This chapter examines women’s rights. Section 2 describes the treatment of women in international law prior to the adoption of the UN Charter, in order to highlight the significance of the subsequent shift to the promotion of women’s equality. It examines the non-discrimination approach favoured by the drafters of the founding human rights instruments, highlighting the importance of the approach as well as some of its limitations. Section 3 examines the innovative approach taken in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the drafters of which aimed to address the problems attending the concept of non-discrimination by promoting a strong version of women’s substantive equality. Section 4 considers the strategy of ‘gender mainstreaming’ adopted in the 1990s, which sought to reinterpret mainstream human rights to be inclusive of women’s experiences. Section 5 concludes by highlighting some continuing obstacles presented by the
law itself, which prevent women from successfully claiming and enjoying human rights.

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