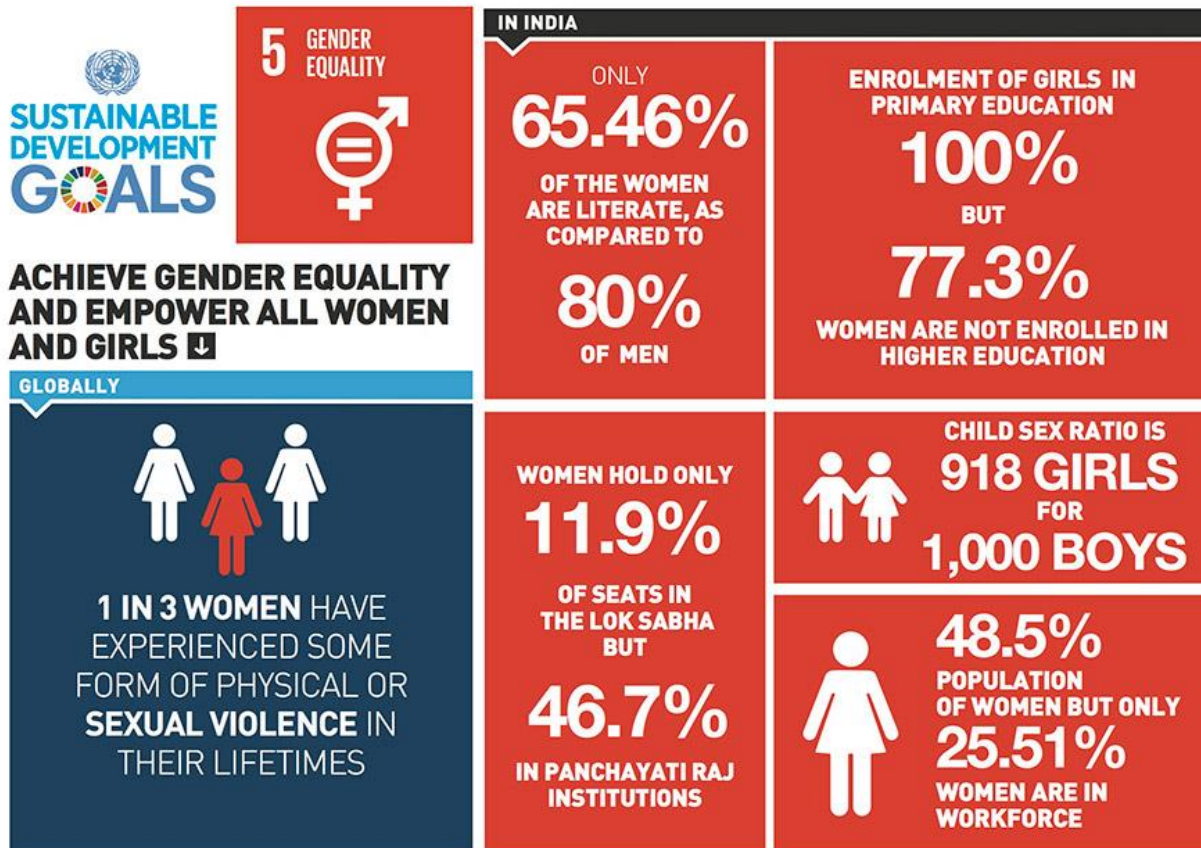


Equality is Achievable



In celebration of International Women's Day March 8, 2018, our class attended a presentation of Ms. Gail Binley-Taylor Sainte, former senior information officer at the United Nations Department of Public Information, who talked about the role of women in society and the ways in which we can strive for a more equal future. During her presentation, she shared striking statistics that highlight the existence and gravity of gender inequality at home, and around the world. For instance, there is a 23 percent pay gap between men and women worldwide. The U.S. pictures itself as a beacon of justice and equality, but ranks only 100th (out of 193 nations) in female representation in parliament. Whereas Rwanda, a country often vilified for ethnic strife and instability, ranks 1st in female representation in parliament (due to an equality mandate following the Rwandan genocide). Both countries have differing histories and cultural backgrounds that lead to their current state of being, but this tremendous difference in female congressional representation does raise some interesting questions. Can gender equality in congressional representation be achieved? What does equality mean for policy?

Next, Ms. Sainte spoke about the growing cultural movement toward a more equal future. She talked about the social impact of the Women's March that took place after the election of far-right demagogue Donald Trump. Despite the tremendous amount of division and racial prejudice that was exposed by his dubious election, women of the U.S. (as well as women around the world) marched in unshaking solidarity. It was a social demonstration to display the power of the voice of the people. After all, people are intended to be the source of political power in a democratic society. She also spoke about the growing importance of the internet in political movements. The instantaneous spread of information has led to numerous social movements. One such movement is the #MeToo campaign that exposes the breadth and depth of sexual harassment and sexual violence in our culture.

International Women's Day began in 1911 in Western Europe, to advocate working and voting rights for women, but it has since moved to new fronts. We face new and different challenges in the struggle for equality. Everyone can make a difference in this issue, regardless of their social position. Men, in particular, have an obligation to fight for equality. Inequality is detrimental to all, even those who benefit from it. It undermines the fabric of society, creating rifts and hatred that almost always comes to a head. Franklin D. Roosevelt said in a 1942 Flag Day radio address "If our brothers are oppressed, then we are oppressed. If they hunger, we hunger. If their freedom is taken away, our freedom is not secure." This is as true today as it was during the greatest cataclysm in the history of humankind. We must fight inequality wherever it appears. We must unite as one or fall as many.

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