between different people. This would be quite effective on a community level, due to the fact that assumptions about different groups are a major cause of prejudices and discrimination, and by allowing people from different groups to interact with each other, these assumptions will be cleared, which can stop discriminatory acts from taking place due to simple misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

In addition to this, more countries can introduce legislative measures to combat discrimination in the workplace and in law enforcement. Enacting laws to prevent discrimination in the workplace will prevent things such as unequal pay, the inability to find jobs and the problems that people face from colleagues at work. This will especially be useful for the discrimination of age, due the fact that older people, even though they have no mental or physical limitations, and have the required qualifications find it hard to be employed simply because of their age. Moreover, putting laws to prevent and discrimination in law enforcement is very important, as this will allow people of colour to place more trust in law enforcement authorities, and feel safer in interactions with the police force. It will most likely reduce the cases of racial profiling that are very common today, and will prevent police officers from using their personal biases instead of solid evidence when making a judgement.

Guiding Questions

1. How does this issue affect your delegation, especially in terms of social interaction and in policies and laws that are maintained by the government?



2. Has discrimination against certain groups been normalised in your society, and if so, how have these forms of discrimination been normalised?
3. How has your delegation's history impacted this issue?
4. Do you think that this issue is one that is a systemic issue, or a social issue that is not the responsibility of the government?
5. What initiatives has your country taken in the past, or are currently taking to solve this issue?
6. Do you think that this issue is one that can be effectively solved, or will there always be some form of underlying discrimination?
7. Do you think it is fair that the government imposes anti-discrimination laws on private companies, who should be free to make their own decisions?

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