



Empowering Women and Advancing Equality: The Intersection of Women's Status and Gender Equality in India

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Abstract

This article examines women's participation and leadership in India, focusing on gender equality. Data reveals underrepresentation in various sectors: Indian armed forces (6.7%-13.69%), political positions (14.37%-19.87%), women-led businesses (20%), and tertiary education enrolment (26.4%). Challenges include stereotypes, limited access to resources, cultural norms, gender-based violence, and discriminatory policies. Strategies proposed for change: affirmative action, inclusive policies, gender sensitivity, health and safety measures, media representation, and increased women's representation in decision-making. Achieving these goals will foster an inclusive and equitable society, empowering women and advancing gender equality in India.

Keywords

Gender equality, women's participation, leadership, challenges, empowerment,

Introduction

For decades, India has been a patriarchal society where men have held most of the power and influence in various spheres of life, while women have been marginalized and excluded from many opportunities. However, in recent times, India's social, cultural, and political landscape has undergone a significant shift with more women participating and leading in various fields. Women in India have broken down several barriers and made significant strides in areas ranging from politics to sports, business to entertainment, and others. Despite this progress, there is still a long way to go in terms of achieving true gender equality in the country. Women continue to face various forms of discrimination and biases, hindering their participation and growth in several fields. This article explores the current status of women's participation and leadership in India, the challenges they face, the progress made so far, and the way forward to achieving true gender equality in the country. Additionally, it presents statistics showcasing the representation of women in various fields in India, providing a clear picture of the existing gaps and the need for change.

Background

The issue of women's participation and leadership in India has been the subject of research and discussion for many years. Historically, Indian society was ruled by patriarchy, which held most of the power and influence in many aspects of life, including politics, business, and lifestyle. This results in women being marginalized and excluded many times over. However, we have put a lot of effort into empowering women and giving them more opportunities to participate and lead many things. Indian law provides equal rights and opportunities to men and women. In addition, the



government has initiated many policies and programs to promote women's education, health and empowerment. Despite these efforts, the gender gap remains significant in India. Women continue to be exposed to many forms of discrimination and discrimination that hinders their participation and development in every field. Many studies have shown that Indian women are still underrepresented in many fields such as politics, business and sports. To address this issue, many organizations, activists and policy makers are working to promote women's participation and leadership in India.

There are several strategies to empower women and create a more inclusive society where women have equal opportunities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the current status of women's participation and leadership in various fields in India, including politics, business, sports, and entertainment.
2. To identify the challenges and barriers faced by women in India in terms of participation and leadership.
3. To highlight the importance of gender equality and the need for creating a more inclusive and equitable society in India.
4. To suggest strategies and policies for promoting women's participation and leadership in India and closing the gender gap.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender stereo types and biases limit women's participation and leadership in various fields in India.
2. Women face unique challenges and barriers in different fields in India, such as politics, business, and sports, which hinder their ability to succeed and achieve leadership positions.
3. The representation of women in leadership positions in India is disproportionately low compared to their male counterparts, with significant disparities across different fields and industries.
4. Government policies and programs aimed at promoting women's participation and leadership in India are not effectively implemented, resulting in limited progress towards gender equality.

Methodology

This analysis utilizes the latest available data from government sources, international agencies, and credible research institutions to assess women's participation across diverse sectors including politics, military, business, sports, education, and entertainment. Quantitative representation in different fields is presented through data tables. Key policies and milestones are analyzed to reflection progress. Persistent challenges are identified based on scholarly research and reports. Proposed strategies are informed by evidence-based recommendations.

Key Findings and Analysis

An evaluation of the data on women's representation reveals that while some positive trends are visible, there remain considerable gender disparities in leadership roles across diverse sectors. To provide a detailed understanding of the status of women's participation and leadership, this section presents data tables highlighting women's representation in areas like politics, military, business, education, sports, and entertainment. The data has been collated from authoritative government and industry sources. A sample of key indicators is presented to showcase the gender gaps across different domains. An analysis of the data follows.



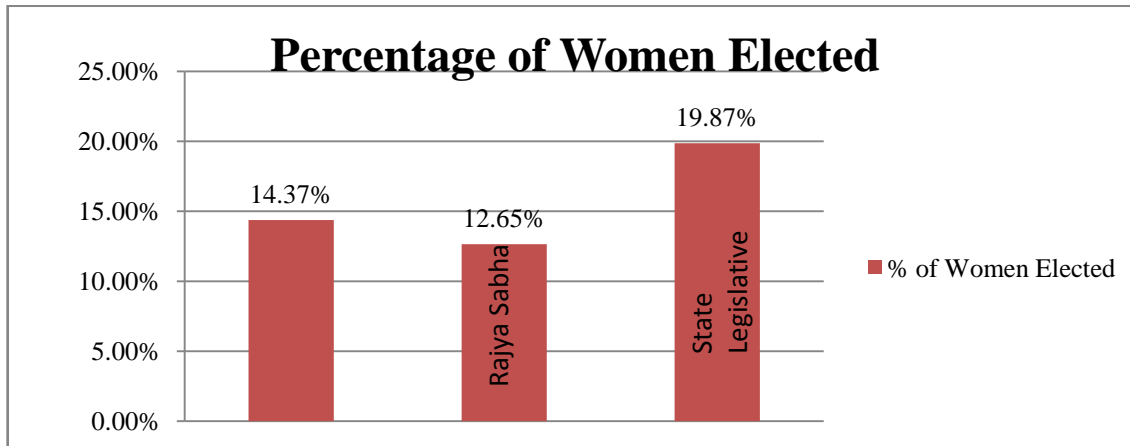
Politics

While quotas have increased women’s representation in local governments, progress at higher levels remains slow due to persisting gender biases, lack of financial resources, and violence targeting women in politics. More affirmative action, political party reforms, and shifting societal attitudes are vital to enhance women’s political participation.

Table 1: Women’s Representation in Indian Politics

Position	Total Seats	Women Candidates	Women Elected	% of Women Elected
Lok Sabha	543	724 (13.32%)	78 (14.37%)	14.37%
Rajya Sabha	245	64 (26.12%)	31 (12.65%)	12.65%
State Legislative Assemblies	4120	5726 (14.20%)	819 (20.16%)	19.87%

Sources: Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Election Commission of India



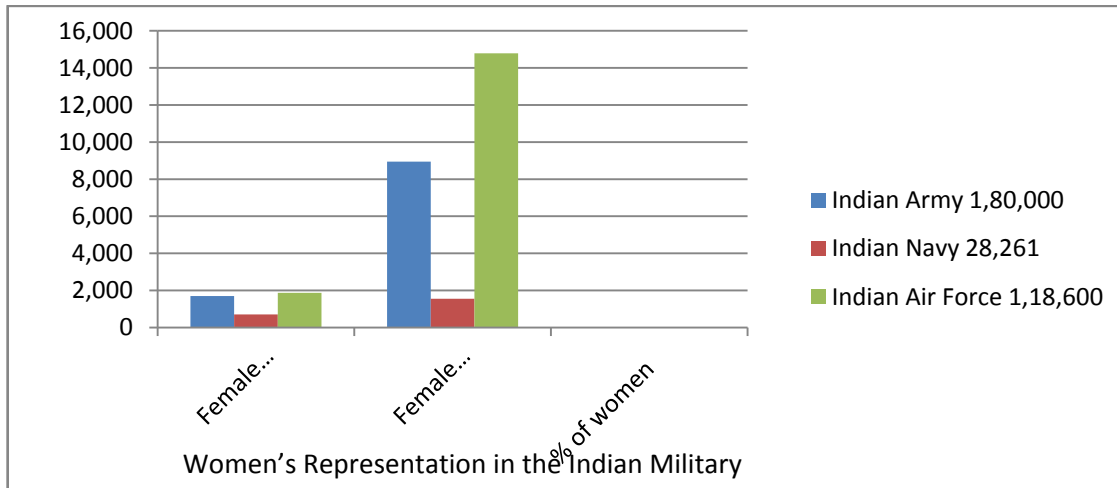
Military

Despite opening all military roles to women, their representation remains low at just 6.5% currently. As table 2 highlights, the Indian Army and Navy have fewer than 7% women, while the Air force forces slightly better at 13.7%. The lack of separate facilities, scaling physical standards, stereotypes questioning women’s abilities. Focused efforts on recruitment, infrastructure upgrades, and sensitization trainings, enforcing codes of conduct, and targeted mentorship programs can create a more inclusive environment and enhance opportunities for women.

Table 2: Women’s Representation in the Indian Military (2022)

Branch	Total workforce	Female officers	Female soldiers/sailors/airmen	% of women
Indian Army	1,80,000	1,698	8,944	6.70%
Indian Navy	28,261	704	1,555	6.00%
Indian Air Force	1,18,600	1,875	14,788	13.69%

Source: Ministry of Defence, Government of India



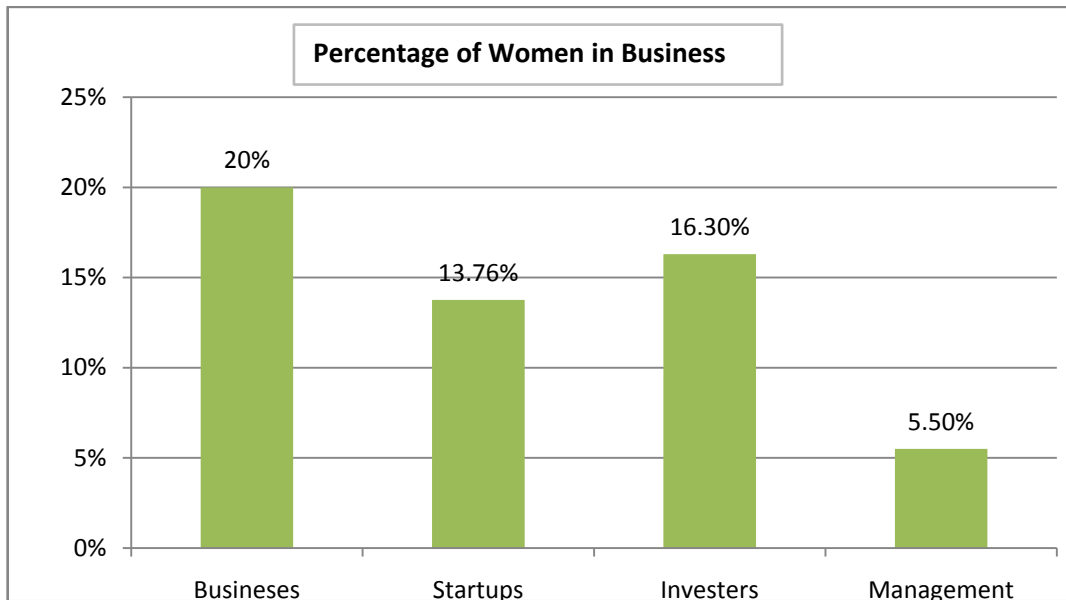
Business

Women remain under represented in India’s business leadership, constituting 17% of senior management roles. As table 3 shows, only 16% of investors and 15% of board seats in top companies are occupied by women. The high cost of balancing work, family obligations, muted organizational support for women, and unconscious gender biases are key deterrents.

Table 3: Women’s Participation in Indian Business

Indicator	Value
Women-led businesses (out of all businesses)	20%
Women-founded startups (out of all startups)	13.76%
Women investors (out of all investors)	16.30%
Women in senior management (private sector companies)	5.50%

Source : "Powering The Economy With Her-Women Entrepreneurship in India" (2021).



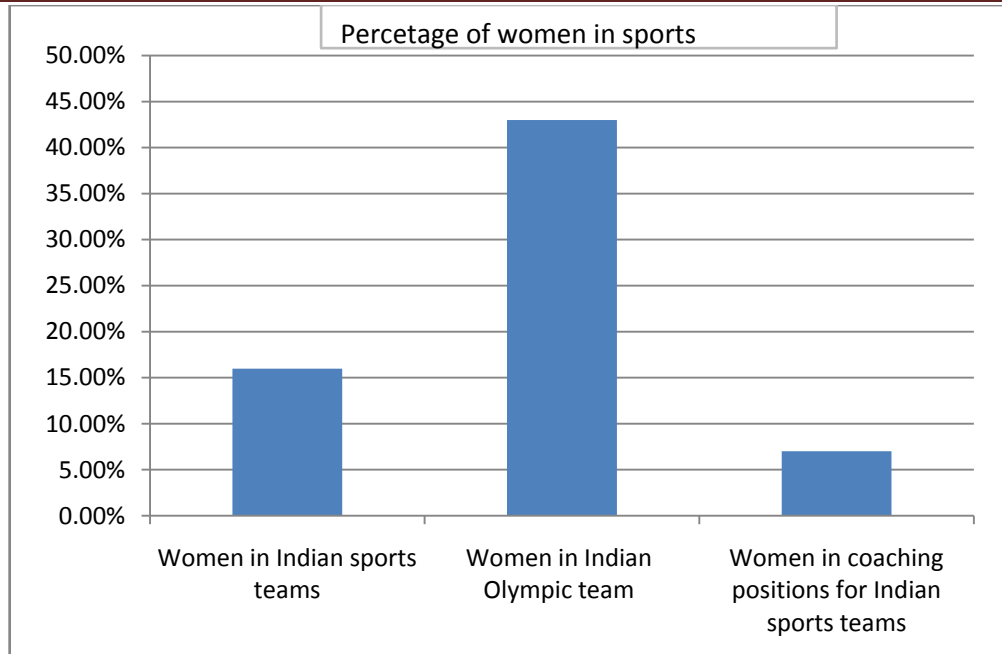
Sports

Despite improved participation, women constitute just 16% of the athletes in major sports teams as per table 4. Coaching roles remain heavily male-dominated, with women occupying just 7% of such positions currently. Systematically nurturing talent through training academies for women, providing coaching and mentoring support, and addressing safety concerns can encourage more active participation. Media campaigns celebrating women athletes as role models are equally important.

Table 4: Women’s Participation in Indian Sports

Indicator	Value or %
Women in Indian sports teams (total participation)	15.98% (2021)
Women in Indian Olympic team (total participation)	43% (2021)
Women in coaching positions for Indian sports teams	7% (2021)

Source: Women in Sports Foundation, India



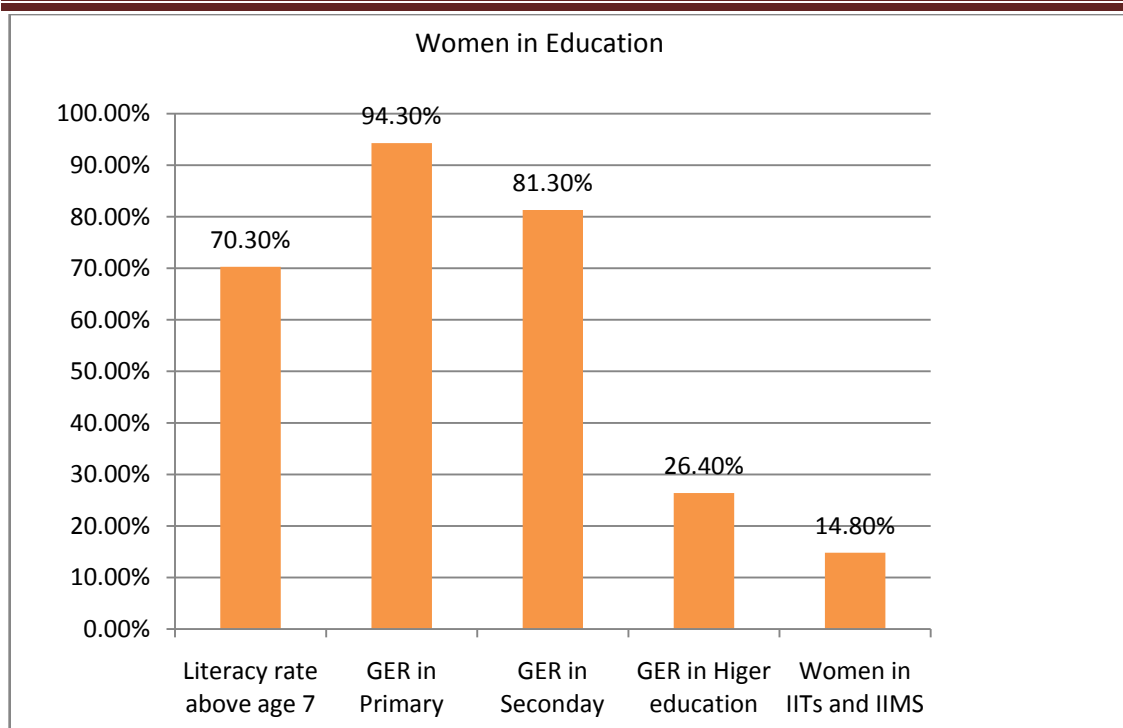
Education

Here, India has made significant progress, with women comprising 70% of graduates and about 50% of postgraduates. As table 5 indicates, 94% of girls complete primary schooling. But dropout rates increase at higher levels, with just 26% enrolled in tertiary education. Quality improvements, curbing school dropout rates by tackling underlying socioeconomic reasons, and pursuing higher education remain priorities. Targeted scholarships and safe transport facilities can enhance access for economically and socially marginalized girls.

Table 5: Women’s Education in India

Indicator	Value or %
Literacy rate among women (age 7 and above)	70.3% (2021)
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in primary education for girls	94.3% (2021)
GER in secondary education for girls	81.3% (2021)
GER in tertiary education for women	26.4% (2021)
Women in IITs and IIMs (total enrolment)	14.8% (2021)

Source: Ministry of Education, AISHE



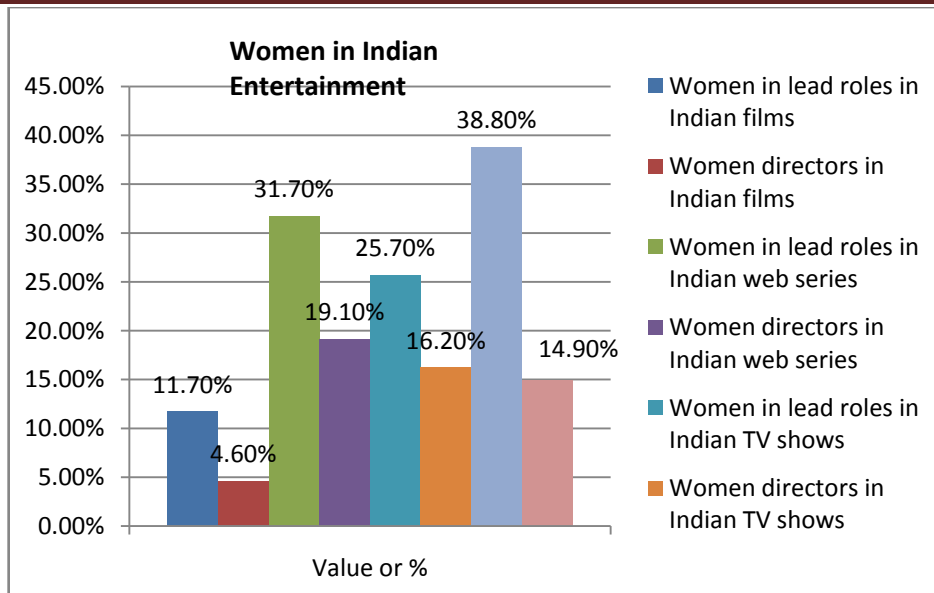
Entertainment

Despite the spotlight on women-led films, women comprised just 11.7% of lead actors in Indian films in 2020 (table 6). The figures for women directors across cinema, television, and advertising remain dismal, ranging from 4.6% to 19.1%. To transform the underrepresentation, the industry needs more women in key creative and leadership roles. Enabling policies on anti-harassment, pay parity, and workplace inclusion can enhance participation.

Table 6: Women’s Representation in Indian Entertainment

Indicator	Value or %
Women in lead roles in Indian films	11.7% (2020)
Women directors in Indian films	4.6% (2020)
Women in lead roles in Indian web series	31.7% (2020)
Women directors in Indian web series	19.1% (2020)
Women in lead roles in Indian TV shows	25.7% (2020)
Women directors in Indian TV shows	16.2% (2020)
Women in lead roles in Indian advertisements	38.8% (2020)
Women directors in Indian advertisements	14.9% (2020)

Sources: FICCI-EY report "The Era of Consumer A.R.T.: Acquisition, Retention, Transaction" (2021); Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media "Gender in Indian Advertising" (2020)



Based on the data provided in the tables, it can be observed that women's participation in various sectors in India has been low, but there have been some improvements over the years. While there have been some improvements in women's participation in various sectors in India, there is still a long way to go in achieving gender equality and increasing women's representation in various fields.

Certainly! Women in India face a number of challenges and barriers when it comes to participation and leadership. Here are some of the key ones:

1. Gender stereotypes and biases: Traditional gender stereotypes and biases can lead to women being perceived as less capable of leadership positions, especially in male-dominated fields.
2. Lack of access to education: Although there have been improvements, women in India still have lower levels of education than men, and many girls drop out of school due to poverty, early marriage, or other factors.
3. Limited access to resources: Women in India often face limited access to resources such as finance, technology, and training, which can limit their ability to start and grow businesses or pursue leadership positions.
4. Cultural and societal norms: Many cultural and societal norms in India emphasize women's roles as caregivers and homemakers, which can limit their opportunities to pursue careers or participate in public life.
5. Gender-based violence: High levels of gender-based violence in India can make it difficult for women to participate in public life and leadership roles.
6. Discriminatory laws and policies: Despite legal protections, women in India still face discrimination in various forms, such as unequal pay, limited property rights, and restricted access to certain jobs.
7. Lack of representation: Women are often underrepresented in positions of power and leadership, which can limit their ability to advocate for their needs and priorities and influence policy and decision-making processes.

Addressing these challenges and barriers requires a multi-faceted approach that includes changes to societal norms, policies and laws that promote gender equality, increased access to education and



resources, and greater representation of women in leadership positions.

Highlight on importance of gender equality and the need for creating a more inclusive and equitable society in India.

Gender equality is crucial in India to build a more inclusive and equitable society. It ensures that everyone has an equal chance to access education, employment, and leadership positions irrespective of their gender. Empowering women can lead to economic growth, innovation, and social development and it can create positive impacts on families and communities.

Creating an equitable society means dismantling traditional gender roles and addressing gender-based discrimination and violence. This requires implementing policies and laws that promote gender equality and guarantee equal access to education, employment, and leadership positions for women. It also involves addressing cultural and societal norms that reinforce gender stereotypes and biases and promoting gender sensitivity and awareness.

Gender equality brings numerous benefits, including increased economic growth, better health outcomes, and greater political stability. Moreover, promoting gender equality can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as women's empowerment is critical to reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and building resilient communities.

To create a more inclusive and equitable society in India, there must be a strong commitment to gender equality and a willingness to confront the obstacles and challenges women face. Promoting gender equality means building a fairer and more prosperous society for everyone.

Here are some strategies and policies that can help promote women's participation and leadership in India and close the gender gap:

- **Education and Training:** Providing education and training programs that focus on developing women's leadership skills and increasing their access to opportunities in various fields. This can include programs that help girls and women acquire necessary skills, such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and vocational training, to improve their employability.
- **Affirmative Action:** Implementing affirmative action policies that reserve seats for women in educational institutions, jobs, and political positions. This can help increase the representation of women in leadership positions and break down traditional gender roles and stereotypes.
- **Inclusive Policies:** Developing and implementing inclusive policies that promote gender equality in various spheres, such as employment, education, health, and politics. This can include policies that provide equal pay for equal work, maternity leave, and flexible work arrangements to support working mothers.
- **Women's Health and Safety:** Addressing the health and safety concerns of women by improving access to healthcare and developing policies and programs to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- **Gender Sensitivity and Awareness:** Promoting gender sensitivity and awareness among all sectors of society, including government, the media, and the private sector, to break down traditional gender roles and stereotypes.



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- **Media Representation:** Promoting positive representations of women in media and advertising, highlighting their achievements and contributions to society. This can help break down gender stereotypes and biases and promote a more equitable society.
 - **Increasing Women's Representation in Decision-Making:** Ensuring that women are represented in decision-making processes at all levels, from local to national. This can include reserving seats for women in elected bodies, appointing women to leadership positions, and promoting women's participation in civil society and advocacy organizations.

Overall, these strategies and policies can help create a more equitable and inclusive societies in India, where women have equal opportunities to participate and lead in various fields, close the gender gap, and promote gender equality.

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