

Forum: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural

Issue: Promoting women's and minorities' political inclusion

Women:

Definition of Key Terms

Political inclusion : Every citizen, regardless of class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic group or ability is active in democracy and governance.

Democracy : A type of government where representatives elect the leader and government.

Gender equality : Gender equality is a human right. It implies that women, men, boys and girls of all classes and races participate as equals and have equal value. They enjoy equal access to resources, freedoms and opportunities to exercise control.

Patriarchy : A system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line.

Feminism : Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes.

Political representation : Political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" in public policy making processes. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolise, and act on the behalf of others in the political arena.

Women's suffrage : Women's suffrage is the right of women to vote in elections. At the beginning of the 18th century, some people sought to change voting laws to allow women to vote.

Gender quota : A gender quota is a quota used by countries and parties to increase women's representation or substantive equality based on gender in legislatures.

Introduction

Political inclusion is vital for democracy. If some groups are under or not represented at all, democracy can not be considered democracy. Political inclusion for women and minorities is important for the accomplishment of the SDG 5 (Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality). In democracy, women and minorities often have barriers hindering their involvement in politics. Addressing these barriers is very important for sustainable development of the world. In this research report you will find the core information of the topic.

General Overview

All around the world, Minorities face threats, discrimination and racism. They are frequently excluded from participating in the politics of their country. Nowadays, minorities around the world often face policies that impede on their rights. This exclusion from political participation undermines the principles of democracy and leads to the marginalisation of minority voices in decision-making processes. So, in order to maintain democracy, it is important for minorities to gain their needed representation for their participation in legislation and state politics.

Throughout history women's political inclusion has been a gradual and long fought for process. Women have long been marginalised and excluded from political decision making. However over the years there have been several significant milestones in the fight for women's rights and political representation.

Over time, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of women in political positions worldwide, but obstacles still need to be addressed. Despite making up roughly half of the global population, women are frequently underrepresented in positions of political leadership. Only about 25% of parliamentary seats and even fewer executive leadership positions are held by women worldwide. In spite of this, there have been encouraging advancements lately. In an effort to boost the representation of women in politics, numerous nations have enacted gender quotas or other affirmative action policies. Furthermore, the significance of gender equality in political decision-making has come to light more and more. Globally, women's movements and advocacy organisations are still working to increase the number of women in politics and their representation in those positions.

One of the earliest movements for women's political inclusion was the suffrage movement, which aimed to secure women's right to vote. This movement gained

momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with countries like New Zealand, Australia, and the United States granting women the right to vote during this time. The 19th amendment legally guarantees American women the right to vote. Achieving this milestone required a lengthy and difficult struggle—victory took decades of agitation and protest. Beginning in the mid-19th century, several generations of women suffrage supporters lectured, wrote, marched, lobbied, and practiced civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change of the Constitution. Few early supporters lived to see final victory in 1920. Beginning in the 1800s, women organised, petitioned, and picketed to win the right to vote, but it took them decades to accomplish their purpose. In the years following suffrage, women continued to push for greater political inclusion. The rise of feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s brought attention to issues of gender equality and paved the way for more women to enter politics. In 1981, Switzerland became one of the last Western countries to grant women the right to vote in federal elections.

Women's political inclusion in the Vatican

The Vatican City, in Rome, was one of the last places in the world that prevented women from voting. The centre of the Roman Catholic Church, this tiny state only allows cardinals to vote, when a new Pope is elected. While this also means not all men have the right to vote, women are unable to hold any executive or legislative positions in Vatican City elections- whereas men can become cardinals. Up until last year, since its establishment in 1929, women have had no voice in the decision making in the Vatican city. In October of 2023 Pope Francis invited women to add their voices to the Synod of Bishops and announced that women will be allowed to vote on a Vatican panel that had been exclusively led by men up until then. That does not mean he is allowing women to be bishops or priests, but it is still a move that groups like the Women's Ordination Conference have been calling for.

Women's political inclusion in Saudi Arabia

In 2015 Women were allowed to vote for the first time ever in Saudi Arabia and present themselves as candidates. In 2017 the king passed an order that allowed women access to education and healthcare without consent from a guardian (a father, brother, husband or uncle). Women however still continue to face restrictions on their public behaviour, and aren't allowed to make major decisions without male permission. In May 2017, King Salman ordered that women no longer require permission for activities such as entering university, a job or undergoing surgery. However, being so heavily integrated in their society, it is extremely difficult for women to make choices about politics without male permission.

Women's political inclusion in Uganda

In the 2016 elections in Uganda violence against women trying to vote got so concerning that control centres had to be set up for protection. However this received over 600 complaints from women that this only discouraged women from voting, causing delays and ending up in forcing women to go back to domestic duties.

Women's political inclusion in Egypt

Women in Egypt have had the right to vote since 1956, however women face similar barriers to other patriarchal countries. One specific rule, put forward in 2015, banned women from voting in 'revealing attire' but despite the process insisting they remove their niqab veil to be identified. Essentially, women must now fear having to remove their veil- which they aren't traditionally allowed to do in public- if they wish to vote.

In 2016 and 2017, the Egyptian government moved towards banning the burka stating it isn't Islamic tradition or required by the Koran. However, for some women it is a personal, not enforced, choice and therefore the requirement to remove it for voting still remains an issue.

Women's political inclusion in the USA

In the United States, the women's suffrage movement was a significant milestone in the fight for women's rights. Led by activists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the movement culminated in the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote. Since then, women in the US have continued to push for greater political representation, leading to the election of the first female vice president, Kamala Harris, in 2020.

Women's political inclusion in Sweden

In Sweden, women have a long history of political activism and participation. Sweden was one of the first countries to grant women the right to vote in 1919. The country has a strong tradition of gender equality and has implemented policies to promote women's representation in politics. Sweden has consistently ranked high in global gender equality indexes and has a relatively high proportion of women in parliament. The country also has a feminist government, led by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, which has prioritised gender equality and women's rights in its policies.

How Media affects women's political inclusion

The public's perceptions and political discourse are greatly shaped by the media, and this can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on the political inclusion of women. The way women are portrayed in the media can affect how society perceives them, which can affect their access to leadership positions and political arenas.

On one hand, media representation can help raise awareness about the issues faced by women in politics, bringing attention to the need for greater diversity and inclusion. Good representations of women in politics can act as role models for others from marginalized groups, encouraging them to get involved in politics and run for office. Additionally, media coverage of gender and diversity issues can generate public discussions and push for policy changes that promote greater inclusivity in politics.

However, the media can also perpetuate stereotypes and biases that marginalise women in politics. Negative or limited portrayals of women political figures can reinforce existing prejudices and undermine their credibility and authority. Moreover, the lack of representation and diverse perspectives in media coverage can contribute to the erasure of the voices and experiences of women in political decision-making processes.

Timeline of Events

Issue Women's political inclusion

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| July 1911 | Julieta Lanteri becomes the first woman to vote in Latin America. |
| November 1917 | 33 Suffragists were beaten and tortured in prison after picketing Outside the White House for the right to vote. |
| 1917 | The Russian government grants women's suffrage and allows Women the right to hold public office. |

- August 1920** The 19th Amendment was ratified.
- September 1947** Argentina granted women the right to vote.
- 1948** South Korea The Constitution restricts discrimination
- 1948** India grants women's suffrage shortly after British Independence
- 1953** Full citizenship and suffrage of Mexican women
- 1953** The UN hosts the convention on the political rights of women in New York, NY.
- 1980** Vigdís Finnbogadóttir becomes the first elected female President of a country.
- January 2021** Kamala Harris becomes the first black female vice president in the United States of America.

Minorities:

Definition of Key Terms:

Minority: An ethnic, religious or linguistic minority is any group of persons which constitutes less than half of the population in the entire territory of a State whose members share common characteristics of culture, religion or language, or a combination of any of these. A person can freely belong to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority without any requirement of citizenship, residence, official recognition or any other status.

Gerrymandering: When the government divides election districts to give a party an advantage in elections.

Representative democracy: Citizens of a country vote for representatives to handle legislation.

Bidun: Stateless people in the Middle East.

Likud: Right wing Israeli political party.

Introduction:

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General overview:

People of minorities can be politically excluded in many ways such as:

Denial of citizenship remains a global issue, where individuals of certain races encounter barriers to citizenship in other nations solely because of their ethnicity. This exclusion effectively marginalises them from participating in their country's political processes. Examples are widespread, including the discrimination faced by ethnic Russians in Latvia, ethnic Nepalis in Bhutan, Rohingya Muslims in

Myanmar, ethnic Banyawandas in the DRC, ethnic Eritreans in Ethiopia, Biduns in Kuwait, and ethnic Kurds in Syria.

Gerrymandering is a common practice in representative democracies, involving the manipulation of electoral district boundaries to favour one political party over others. This manipulation often results in an unfair advantage for a particular party during elections. This phenomenon occurs globally, such as in France, where legislative bodies have unchecked authority to redraw district boundaries to suit their interests.

Voter suppression tactics are utilised to influence election outcomes by disenfranchising specific groups of people. These tactics take various forms, including intimidation, violence, disqualification of votes, confusing ballot designs, and imposing significant logistical hurdles, such as requiring citizens to travel long distances to cast their votes. Instances of voter suppression occur in countries like Brazil, where police efforts in 2022 aimed to hinder lower-class individuals from voting, Canada, where false calls misdirecting voters to nonexistent polling stations occurred in 2011, and Israel, where secret cameras installed by Likud activists during the 2019 elections raised concerns about voter intimidation and privacy violations.

Major parties involved:

United States of America:

One of the founding principles of the United States of America was equality between everyone, even though black people couldn't vote until 1870, Almost 100 years after the independence of the United States of America in 1776, as the 14th and 15th amendments, which gave black people citizenship and the right to vote. After the civil war southern states kept on making it difficult for black people to vote, like with 'black codes', or laws that only affect black people. These were used to circumvent the 13th amendment, which banned slavery, by making the black people legal prisoners, thus allowing them to do free labour. Some states, like Oregon, had constitutions that explicitly disenfranchised black and Chinese people. Oregon's government also denied the 14th and 15th amendment until 1959. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was made, explicitly prohibiting Chinese people from becoming citizens. In 1965 the Voting Rights Act was made to give every citizen Voting rights. In 2012, the Shelby County v. Holder court case made A change to the Voting Rights Act which allowed the use of Voter IDs which needed a photo of the voter. It often didn't recognise non-whites. Now, even

though the United States of America stands for political inclusion of minorities, it still has many flaws within its own borders.

European Union:

The European Union's biggest minority is the Roma group, with around 6 million Roma people living in the EU. Around 80% of all Roma in the EU live in poverty, much higher than the EU's average of 21%. Also, the Roma life expectancy is 11 years lower than the rest of the EU. As most Roma are very poor compared to EU citizens, they are often socio-economically excluded. Ever since the 1990s, the EU has been stressing about this issue. In March 2021, the EU set new recommendations for the Roma peoples' living conditions. Just like the USA, the EU stands for political inclusion of minorities but has its set of problems it needs to fix.

India:

For thousands of years, lots of people from different ethnicities migrated to India, starting with Indo-Aryan tribes around 5 '000 years ago. Ever since then, lots of Arabs, Turks, central Asians and Thai people have migrated there.

At around 1 '500 BCE, The caste system started in India, where there were socially and politically dominant groups, and socially and politically excluded 'outcastes', now known as Dalits and Adivasis. When lots of Turks, central Asians and Arabs came, Islam was introduced, and lots of the 'outcastes' converted to Muslim.

Across northern and eastern India Islam became very popular. Because of this, Muslims, although a minority, ruled India with the Mughal empire. The Mughal empire was very religiously tolerant. When the Mughal empire broke up, there were many Hindu chieftains that had circles of influence, ending Muslim rule in India in the late 17th century.

Muslims and Hindus lived peacefully together until British rule. At first, the British didn't interfere in social matters, until in 1857 Muslims and Hindus banded together to try to oust the British. After that, the British started turning Hindus against Muslims, such as with classifying communities by religion. The British partition of India and Pakistan further complicated issues such as religious violence. The partition led to 1 to 2 million deaths and 15 millions displaced people.

Partition also turned India from a multicultural and multi-ethnic country into a Hindu country. Violence against Minorities peaked in the 1980s with attacks against Bengali Muslims in Assam, Sikhs in Delhi and Muslims in many parts of India. The BJP party, a right wing Hindu nationalist party, also rose in the 1980s and the current prime minister, Narendra Modi, belongs to this party.

In recent years there has been rising hostility against India's minorities from right wing Hindu groups.

India was built as a multicultural county, but as a result of colonialism it has become divided, and although a democracy, minorities are facing lots of trouble.

Timeline of events:

509-507 BCE: First democracy developed in Athens, Greece. Even though it was the first democracy, there was a lot of exclusion: Only adult male Athenian citizens could vote. Only around 10%-20% of all Athenians were in this group. During this time democracy also developed in the Roman republic. In the Roman Republic only a small number of citizens Participated in the political assemblies.

1787 CE: The United States Constitution was written, making the USA the first democracy after the fall of the Roman Republic. However, only property-owning or tax-paying white males could vote (about 6% of the population back then).

1848: Switzerland became a democracy, even though women, poor people and Jewish people couldn't vote.

1945: The UN was created, which is an organisation which promotes democracy.

1965: Racial discrimination in voting is banned in the USA with the 'Voting Rights Act'.

1976: The Australian government passed the 'Aboriginal Land Rights Act', giving indigenous people representation in decision making bodies.

1994: South Africa hosted its first multiracial elections, ending the apartheid.

2010: LGBT+ individuals were recognized by Nepal's Supreme court, thus giving them representation.

2018: Disabled people gain representation in Kenya with the 'Persons with Disabilities Act'.

As seen in this timeline, the situation of minority representation and inclusion in politics is improving, however it is improving too slowly as millions of people

worldwide still aren't included in state politics just because of their race, sexuality or gender.

Possible solutions:

Denial of citizenship: Ways to stop the denial of citizenship can be by focusing on stopping statelessness such as by making sure every human being has the citizenship of one country. Conflict resolutions should also look at the people who got their citizenship removed because of the conflict. It should also be recognized, that racial denial of citizenship can lead to human rights abuse, genocide or armed conflicts.

Gerrymandering: Gerrymandering can be solved by having unbiased parties making election districts, by passing laws against Gerrymandering and by having district changes being shown to the public.

Voter suppression: Voter suppression can be solved in ways such as by allowing Vote-by-Mail, having unbiased police forces protect the ballots or by having more transparent election results.

Ways to include Minorities into politics are also giving them more representation or encouraging them to participate in politics.

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