

MEDIMUN XII Annual Session 2017



RESEARCH REPORT – GA2

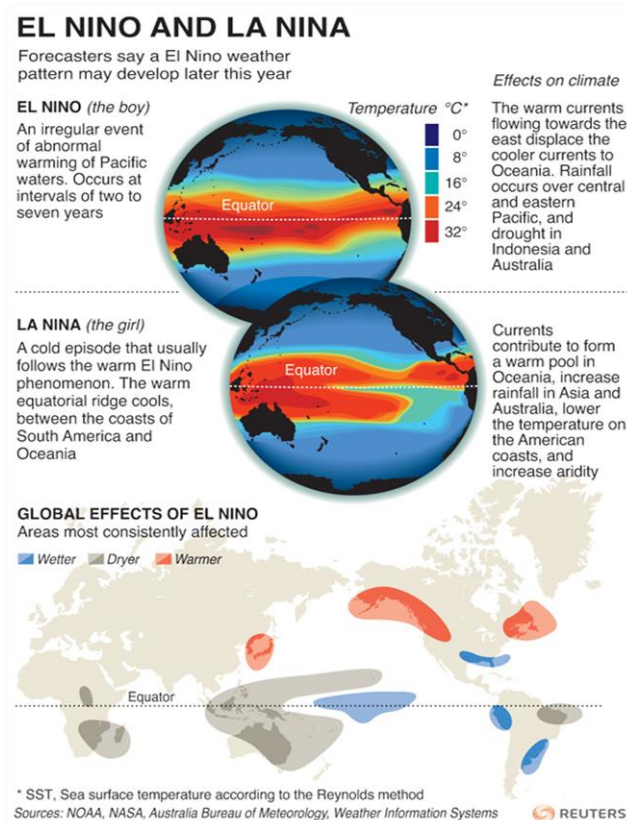
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Topic 1: Combatting the effects of El Nino and La Nina on vulnerable urban populations

Introduction:

When coming across the term, El Nino and La Nina one finds a series of normally occurring weather phenomena. But only when taking a closer look one can truly understand their devastating effects. These almost unpredictable warming and cooling periods are the leading causes of a multitude of natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes and droughts which have devastating effects on agriculture, biodiversity, infrastructure and threatens people's livelihoods. The most recent El Nino that has persisted through 2016 has led to 2014 and 2015 being one of the warmest years on record, contributing to world hunger since over 60 million people face hunger, malnutrition in 2016 due to drought effects influenced by ENSO, with Africa worst hit, Indochina facing severe drop in food production, and Ethiopia counting 10 million people at risk. This is owed to the fact that El Nino causes some areas of the world to be dryer, wetter or warmer than normal as shown in the figure above. Another way to examine the effects of El Nino and La Nina are through their effects on coastal urban populations, who have to face major flooding and hurricanes which pose a threat to infrastructure that cost millions to repair – prime examples being torrential rains in Peru and huge storms pounding the coast of California.



Definition of Key Terms:

- **El Nino:** is a naturally occurring phenomenon that is linked to a periodic warming in sea surface temperatures across the central and east-central Equatorial Pacific.
- **La Nina:** La Niña conditions occur when there are colder than normal waters over the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean and a piling up of

warm waters in the west

- **El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO):** is an irregularly periodical variation in winds and sea surface temperatures over the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean, affecting much of the tropics and subtropics. The warming phase is known as El Niño and the cooling phase as La Niña. Both extremes appear to be part of the same phenomenon.
- **World Meteorological Organization (WMO):** The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It is the UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces and the resulting distribution of water resources. It provides a framework for international cooperation in the development of meteorology and operational hydrology and their practical application. It publishes quasi-quarterly updates on El Nino and La Nina patterns.
- **Oceanic Nino Index:** A set of data used by scientists to measure the differences in normal sea surface temperatures. In this case the data is used to measure the deviations from normal sea-surface temperatures that El Niño and La Niña produce in the east-central Pacific Ocean.
- **Upwelling:** process by which currents bring cold, nutrient-rich water to the ocean surface.
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA):** U.S. Department of Commerce agency whose mission is to "understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts; to share that knowledge and information with others, and; to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources."
- **Walker circulation:** The walker circulation is a conceptual model of the air flow in the tropics in the troposphere (lower atmosphere). This is caused by heat distributions and differences between oceans and land.

General Overview:

El Nino and La Nina weather phenomena are part of the walker circulation and typically last nine to 12 months. The presence of both can significantly influence ocean conditions and weather patterns across large portions of the globe. Although there are many meteorological societies that use indexes and

environmental proxies such as the **Oceanic Nino Index** to accurately predict the size and the strength of an El Nino or La Nina phase, the phenomena are exceedingly difficult to accurately predict even though organizations such as the **WMO** and **NOAA** collaborate with each other to properly prepare for such events. Hence, it is safe to say that the danger that comes from the effects of the **ENSO** comes its unpredictability which leaves populations vulnerable to its effects.

When looking back at recent history of El Nino and La Nina occurrences one cannot omit the historic "Super El Niño" of 1997-1998. In February 1998, a series of storms caused an estimated \$550 million in damage and killed 17 people in California. A total of 35 counties were declared federal disaster areas in that year. In Indonesia, El Niño related drought brought large scale environmental degradation from uncontrolled fires in October 1997. The droughts had impact on the whole populations as they could no longer afford the skyrocketed prices of agricultural goods leading to famine and devastation.

There is a certain comparison that is drawn from what happened in during the 1997-1998 El Nino and La Nina to the current El Nino and La Nina phase which began in late 2014 since WMO declared this one to be one of the strongest phases since the first measured data in 1950. The current El Niño has already affected millions of people and comes on top of already volatile and erratic weather patterns linked to climate change. 2014 and 2015 were the hottest years on record, with the Pacific Ocean already warming up to an unprecedented degree.

El Niño-affected communities need immediate and intensified assistance that takes into account long-term impacts. Funds are urgently being sought to alleviate suffering and provide life-saving assistance. The total amount needed by governments, aid agencies and partners to address urgent El Niño-linked humanitarian needs globally stands at USD \$5 billion. To date, USD \$1.9 billion has been raised, leaving a funding gap of USD \$3.1 billion which is a major issue plaguing the world today.

Major Parties Involved

El Niño and La Nina affect atmospheric pressure and temperature, rainfall and ocean temperature. In Europe, El Niño reduces the number of autumnal hurricanes. La Niña has less of an effect in Europe but it does tend to lead to milder winters in Northern Europe (the United Kingdom especially) and colder

winters in southern/western Europe leading to snow in the Mediterranean region. Elsewhere in the world, areas that are affected by La Niña experience the opposite of the effects they experience with El Niño. It is continental North America where most of these conditions are felt. The wider effects include:

- Stronger winds along the equatorial region, especially in the Pacific
- Decreased convection in the Pacific leading to a weaker jet stream
- temperatures are above average in the southeast and below average in the northwest
- Conditions are more favourable for hurricanes in the Caribbean and central Atlantic area
- Greater instances of tornados in those states of the US already vulnerable to them

In the western Pacific, the formation of cyclones shifts westwards which increases the potential for landfall in those areas most vulnerable to their affects, and especially into continental Asia and China. There is greater rainfall in the west too, especially in Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia and further westwards toward the southern countries in the African continent. Consequently, over the US and Canada there will be lower than average precipitation and this pattern follows the coast southwards where the western portion of South America will also experience lower than average rainfall.

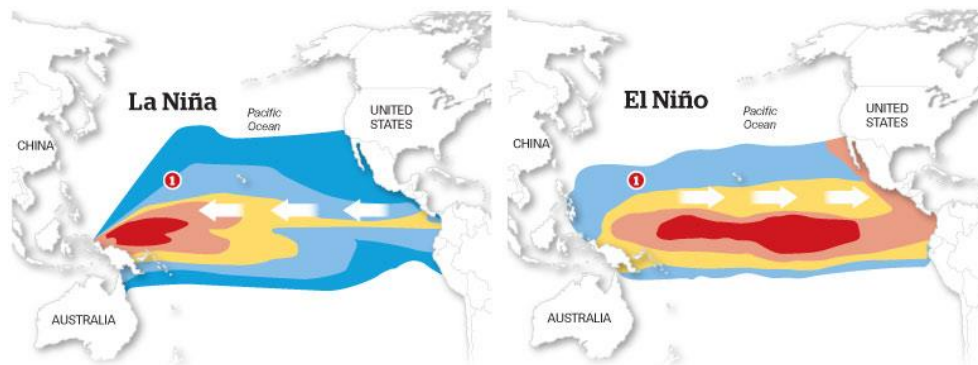
Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In the most recent case of El Niño in the winter of 2015-2016 a variety of indices are used to characterize ENSO because it effects so many elements of the atmosphere-ocean climate system. Probably the two principal indices are the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI), which is given by the difference in sea-level pressure between Tahiti and Darwin, Australia, and the Nino 3 index, which refers to the anomalous SST within the region bounded by 5°N-5°S and 150°W-90°W. The measurements needed for these indices are straightforward, and we have long historical records, especially for the SOI.

Possible Solutions:

El Niño and La Niña cannot be prevented as they are naturally occurring climate patterns and humans have no direct ability to influence their onset, intensity, or duration.

However, scientists can often predict the onset of El Niño and La Niña several months to a year in advance, thanks to modern climate models (such as those used by NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Prediction) and observation data from the Tropical Pacific Observing System (which includes sensors on satellites, ocean buoys, and radiosondes), which constantly monitors changing conditions in the ocean and atmosphere. Without these tools we wouldn't be able to detect or predict the onset of El Niño or La Niña.



Appendix/Appendices

Appendix 1:

NOAA stands for The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an American scientific agency within the United States Department of Commerce focused on the conditions of the oceans and the atmosphere.

Sources

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Topic 2: Measures to combat the global youth unemployment crisis

Introduction

Young people across the globe are more likely to be plagued by unemployment for at least the next decade compared to people of other ages or previous generations of youth. (1)

One billion youth, defined as people 15 to 29, are expected to look for jobs in the next 10 years, but only 40 percent of them will be able to find work if the global economy remains as is. In fact, the world economy will have to create 5 million new jobs every month if youth employment rates are to remain steady.

A third of the world's 1.8 billion youth currently are unemployed, out of school or not in training programs, the report titled "Towards Solutions for Youth Employment: A 2015 Baseline Report" found.

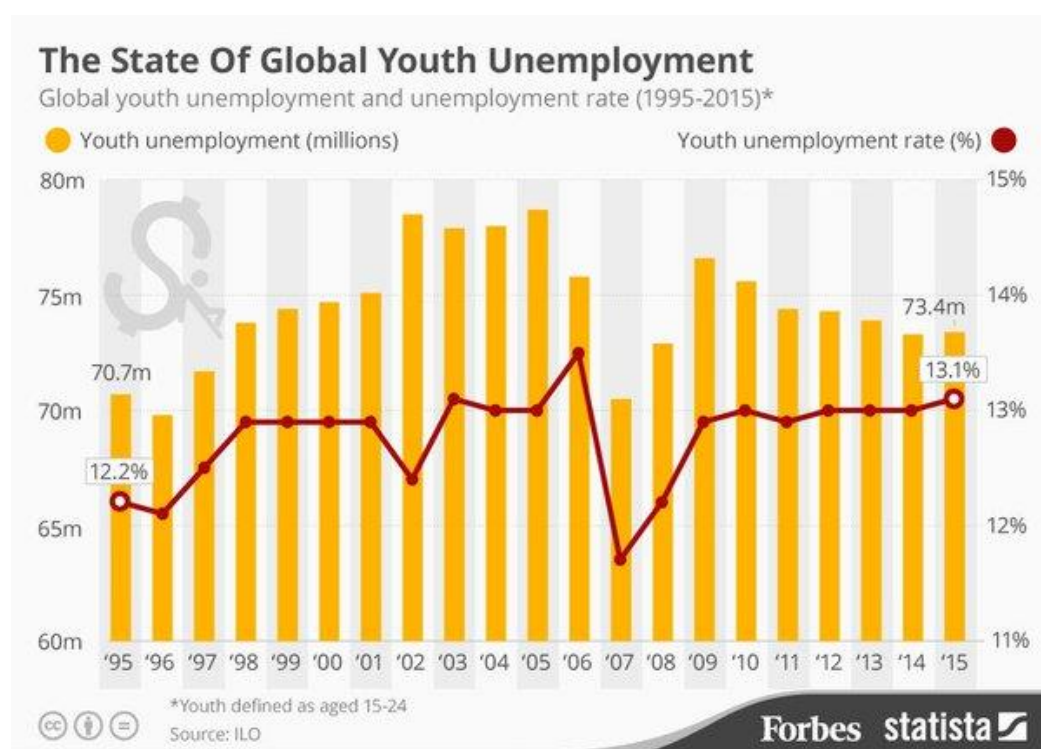
This year, global youth unemployment overall is expected to be 13.1 percent, compared to an adult unemployment rate of 4.5 percent, the International Labor Organization has projected.

Definition of Key Terms:

- **Youth unemployment:** Youth unemployment is the unemployment of young people, defined by the United Nations as 15–24 years old.
- **Unemployed:** An unemployed person is defined as someone who does not have a job but is actively seeking work. In order to qualify as unemployed for official and statistical measurement, the individual must be without employment, willing and able to work, of the officially designated 'working age' and actively searching for a position.
- **Labour Market:** A labour market is the place where workers and employees interact with each other. In the labour market, employers compete to hire the best, and the workers compete for the best satisfying job.

- **Regulation:** Rule based on and meant to carry out a specific piece of legislation (such as for the protection of environment). Regulations are enforced usually by a regulatory agency formed or mandated to carry out the purpose or provisions of a legislation. Also called regulatory requirement.
- **Market failure:** Market failure is a situation in which the allocation of goods and services is not efficient. That is, there exists another conceivable outcome where an individual may be made better-off without making someone else worse-off. Market failures can be viewed as scenarios where individuals' pursuit of pure self-interest leads to results that are not efficient – that can be improved upon from the societal point of view.

General Overview



The quality and relevance of education is often considered as the first root cause of youth unemployment. In 2010, in 25 out of 27 developed countries, the highest unemployment rate was among people with primary education or less. Yet, high education does not guarantee a decent job.

Surveys suggest that up to half of all businesses have open positions for which they are struggling to find suitably qualified people. One global survey found

that more than 55% of employers worldwide believe there is a "skill crisis" as businesses witness a growing mismatch between the skills students learn in the education system and those required in the workplace. For many governments, a key question is how they can bridge this gap and ensure that young people are equipped with the skills employers are looking for.

Labour market policies and Institutions play a critical role in promoting labour demand and supporting transition from education to work.

First, a high level of employment protection regulations has had a negative effect on youth workers as these regulations make it harder for employers to fire them during a downturn. Second, the development of temporary forms of work such as internships, seasonal jobs and short term contracts have left young workers in precarious situations. Because their jobs are temporary contracts, youth are often the first to be laid off when a company downsizes. If they are laid off, youth are typically not eligible for redundancy payments because they only worked with the company for a short period of time.

Once this work ends, many find themselves unemployed and disadvantaged in the job search. However, some youth are entering work on a part-time basis during tertiary education. This rate is low in countries like Italy, Spain and France but in the United States almost one-third of students combine education and work.

Major Parties Involved:

The International Labour Organisation (ILO):

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency dealing with labour issues, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all. The ILO has 187 member states: 186 of the 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands are members of the ILO. The ILO registers complaints against entities that are violating international rules; however, it does not impose sanctions on governments.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF):

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an international organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., of "189 countries working to foster global

monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

For decades governments have tried to reduce youth unemployment but have failed due to a lack of education as youngsters leaving school with only GCSEs were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as those with better qualifications. Also, barriers, such as large disparities in housing prices and private sector rents, prevent many young people from moving to rapidly growing cities where they have an improved chance of finding entry-level work.

For example, the Eurozone crisis highlighted the fact that Greek public sector debt was much higher than previously thought. Before 2007, bond yields in the Eurozone had been very low. But, after the credit crisis and realizing the true levels of Greek debt, bond yields in Europe rose rapidly. People became nervous about holding Eurozone bond yields created a new panic. European governments felt the necessity of cutting budget deficits ('austerity'). This involved cutting government spending and higher taxes. However, in a recession, this fiscal austerity leads to lower aggregate demand and worsened the recession, as consumption fell and there was a lower employment rate, in an effort to reduce the National Debt of Greece.

Possible Solutions

These new areas of the labour markets can boost the chances of employment for young people around the world:

- **Digital Age Impact** – the technological revolution is fundamentally changing work and relationships, but this shift is unevenly felt across the world, hence youth should be technologically literate, so as to increase their productivity and be more likely to be employed.
- **Skills Gap** – in order to fill the skills gap, opportunities for all, especially the most vulnerable, must be improved. Especially for developed economies, where the new generation is too focused to tertiary sector jobs, hence neglecting for example manufacturing sector jobs that boost faster economic growth.

- **Quality Jobs** – quantitative unemployment measurements do not reflect quality of employment and deeper understandings of today's working conditions is required. For example, zero-hour contracts do not fully replace a normal employment contract.
- **Entrepreneurship and self-employment** – Young people are 1.6 times more likely than adults to display entrepreneurial activity and this can be encouraged.

Appendix/Appendices

Appendix 1:

Youth unemployment rates are historically four to five times more than the adult rates in every country in the world. In 2012, youth made up to 40% of the world unemployed, with a global youth unemployment rate of 12.6%. Close to 75 million youth were unemployed worldwide.

Sources

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- <http://reports.weforum.org/disrupting-unemployment/youth-unemployment-initiative/>
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Topic 3: The Question of the Pink Tax

Introduction:

The pink tax refers to the extra amount women are charged for certain products or services. These products are very often identical or extremely similar to that of products directed at a male demographic. The hidden costs associated with being a female consumer seem to show a gender discriminatory point of view by both retailers and manufacturers of these falsely marked up products. This may be a reflection of a society that accepts that women have to pay more for an almost identical product and hence is supporting gender inequality. The issue at hand is that most of the time women are unaware of the fact that they are paying more for a product or service or if they are aware, their voices seem to not be heard enough for changes to be made to resolve this issue. As Suzanne McGee (1) stated "Adding a consumption gap, or a gender-based "pink tax", atop the pay gap is simply adding insult to injury."

Definition of Key Terms

- **Pink Tax:** The additional amount of money that women pay for goods and services directed at them that have a similar or identical product directed at men that is cheaper and has the same cost of production.
- **Gender Discrimination:** It is a type of discrimination that is based on a person's gender. It mostly refers to women and girls who are the key victims of gender discrimination since they have less opportunities when it comes to education, economic and career advancement as well as political influence.
- **Gender Pricing:** Selling products at different prices when directed at different genders whilst having the same exact cost of productions.
- **Gender Equality:** This is a term that refers to the social, economic and political equality of the sexes.
- **Female Oriented Products:** These are products that have a female demographic as in they are directed to be purchased by females. These products are often falsely marked up.

- **The Feminist Movement:** A movement to combat gender discrimination to gain full economic, vocational, educational, and social rights and opportunities for women, equal to those of men. Also known as “The Women’s Movement” or simply “Feminism”.

General Overview

In a 2015 study conducted by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) looked into how goods are priced and the study showed that women’s items are overtly charged by an average of 7% nearly 42% of the time. This applies to cases where the products have almost identical costs of production and are the same or similar to men’s products. A key concern is assessing whether the higher prices for female products are justified by differentially higher costs. A company might, for example, have higher fixed costs per unit on women’s products if they sold at lower volume than men’s products. Moreover, the cost of creating something catered to a woman such as an article of clothing may be different to creating a similar piece of clothing for a man due to tailoring or fabric types. However, the Pink Tax concerns products that are likely unlikely to have highly different costs of production such as razors, deodorant or shampoos that have the same active ingredients.



In addition, on top of the pink tax women are outraged to find that they are victims of yet another subset of gender discrimination known as the gender gap. In 2015, a study conducted by the IWPR found that in 2015, female full time workers made only 80 cents for every dollar earned by men, a gender wage gap of 20 percent. Women on average, our found to earn less than men in every single occupation in which the earnings ratio can be calculated. In connection to the pink tax, not only are women not paid as much as men, they are made to pay more than men for identical goods. This has given true meaning to the phrase “Women earn less and pay more” by Candice Elliot who is the editor in Chief of *Listen Money Matters*.

The existence of a gender gap and pink tax uncovers a deep fault within a society that find these things acceptable and yet ironically enough there are those who believe that the pink tax is a myth. Of course there are some ways to “fight” against the pink tax such as filing complaints to companies that are believed to enforce this marketing behaviour, providing information and

educating others about the existence of this tax as well as to expose companies that enforce the pink tax. However, these solutions can only go so far – other more effective methods have to be introduced to absolve the pink tax for good.

Major Parties Involved

UN Women:

UN Women is the United Nations entity for the empowerment of women and for gender equality. They support Member States to implement measures striving towards achieving gender equality. UN Women views this issue as very important and has the main goal to irradiate gender discrimination. They believe that gender equality is the most important aspect to take into consideration than the requests of major companies for example. In an attempt to solve the issue of gender inequality they would work collaboratively with all Member States to come to a comprehensive solution.

(2)

United States of America and United Kingdom:

The United States of America and the United Kingdom have similar views on this issue, and would like to see change in gender inequality and tackle the issue of Pink Tax. However, they would like to ensure that the interests of major companies are kept in mind, as they are a large source of income for the United States and United Kingdom. In addition, the USA and UK have an interest in maintaining good international relations. The USA and UK believe that negatively impacting major companies may damage and cause friction between trading countries such as Canada, China and Germany.

Canada:

Canada's view on this topic is to address the issue at hand effectively. Canada is involved in this issue because similarly to many other nations there have been reported cases of pink tax that Canada would like to tackle. However, Canada also would like to take the needs of major companies into consideration, while keeping in mind the important goal these measures should address, similarly to the USA.

China:

China is a major trader with the UK and the USA and would like to see these good trade relations maintained. However, they also believe that the issue of gender discrimination is a serious problem and would like to tackle it. They would preferably do this without causing too much negative publicity on major export and import companies they trade with. The reason for this is to maintain their current economic standings, as China currently is experiencing a decreasing rate in the increase of their economy.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Since the term pink tax has been coined fairly recently, an abundance previous types of resolving the issue have not been made as of date but nevertheless attempts have been made.

One of the most major ways is the media exposure the pink tax has made. With media exposure comes publicity which serves to educate women on matters that discriminate them. With this new found knowledge women can find their own ways to deal with the issue and use their voice to change things.

Moreover, there has been a petition [change.org](https://www.change.org/p/boots-uk-review-the-sexist-pricing-of-everyday-products) urging high street pharmacist Boots (UK) to "review the sexist pricing of everyday products", which currently has over 40,000 signatures. This is an example of people coming together to absolve an issue which concerns faults in society.

The issue of the Pink Tax has also been raised in British Parliament. Paula Sherriff, Labour MP for Dewsbury, called a debate on the issue. She wants the government to commission independent research to quantify the extent of the problem, arguing that it amounts to women paying thousands of pounds more over the course of their lives. This has been the first genuine governmental response to allegations of the pink tax.

Possible Solutions

One way of resolving the issue is increasing the transparency between Transnational Corporations and governments in in regards to their costs of production in order for Governments to better detect whether some companies are guilty of imposing the Pink Tax or not and then place the

appropriate measures to a company found guilty such as exposing them to the public.

Another way is appropriate education for women and girls everywhere on the existence of the pink tax, ways to detect it and ways to avoid it. The more people know and speak out about the issue of Pink Tax in a certain company the less people; especially women will want to buy goods and services from that shop, which will result in a drop in revenue for the companies. The lower revenue will hence discourage firms from employing this technique. This can similarly be done through ad campaigns and through other media that are unbiased – such as reliable news outlets- and educate people about current forms of gender discrimination.

Appendix/Appendices

Appendix 1: Suzzane McGee is the Author of a Guardian Article named “Pink taxes: higher expenses for women add insult to gender pay gap injury”

Appendix 2: Some examples of UN reports can be found here:

1. Report of the Commission on the status of women on its 61st session, 24th of April 2016 (**E/2016/27-E/CN.6/2016/22**)
2. United Nations Charter that supports equality of the sexes
3. The creation of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN addressing the issue of gender equality
4. Gender equality and Empowerment of Women strategy 2016-2019, a report by the director general. 14th September 2015 (**GC16/8**)

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