

November 2022

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Recommended Citation

Menon, Sangeetha and M K, Rema (2022) "Gender Equity: Closing the Gender Gap," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 24: Iss. 7, Article 1.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol24/iss7/1>

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Gender Equity: Closing the Gender Gap

By Sangeetha Menon¹ and Rema M K²

We welcome readers to this special issue of *Journal of International Women's Studies (JIWS)*. The articles presented in this special issue are topics discussed during the 8th Virtual International Conference on “Gender Equity: Barriers, Inclusion and Enablers,” conducted by the Womens’ Empowerment Cell of Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bangalore, India.

A gender gap is defined as gender-based inequality or any disparity in treatment or situation between genders in social, cultural and legal norms and customs. Gender gaps create barriers to gender equity by limiting or restricting women’s access to resources and decision-making opportunities. Means such as violence are used against women to control resources and opportunities, reinforcing power imbalances and gender inequality. Living solely offline in 2022 resembles a bygone era as connectivity and technology have indubitably become integral parts of most people’s daily lives. With governments around the globe imposing lockdowns and movement restrictions to curb COVID-19 infections, businesses and organizations have swiftly adapted to reinvent themselves to survive. This has worsened social, gender, and racial inequality in addition to taking a heavy toll on the global economy, public health, and policymaking. It is now estimated that it would take 135.6 years to achieve gender equality, one generation leap backward from the 99.5 years estimated in 2020.

At this critical juncture, UNDP embarked on a new strategic plan to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and build a more equitable future with an aim to strengthen gender equality enablers – a more inclusive economic system, a more equal social contract, and changing gender norms. The papers presented in the conference broadly reflect the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOCs) in achieving gender equality, which is Goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The papers in this special issue discuss studies and measures in recognizing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies. The issue also discusses women's equal rights to economic resources of land, property, and financial services.

Although the papers relate to gender inequality in the Indian context, it is pertinent to understand that without gender equality and an inclusive role attributed to women in society, economy and governance, a gender equitable future cannot be envisioned and attained. The special issue also includes an article on the fight by women’s and feminist groups for winning social and political rights in Iran by adopting a radically new strategy of “presence-as-resistance” which constitutes an everyday mode of opposition involving public and private spaces. We hope

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² Rema M K has a PhD in Psychology and is an Assistant Professor at Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, India. She is a trained Psychotherapist with experience working in the areas of children, women, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS, family counselling, and people with serious mentally illness. She is an academic and clinical supervisor.

that the special issue addresses the fact that gender inequality and the resulting gaps and barriers are different in every context. So programmes and strategies should be designed with gender and social context in mind for effective ecosystem management.