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Commission on the Status of Women Background Guide 2025

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Maria Anne Ruedisueli and Assistant Director Meg Traska (Conference A), and Director Chizulu Uwolloh and Assistant Director Malana Marianne Homan-Hepner (Conference B). Maria received her B.A. from Alma College in political science and history. She currently works for a publishing company in marketing. Meg holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She is currently working as a Talent Acquisition Coordinator for a global industrial technology company. 'Zulu Uwolloh is a Program Assistant at the Ford Foundation where she supports the programs team on the office's two programmatic areas, Gender, Racial and Ethnic Justice, and Natural Resources and Climate Change. She is a lawyer licensed to practice in Nigeria and earned her Bachelor's of Law, LLB, from the University of Lagos, and her BL from the Nigerian Law School. Malana Homan-Hepner is currently a quadruple major in Political Science, International Studies, History, and Economics at Rowan University. Malana works as an intern for the United States Senate, and she plans to pursue her masters in International Relations following graduation. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Gamaliel Perez (Conference A) and Courtney Indart (Conference B) with contributions by Under-Secretaries-General for Conference Management Joshua Andersen (Conference A) and Kenny Nguyen (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Addressing the Burden of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work on Women and Girls
2. Protecting Women and Children in Armed Conflicts

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2025 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Maria Anne Ruedisueli, Director
Meg Traska, Assistant Director
Conference A

Chizulu Uwolloh, Director
Malana Marianne Homan-Hepner, Assistant Director
Conference B



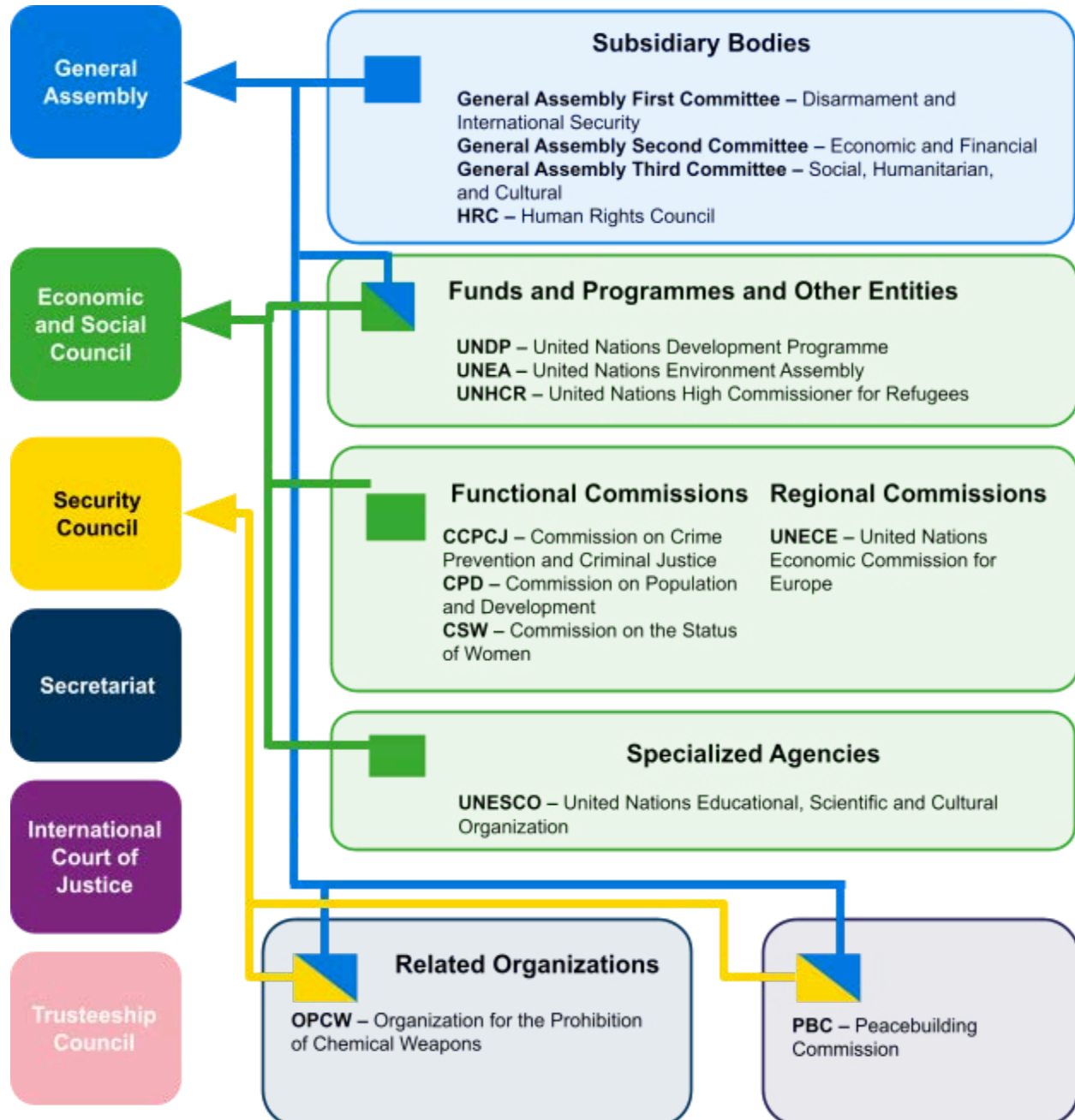
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

Established in 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the principal international body of the United Nations discussing women's empowerment and gender equality.¹ As such, CSW is the main forum to debate and review the ongoing progress of the creation and implementation of international norms and standards related to the advancement of women.² CSW's work is guided by the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the 1993 *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA), and the outcome documents of the 23rd special session of the United Nations General Assembly, a follow-up to the BPfA titled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century."³

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integral to CSW's work on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment.⁴ While the overall work of CSW is closely aligned with SDG 5 (gender equality), women and girls' empowerment and gender equality are mainstreamed across several SDGs.⁵

Mandate, Function, and Powers

CSW provides policy guidance on gender equality and links women and girls' empowerment to sustainable development.⁶ The original mandate of CSW, adopted in 1946, was to provide "recommendations and reports to ECOSOC on promoting women's rights in political, economic, social, and educational fields... [and] urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights."⁷ This mandate was substantially expanded as a follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Women from 1975 to 1985, the BPfA in 1995, and the outcome documents of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.⁸

While the following list is not exhaustive, CSW's mandate can be summarized as:

¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Brief History of the Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

³ *ibid.* pp. 9-15; United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1)*. 1995.; United Nations, General Assembly. *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/RES/55/71)*. 2000.

⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2022/4)*. 2022. p. 2.

⁵ *ibid.* p. 3.

⁶ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2023-24*. 2023. pp. 158-159.

⁷ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Commission on the Status of Women (Res. 11(II))*. 1946. p. 525.

⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women*. 2019. pp. 9-15; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2022/4)*. 2022. p. 2.



- CSW **will generally**: outline international norms and standards and issue policy recommendations for gender equality; adopt agreed conclusions, declarations, and resolutions on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; advise intergovernmental bodies and Member States on gender mainstreaming; hold discussions on and track the progress on implementation of the BPfA.⁹
- CSW **will not generally**: implement or manage programs and projects on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment; support Member States, governments, and civil society in implementing programs and projects on gender equality.¹⁰

Governance, Funding, and Structure

CSW consists of 45 Member States elected for four-year terms based on equitable geographical distribution.¹¹ CSW is led by a Bureau, which facilitates the preparation of the annual session and ensures the successful conclusion of each session.¹² The Bureau of CSW consists of a Chair and the four Vice-Chairs who are elected for two-year terms immediately after the end of the previous session.¹³

Each year in March, CSW holds its annual sessions to review progress on, identify challenges to, and make policies on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment.¹⁴ For each annual session, CSW selects a priority theme related to its work, which is decided on in advance through its multi-year program of work.¹⁵ As the largest gathering on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment, CSW's annual session brings together governments, civil society, and other relevant actors to achieve gender equality.¹⁶ The outcome documents of CSW's annual sessions are referred to as agreed conclusions.¹⁷ Part of the funding for CSW's annual sessions is provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) through the United Nations regular budget.¹⁸

⁹ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Report on the sixty-sixth session (26 March 2021 and 14–25 March 2022) (E/CN.6/2022/16)*. 2022; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*. N.d.; New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2025. pp. 156-160.

¹⁰ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2024. pp. 156-160; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Programme Implementation*. N.d.; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *About UN Women*. N.d.

¹¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

¹² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Member States*. N.d.

¹³ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2024. pp. 157.

¹⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Snapshot: What is CSW?* N.d.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Proposed programme budget for 2025 (A/79/6 Sect. 17)*. 2024.



UN Women hosts the Secretariat of CSW and provides guidance on operational activities aimed at the advancement of women.¹⁹ CSW and UN Women work closely together: CSW serves as the policy-making body, UN Women as the programmatic and implementation body.²⁰ UN Women supports the work of CSW substantively by providing annual documentation on critical areas of concern regarding gender equality and facilitates interaction between the commission and civil society organizations at its annual sessions.²¹ Each year, CSW reports to ECOSOC during the ECOSOC Management Session.²²

¹⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Short History on the Commission on the Status of Women*. 2019. pp. 8-10.

²⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Programme implementation*. N.d.; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Outcomes*. N.d.

²¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Short History on the Commission on the Status of Women*. 2019. p. 9.

²² United Nations, Economic and Social Council. ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies. N.d.



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<https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2022/16>

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United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Commission on the Status of Women (Res. 11(II))*. 1946. Retrieved 20 October 2024 from: [https://undocs.org/en/E/RES/11\(II\)](https://undocs.org/en/E/RES/11(II))

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *About UN Women*. N.d. Retrieved 20 October 2024 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d. Retrieved 20 October 2024 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*. N.d. Retrieved 20 October 2024 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/hlpf-on-sustainable-development>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Member States*. N.d. Retrieved 20 October 2024 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/member-states>

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United Nations, General Assembly. *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/RES/55/71)*. 2000. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/55/71>

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1. Addressing the Burden of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work on Women and Girls

Introduction

According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), women disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid care and domestic work.²³ This disparity will persist, with women expected to dedicate 9.5% more time, or approximately 2.4 additional hours a day, to unpaid care work than men by 2050.²⁴ UN Women defines unpaid care work as unpaid services provided by an individual in a community or household for the benefit of others.²⁵ This can include cooking, gathering water, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, and shopping.²⁶ Domestic work is defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as any work done in or around the home or household.²⁷ Currently, women and girls carry out more than two and a half times unpaid care and domestic work than men.²⁸ The disproportion of care work is exemplified in developing countries, where women and girls spend, on average, 41 more minutes on unpaid care work compared to women in developed countries.²⁹

Beyond being responsible for two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men, women can be expected to forgo their work in the formal sector to care for those in their family, and girls are forced to give up their education, limiting their future employment opportunities.³⁰ The motherhood employment penalty describes the burden of unpaid childcare work, which can hinder a woman's employment opportunities.³¹ Women with young children have the highest unemployment rate according to the ILO due to the amount of unpaid care work required to care for children, which decreases the hours available for work outside the home.³² In addition to health and time commitments, women who do not participate in the formal employment sector lead to losses of over \$28 trillion for overall GDP.³³

Climate change disproportionately burdens women and girls by increasing their unpaid care work, exacerbating existing gender inequalities.³⁴ On average, women put in an extra hour a day for environmental care, which includes activities outside of the home such as farming crops and caring for

²³ Hanna et al. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Forecasting Time Spent in Unpaid Work and Domestic Care*. 2023.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: from 3Rs to 5Rs*. 2022. p. 5.

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Unpaid Care Work – A Gateway for Gender Equality*. 2020.

²⁷ International Labor Organization. *Convention 189 - Domestic Workers Convention*. 2011.

²⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Redistribute Unpaid Work*. N.d.

²⁹ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.

³⁰ Ibid.p. 143.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.; International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016. p.19.

³³ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018. p. 143.

³⁴ United Nations, World Health Organization. *Climate change*. 2023; International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.



livestock, to adapt to harsher climates.³⁵ With extreme weather occurring more often due to climate change, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations found that women are more likely to increase their workload due to the extra responsibilities that arise from caring for their household farm due to damage caused by tumultuous weather such as flooding or droughts.³⁶ Responsibilities such as collecting natural resources for food, water, and fuel sources become more time intensive, hindering the time women and girls have to participate in government efforts, the formal sector, and their education.³⁷

International and Regional Framework

Various international instruments establish and advance human rights, yet their implementation has not yet eradicated gender inequality globally.³⁸ In 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) was adopted, setting the universal precedent of protecting fundamental human rights, including the equal rights of men and women.³⁹ Article 25(2) of the UDHR establishes the right to adequate living standards, ensuring health and well-being, with particular attention to giving exceptional care and assistance to mothers and children.⁴⁰ The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) furthers equal rights through Articles 6 and 7, which establishes the right to work and equal pay and emphasizes the freedom to choose work.⁴¹ The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979) (CEDAW) is one of the most foundational human rights documents for women's rights with Article 16 acknowledging the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work women do by affirming the right that both parents have the same responsibilities toward their children.⁴² Further protections outlined in Article 11 of CEDAW provide paid maternity leave, protections during pregnancy, and social services that provide support for mothers as they balance family obligations and work responsibilities.⁴³ Furthermore, under Article 28 and Article 32 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) (CRC) children have the right to an education and to be protected from any work that will interfere with their ability to obtain education or harm their health and well-being.⁴⁴

Promoting gender equality is essential for reducing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work carried by women and girls.⁴⁵ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) (2030 Agenda) established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), of which SDG 5 focuses on gender equality and SDG target 5.4 focuses on reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic

³⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The Climate Crisis is Unjust for Rural Women: FAO Gender Expert*. 2024.

³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The Unjust Climate: Measuring the Impacts of Climate Change on Rural Poor, Women and Youth*. 2023. pp. 29-30.

³⁷ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Why Women are Key to Climate Action*. N.d.

³⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Women's Rights are Human Rights*. 2014.

³⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁴² United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989.

⁴⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. 2015.



work.⁴⁶ Additional frameworks include the *Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention*, 1981 (No. 156), which outlined the importance of recognizing the burden family responsibilities have on entering and staying in the workforce and that men and women have the right to work and balance family responsibilities.⁴⁷ The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995) (Beijing Declaration), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, laid out a policy framework and blueprint addressing 12 key issues for action on gender equality.⁴⁸ One area of focus is women and the economy, in particular, addressing the lack of employment opportunities, reductions in public services, and child labor that places more burden on women and girls completing unpaid care and domestic work.⁴⁹ Although progress has been made since the Beijing Declaration, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) reviewed this topic in 2015 and produced the *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women* (Political Declaration).⁵⁰ The Political Declaration acknowledged that while progress has been made toward achieving equality and empowerment for women and girls, it has been uneven and no Member State has reached these goals.⁵¹

Regional efforts have been made to address the disproportionate amounts of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by women and girls.⁵² The *Highlights and Recommendations for Practitioners: Asia-Pacific Care Economy Forum* (2023) emphasizes that public recognition, policymaking, and investment in the care work sector can help reduce the wage gap, improve working conditions, and lessen the burden of unpaid work on women.⁵³ To advance gender equality in the workforce, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union issued the *Work-Life Balance Directive* (2019), which allows parents to request flexible work arrangements and paid parental leave to balance the burden of caring responsibilities and work among mothers.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the *European Social Charter (Revised)* (1996) addresses children's rights in the workforce and access to education.⁵⁵ Article 7 outlines that children still in school should not be employed in a manner that would deprive them of the full benefit of their education.⁵⁶ Similarly, Article 32 in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2000) states that the minimum working age for children should not be lower than the compulsory school-leaving age, and if children do work, it must not interfere with their education.⁵⁷ The African Union has also made strides in protecting women and girls through their adoption of the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003) which reaffirms and

⁴⁶ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018. p. 26.

⁴⁷ International Labour Organization. *Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention*, 1981 (No. 156). 1981.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1)*. 1995.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*. 2020.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Highlights and Recommendations for Practitioners: Asia-Pacific Care Economy Forum*. 2023.

⁵⁴ European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. *Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers and Repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU*. 2019.

⁵⁵ The Council of Europe. *European Social Charter (Revised)*. 1996.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ The European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. 2000.



expands the rights of women and girls to career opportunities and education to close the inequality gap between men and women.⁵⁸

Role of the International System

CSW is the largest discussion forum on gender equality with a key focus on addressing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work placed on women and girls, to achieve a more equitable distribution of care responsibilities.⁵⁹ The 69th session of CSW is actively engaged in reviewing and appraising the Beijing Declaration, demonstrating the ongoing commitment to gender equality and the need for regular progress assessments.⁶⁰ At the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), it was acknowledged that the disproportionate sharing of unpaid care responsibilities directly relates to women experiencing higher amounts of poverty, often referred to as the feminization of poverty.⁶¹ They also discussed how the unequal distribution of care work severely limits many aspects of a woman's life, such as their ability to participate in the labor market and to access leadership roles in the community, often imposing significant restraints on their education.⁶² CSW68 emphasized the need to recognize and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work by fostering an equitable division of responsibilities between all members of the household.⁶³ Strengthening social protection systems and increasing access to social services such as caregiving, childcare, and paid parental leave will aid in addressing and alleviating the undue burden placed on women.⁶⁴

UN Women acts as the Secretariat for CSW and they work collaboratively to set global standards for women rights and for the implementation of policies and norms.⁶⁵ UN Women is guided by their Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the SDGs.⁶⁶ The main impact areas for UN Women for 2022-2025 are ending violence against women, governance and participation in public life, and women's economic empowerment.⁶⁷ One example of their efforts to decrease the disproportionate amount of care work for women and empower them economically is UN Women's partnership with Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDC).⁶⁸ In Rwanda, these ECDCs provide women with a safe space to send their children so they are able to pursue employment in the formal sector.⁶⁹ New initiatives from UN Women include supporting women in green sector employment.⁷⁰ The Government of Australia is working with the women

⁵⁸ African Union. *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. 2003.

⁵⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

⁶⁰ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *CSW69 / Beijing+30 (2025)*. N.d.

⁶¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls by Addressing Poverty and Strengthening Institutions and Financing with a Gender Perspective (E/CN.6/2024/L.3)*. 2024. p. 7.

⁶² Ibid.p. 9.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 4.

⁶⁴ Ibid.p. 6.

⁶⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *About UN Women*. N.d.

⁶⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025*. 2021.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Investing in Women's Safety and Economic Empowerment in Rwanda*. 2024.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Turning Waste into Wealth - the Biomass Briquette Revolution*. 2024.



of Malawi and UN Women to create a sustainable form of fuel to replace traditional firewood which decreases the time spent domestic work necessary to prepare meals.⁷¹

ILO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and CSW collaborate to promote gender equality by advocating for policy changes in labor and education.⁷² ILO and CSW have the common goal of promoting decent work for women, reducing the gender pay gap, and reducing unpaid care work undertaken by women.⁷³ They work to achieve this by investing in the care economy and enhancing access to social protection for women.⁷⁴ ILO is working to create awareness of the importance and necessity of the unpaid work women do in order to strengthen protections and increase benefits for the labor that is being performed.⁷⁵ Partnering with Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine, ILO and UN Women implemented the JP Work4Women joint program which aligned national policies with international standards and promoted lasting employment for women, and is working to challenge long-standing gender stereotypes focused on unpaid care work.⁷⁶ UNICEF is working to improve children's education and development, which has been shown globally to reduce child labor and unpaid care work.⁷⁷ Under UNICEF Adolescent Girls Strategy, which is founded upon normative policies and guided by the SDGs, nearly 50 Member States have taken aggressive steps to implement programming focused on providing girls with education, financial independence, and protection.⁷⁸

Climate Change and the Increase in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work of Women and Girls

Climate crises affect all people but can extrapolate issues for the most vulnerable populations, especially women, children and the elderly.⁷⁹ According to UN Women, women and girls have historically been responsible for the vast majority of unpaid care and domestic work.⁸⁰ As climate change intensifies, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their Sixth Assessment Report (2021), women and girls are shouldering new responsibilities to mitigate the effects of the warming planet, such as waste management, replanting forests, and restoring degraded land.⁸¹ These additional tasks can add one to four hours of work to women and girls a day, leaving them exhausted and more susceptible to illness.⁸² Due to their increased workloads, women and girls are excluded from crucial decision-making spaces and negotiations on climate change.⁸³ UN Women notes that 67% of decision-making roles surrounding climate change are held by men, even though women and girls have been leading the

⁷¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Turning Waste into Wealth - the Biomass Briquette Revolution*. 2024.

⁷² International Labor Organization. *ILO at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 11-22 March 2024*. 2024.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ International Labour Organization. *Mainstreaming Care Work to Combat the Effects of Climate Change*. 2023. p. 4.

⁷⁶ International Labour Organization. *Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine_Funds from Sweden*. 2023.

⁷⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *What Works to Eliminate Child Labour?*. N.d.

⁷⁸ United Nations Children's Fund. *Global Annual Results Report: Gender Equality*. 2023. p. 4.

⁷⁹ United Nations, World Health Organization. *Climate Change*. 2023.

⁸⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Unpacking the care society: Caring for people and the planet*. 2024.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024*. 2024.



movements surrounding climate change.⁸⁴ To combat women's disproportionate participation due to the amount of unpaid care work performed, the World Bank has supported initiatives to include the voices of women, including Indigenous populations, in their community leadership through the Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM).⁸⁵ In Burkina Faso, DGM funding has allowed for the protection of forests surrounding their tribes, and the women have even been able to increase their income in the formal sector by focusing on the non-timber aspect of the forests.⁸⁶

Climate change increases unpaid healthcare work for women and girls.⁸⁷ Climate crises like natural disasters, droughts, and heat waves often cause major disruptions to healthcare services, as well as causing two to four billion dollars in health-related damages by 2030.⁸⁸ With the decrease in health services and the increase of health-related complications such as waterborne illnesses due to increased rainfall, the burden of combating these increasing issues often falls on women and girls, decreasing their time for education or participation in the formal sector due to an additional hour of care work a day.⁸⁹ Even with the increase in other responsibilities, in over 70% of households, women and girls are responsible for finding and gathering water when they do not have water on the premises.⁹⁰ Girls are twice as likely to fetch water for their household compared to boys, decreasing the amount of time they have for education.⁹¹ The ILO has developed a five-step system, '5R,' to help Member States enact climate and gender-sensitive policies by Recognizing, Reducing, and Redistributing unpaid care work while Rewarding and Representing paid care work.⁹² One of the main goals is to transition women from unpaid care work to paid care work while protecting girls' education and their right not to work.⁹³ The 5Rs takes a human rights approach and urges for the implementation of standardized certifications for care work, decreasing the barrier for women to joining the formal sector in care jobs.⁹⁴

Many United Nations and Regional Bodies are working to mainstream care work to combat the additional burdens brought on by climate change through policy changes.⁹⁵ Codifying gender-responsive policies, which are policies that address the needs of all people regardless of gender, helps protect women, as they are more vulnerable to being burdened with extra tasks and being left out of the decision-making process.⁹⁶ The European Commission has implemented the ILO's '5R' Framework for Decent Care Work,

⁸⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Claiming Women's Space in Leadership*. 2021.

⁸⁵ Climate Investment Funds. *Dedicated Grant Mechanism*. N.d.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016.

⁸⁸ Altman. United Nations Foundation. *How Biodiversity Loss Harms Human Health*. 2023.

⁸⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Unpacking the care society: Caring for people and the planet*. 2024; United Nations. United Nations, World Health Organization. *Climate Change*. 2023.

⁹⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. *Women and Girls Bear Brunt of Water and Sanitation Crisis – New UNICEF-WHO Report*. 2023.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² International Labour Organization. *Mainstreaming Care Work to Combat the Effects of Climate Change*. 2023. p. 4.

⁹³ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *Transforming Care Systems in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda*. 2024. p. 14.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 18.

⁹⁵ United Nations Children's Fund. *Women and Girls Bear Brunt of Water and Sanitation Crisis – New UNICEF-WHO Report*. 2023.

⁹⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender-Responsive Policies and Institutions*. N.d.



which has raised the standards, availability, and affordability of care including childhood education and elder care which are both issues exacerbated by climate change.⁹⁷ The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is working to decrease the amount of unpaid care work women take on which perpetuates gender bias.⁹⁸ APEC has developed a *Toolkit to Address the Unpaid Care Gap* to strengthen the social protections and infrastructures surrounding women through policy recommendations and data collection and monitoring as well as encouraging the private sector to implement policies, such as parental leave, to support working mothers.⁹⁹

Cost of Care on Employment and Education

The burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls limits their ability to attain paid work and participate in education.¹⁰⁰ Globally, women perform nearly two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men.¹⁰¹ This burden profoundly impacts two key areas, mothers' employment opportunities and girls' access to education.¹⁰² The motherhood employment penalty negatively impacts career opportunities, widens the gender pay gap, decreases working hours, and increases time spent on unpaid care and domestic work.¹⁰³ On average, women complete about 42.3 hours of paid work per week.¹⁰⁴ However, mothers with at least one child tend to lose around one hour of paid work per week, which increases proportionally with the number of children she has.¹⁰⁵ About 62% of women with care responsibilities work in the informal employment sector, compared to 56.8% with no care responsibilities.¹⁰⁶ The ILO defines the informal employment sector as all paid work, including self-employment and unpaid work in income-generating businesses, that lacks registration, regulation, and legal protection.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, the formal employment sector includes all paid work that is registered, regulated and legally protected.¹⁰⁸ The time girls devote to household chores takes time away from their education.¹⁰⁹ The impact of excessive unpaid care work on girls increases the likelihood of them missing school, with 19.6% of girls who spend at least 14 hours on household chores missing school compared to

⁹⁷ International Labour Organization. *The ILO Welcomes EU Care Strategy in the European Parliament and calls for Recognition and Better Rewarding of Care Workers*. 2022; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work: From 3Rs to 5Rs*. 2022.

⁹⁸ Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Human Resources Development Working Group. *APEC Introduces Policy Toolkit to Address Unpaid Care Gap*. 2024.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.

¹⁰¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. 2015. p. 84.

¹⁰² International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.

¹⁰³ International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016; International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. 2015.

¹⁰⁴ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ International Labour Organization. *Distinguishing the Concepts: The Informal Sector, Informal Employment and the Informal Economy*. 2015; International Labour Organization. *Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)*. 2015.

¹⁰⁸ International Labour Organization. *Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)*. 2015.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Children's Fund et al. *A New Era for Girls: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Progress*. 2020.



12.9% of boys.¹¹⁰ The unequal burden of unpaid care and domestic work leaves a lasting impact on girls' educational attainment, which, in turn, affects their future employment opportunities, as each year a girl stays in school, her earnings as an adult can increase by up to 20%.¹¹¹

The uneven distribution of unpaid care and domestic work hinders mothers from fully participating in the workforce and earning equal income, but policy change offers a path toward change.¹¹² Despite progress, more than one-third of Member States lack legal safeguards essential for women's full participation in the workforce, especially in the informal sector, including maternity leave, access to child care, and equal pay in the workplace.¹¹³ Globally, nearly 60% of women workers do not have access to maternity leave.¹¹⁴ Without employment protections, mothers spend more time on unpaid care and domestic work and earn less.¹¹⁵ According to the World Bank report *Women, Business, and the Law 2024* (2024) policy changes, such as paid maternity leave, job protection, and equal pay allow women to enter and stay in the workforce during and after pregnancy, driving a positive trend towards equality.¹¹⁶ In Rwanda, policy changes to paid maternity leave increased from 12 weeks to 14 weeks and prohibited the dismissal of pregnant workers.¹¹⁷ This change allowed 89% of women and girls to return to work in the same or a similar job.¹¹⁸ In addition, ILO report *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (2016) explains that implementing flexible working arrangements allows employees to change their usual working hours, schedules, and locations which increases women's participation in the workforce by 30%, thus decreasing the gender wage gap.¹¹⁹ Recognizing the importance of promoting gender equality, CSW68 affirmed the protection and promotion of equal pay for women by addressing discriminatory policies, particularly those that impact women during pregnancy and maternity and affect work-life balance.¹²⁰

The amount of time girls spend on unpaid care and domestic work influences girls' access to education and their education level.¹²¹ Although progress has been made towards SDG 4 (quality education), 15 million girls will never enter primary school compared to 10 million boys.¹²² With the completion of higher levels of education, women and girls' time spent on unpaid care and domestic work decreases.¹²³

¹¹⁰ Dayioğlu. United Nations Children's Fund. *Impact of Unpaid Household Services on the Measurement of Child Labour*. 2013. p. 43.

¹¹¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women et al. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals the Gender Snapshot 2022*. 2022; United Nations Children's Fund et al. *A New Era for Girls: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Progress*. 2020.

¹¹² International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. 2015.

¹¹³ The World Bank. *Women, Business, and the Law 2024*. 2024.

¹¹⁴ International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ The World Bank. *Women, Business, and the Law 2024*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Pro-Femmes et al. *Women and Decent Work in Rwanda A Critical Analysis of the Participation of Women in Paid Labour Market Activity*. 2022.

¹¹⁹ International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016.

¹²⁰ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls by Addressing Poverty and Strengthening Institutions and Financing with a Gender Perspective (E/CN.6/2024/L.3)*. 2024.

¹²¹ United Nations Children's Fund et al. *A New Era for Girls: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Progress*. 2020; International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016.

¹²² United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *Educate to Empower: UNGEI Annual Review 2018*. 2018; United Nations Children's Fund et al. *A New Era for Girls: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Progress*. 2020.

¹²³ International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.



Addressing barriers such as societal norms, school-related gender-based violence, poverty, long distances to school, quality of education, and lack of water and sanitation facilities will help improve girls enrollment in school, decrease the time spent completing unpaid care and domestic work, and improve employment opportunities after school.¹²⁴ The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) works to identify and break down barriers to education through research, publications, global summits, regional workshops, and digital platforms.¹²⁵ In 2018, UNGEI partnered with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Education International to host a panel at the sixty-second gathering of the CSW entitled Agenda 2030 for All: Gender, Learning and Teaching in Rural Contexts.¹²⁶ The panel examined and discussed approaches to reducing girls' barriers to accessing and obtaining quality education in rural areas through the implementation of policies that ensure schools and teachers have enough resources to provide quality education to girls.¹²⁷

Conclusion

Women and girls bear the burden of unpaid care and domestic work and this significantly impacts their well-being, ability to participate in employment, and education.¹²⁸ By building on the frameworks of the SDGs, the Beijing Declaration, and CEDAW, CSW can continue to improve recommendations to Member States to achieve gender equality to lessen the burden of unpaid care and domestic work.¹²⁹ UN Women, ILO and UNICEF have implemented programs to address the burdens that unpaid care and domestic work places on women and girls such as a hindrance to their education, inability to participate in the formal sector, and their lack of leadership roles within their communities.¹³⁰ Furthermore, climate crises have had a negative impact on this burden due to the added responsibilities like waste management, reforestation, and land restoration increasing women's and girls' workloads.¹³¹ The increased responsibilities take time away from paid work and girls' education.¹³² Addressing the barriers to education is crucial for increasing educational attainment and future employment opportunities.¹³³ Member States have the opportunity to strengthen protections for women and girls through

¹²⁴ United Nations Children's Fund et al. *A New Era for Girls: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Progress*. 2020; United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *Educate to Empower: UNGEI Annual Review 2018*. 2018; International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.

¹²⁵ United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *What We Do / Overview*. 2024.

¹²⁶ United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *Educate to Empower: UNGEI Annual Review 2018*. 2018. p. 23.

¹²⁷ United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *Gender, Learning and Teaching in Rural Contexts*. 2018.

¹²⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Redistribute Unpaid Work*. N.d; International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.

¹²⁹ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *CSW69 / Beijing+30 (2025)*. N.d.

¹³⁰ International Labor Organization. *ILO at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 11-22 March 2024*. 2024; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

¹³¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Unpacking the care society: Caring for people and the planet*. 2024.

¹³² Ibid; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls by Addressing Poverty and Strengthening Institutions and Financing with a Gender Perspective (E/CN.6/2024/L.3)*. 2024.

¹³³ United Nations Children's Fund et al. *A New Era for Girls: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Progress*. 2020; United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *Educate to Empower: UNGEI Annual Review 2018*. 2018; International Labour Organization. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. 2018.



gender-sensitive policy changes focused on climate change, gender sensitivity, paid maternity leave, equal pay, and access to quality education.¹³⁴

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can the United Nations, NGOs, and Member States collaborate to address unpaid care and domestic work that largely falls on women and girls? What actions can CSW take to further promote the recognition of unpaid care and domestic work? What recommendations can CSW make to address the growing burden of unpaid care work resulting from climate-related challenges? What policy changes can Member States implement to protect and support women and girls in participating in the workforce and education?

¹³⁴ International Labour Organization. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. 2016; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. 2015.



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2. Protecting Women and Children in Armed Conflict

"There will be no humanity, dignity, and peace until international humanitarian law is upheld for people of all genders."¹³⁵

Introduction

The protection of women and children, in particular girls, is essential for advancing their rights, and achieving gender equality, peace, and development.¹³⁶ As of 2022, over 600 million women and girls live in conflict-affected countries, exposing them to violations of their human rights and risks to their health, safety, and well-being.¹³⁷ Women account for over 51% of the global population of forcibly displaced persons and refugees; thus, it is necessary to address their specific needs in conflict situations.¹³⁸ An 'armed conflict' occurs when there is a resort to use of force or an uncontested use of force by one or more states against another or by another party that is a non-state actor.¹³⁹ Violence against women is defined as any act of gender-based violence (GBV) that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.¹⁴⁰ The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), in its 63rd Session, highlighted the importance of addressing the effects of armed conflict and post-conflict situations on women and girls and the need to protect and empower them through social protection measures and programs.¹⁴¹

Women and girls in situations of armed conflict are particularly vulnerable to violations of their human rights.¹⁴² According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), women and girls face humanitarian emergencies differently, with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) increasing in conflict settings.¹⁴³ Over 70% of women have experienced SGBV in crisis

¹³⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gender equality and war: "No humanity, dignity, peace until international humanitarian law is upheld for all genders."* 2023.

¹³⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women*. N.d.

¹³⁷ United Nations Population Fund. *The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls: A UNFPA Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming in Areas of Conflict and Reconstruction*. 2002; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women and peace and security (S/2023/725)*. 2023; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Women are increasingly at-risk in conflict, underrepresented in peace processes, according to UN Secretary-General report*. 2023.

¹³⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross. *International humanitarian law and policy on Protected persons: Women*. 2024; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS*. 2023. p. 3.

¹³⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross. *How Is The Term "Armed Conflict" Defined In International Humanitarian Law?*. 2024. pp. 9-15.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)*. 1993. p. 2.

¹⁴¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council. *Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. 2019. pp. 9-10.

¹⁴² United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Women and Armed Conflict: CSW42 Agreed Conclusions (II)*. 1998; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern*. 1998. pp. 3-4.

¹⁴³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Facts and figures: Humanitarian action*. N.d.



settings; however, this is not the only violation they suffer.¹⁴⁴ Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, and products is also limited for women and girls in conflict situations, which exacerbates health issues, menstrual hygiene management, and period poverty.¹⁴⁵ Period poverty is the lack of access to menstrual products, sanitation, and handwashing facilities, or menstrual hygiene education.¹⁴⁶ Beyond the increased risk of SGBV and the deprivation of WASH services, women and girls also face high risks of child marriage, forced labor, malnutrition and food insecurity, poverty, loss of education, forced displacement, and the lack of freedom of movement, amongst other violations.¹⁴⁷

The United Nations system considers mainstreaming a gendered perspective into all aspects of conflict situations as imperative.¹⁴⁸ In conflict situations, gendered roles and power dynamics are often exacerbated, with more women heading households but only 20% having paid work.¹⁴⁹ The incorporation of a gender perspective in addressing conflicts alleviates the harm and inequalities survivors, especially women, face in humanitarian emergencies.¹⁵⁰ This perspective enhances the understanding of how war affects people differently and ensures that assistance provided to survivors is more effective.¹⁵¹ By increasing the currently limited gender-specific data, and including women in all facets of conflict and post-conflict situations, conflicts and protracted conflicts can be significantly mitigated.¹⁵² As United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, stated, gender equality and parity are crucial in achieving not only development but a more peaceful and sustainable world.¹⁵³

International and Regional Framework

International human rights and humanitarian laws emphasize the equal rights of men and women.¹⁵⁴ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) codifies universally protected human rights, specifically the

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Facts and figures: Humanitarian action*. N.d.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Water. *Water and Gender*. N.d; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender Equality & Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Report of the Expert Group Meeting*. 2017. p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Children's Fund. *FAST FACTS: Nine things you didn't know about menstruation*. 2018; Rodriguez. Global Citizen. *Period Poverty: Everything You Need to Know*. 2022; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Period Poverty - why millions of girls and women cannot afford their periods*. 2024.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons - in the context of armed conflict*. 2018; Centre for Girls. *The Consequences of Conflict on Women and Girls*. N.d; Girls Not Brides. *Child marriage and humanitarian contexts*. 2024; Modongo et al. The African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa. *The Impact of Humanitarian Crises and Armed Conflict on Girls' and Women's Education in Africa*. 2024.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Women's Equal Participation in Conflict Prevention, Management and Conflict Resolution and in Post-Conflict Peace-Building: CSW48 Agreed Conclusions*. 2004. p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Durham et al. International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gendered impacts of armed conflict and implications for the application of IHL*. 2022.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Women's Equal Participation in Conflict Prevention, Management and Conflict Resolution and in Post-Conflict Peace-Building*. 2004.

¹⁵³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Gender equality 'fundamental prerequisite' for peaceful, sustainable world*. 2022; Crespo-Sancho. World Bank Blogs. *Can gender equality prevent violent conflict?*. 2018; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Gender Equality*. N.d.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.



right to dignity, liberty, security of person, and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, without distinction based on sex.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) each further the tenants of gender equality by affirming women's economic, social, and cultural rights and civil and political rights.¹⁵⁶ The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979) defines discrimination based on gender and provides recommendations on how Member States can end gender-based discrimination.¹⁵⁷ The culmination of these laws came at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, which adopted the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Beijing Declaration) (1995), underscoring the human rights of women and the girl child as inalienable, integral, and indivisible parts of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁵⁸ Within its 12 themes, the Beijing Declaration highlights, 'Women and Armed Conflict' as a key area of concern, addressing six strategic objectives, including the promotion of women's contributions to fostering peace, and the provision of protection, assistance, and training to displaced women.¹⁵⁹ In 1996, CSW's mandate was expanded by Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/6 on "follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women" to include leading the annual monitoring and review of progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.¹⁶⁰

SGBV and the discrimination of women are recognized as severe violations of human rights under international law.¹⁶¹ Articles 7 and 8 of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (1998) classify rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, enforced prostitution, sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, as 'crimes against humanity', and war crimes when committed in breach of the *Geneva Conventions* (1949).¹⁶² Further, the *Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War* (Geneva (III)) (1949) and the *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (Geneva (IV)) (1949) reaffirm the equal treatment of women, and the need to protect women and girls against attacks on their honor.¹⁶³ Article 38 of the *Vienna Declaration and Program of Action* (1993) provides that violations of the human rights of women in armed conflict equates

¹⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)). 1948.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (A/RES/2200 (XXI)). 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (A/RES/2200 (XXI)). 1966.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (A/RES/34/180). 1979.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations, Fourth World Conference on Women. *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.; United Nations, Women Watch. *Women and Armed Conflict*. N.d.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women* (E/RES/1996/6). 1996; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

¹⁶¹ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 12: Violence against women*. 1989. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19: Violence against women*. 1992.

¹⁶² United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court. *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. 1998.; *Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*. 1949.; *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*. 1949.

¹⁶³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*. 1949; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*. 1949.



to a breach of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.¹⁶⁴ The Security Council first acknowledged the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in resolution 1325 (2000) on “Women, Peace and Security.”¹⁶⁵ This landmark resolution highlights the need to implement a gender perspective in all peace and security efforts, and the pertinent role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, specifically calling on all Member States to take special measures to protect women and girls against SGBV, and other forms of violence.¹⁶⁶ CSW, through its Agreed Conclusions and Expert Group Reports, outcomes of the Commission’s sessions, emphasizes the need to protect women in armed conflict from SGBV, and the need to provide women and girls with adequate WASH facilities.¹⁶⁷

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* institutes a global plan of action for development that incorporates the intersectionality of gender equality, peace and security, and access to infrastructure for safety, health, and wellbeing.¹⁶⁸ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (gender equality) aims to achieve gender equality and ensure the empowerment of women and girls.¹⁶⁹ SDG target 5.2 specifies the need to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking and other forms of exploitation.¹⁷⁰ SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) focuses on the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, with SDG target 6.2 providing that attention be paid to the needs of women and girls in vulnerable situations.¹⁷¹ SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) in its first target, aims to reduce all forms of violence, including physical, sexual, and psychological violence.¹⁷²

Regionally, several frameworks and policies highlight the need to respect and protect the rights of women and girls, and emphasize the vital role they play in protecting their communities.¹⁷³ The *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women* (1994) provides in Article 9 that special account be given to the vulnerability of women to violence, especially those affected by armed conflict.¹⁷⁴ The African Union (AU), through its *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights of Women in Africa* (2003) and *Gender Policy of the African Union* (2009),

¹⁶⁴ United Nations, World Conference on Human Rights. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. 1993.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325(2000))*. 2000.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *CSW42 Agreed Conclusions (II): Women and Armed Conflict*. 1998. pp. 1-4; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Women and Health Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into the Health Sector*. 1998.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. N.d.

¹⁷¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*. N.d.

¹⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*. N.d.

¹⁷³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. *Using the international and regional legal framework to stop all forms of violence against women and girls*. 2022.

¹⁷⁴ Organization of American States. *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, Eradication of Violence Against Women*. 1994.



reinforces the AU's commitment to the advancement of women, gender equality and their inclusion and effective participation in all aspects of peace, security, and conflict resolution.¹⁷⁵ Adopted in 2018, the European Union's *Guidelines on Violence Against Women and Girls and Combatting All Forms of Discrimination Against Them* outlines three strategies to address GBV and gender-based discrimination: the promotion of gender equality, the collection of data on violence against women, and combating the impunity of perpetrators while ensuring access to justice for victims.¹⁷⁶

Role of the International System

CSW acts as the principal organ dedicated to progressing gender equality and women's empowerment.¹⁷⁷ CSW outlines the expectations of gender equality on an international scale and monitors the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.¹⁷⁸ Every year, CSW holds a two-week session where Member States, civil society, and international bodies convene to examine the current progress and global issues regarding women and girls.¹⁷⁹ CSW serves as an expert on gender equality, contributing to sessions of other United Nations bodies, such as its contributions on women and girls in armed conflict during the General Assembly special session "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century."¹⁸⁰ UN Women is a prominent partner of CSW which also strives to achieve gender equality and to ensure the protection and full participation of women in all levels of peace processes.¹⁸¹ Through its work on the inclusion of a gendered perspective in peace and security, UN Women implements initiatives to increase women's participation in conflict management and peace-building.¹⁸² UN Women further supports the efforts of CSW by producing progress studies on the participation of young women in peace and security.¹⁸³

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a key partner in the promotion of gender equality through the implementation of its gender-focused initiatives in conflict intervention.¹⁸⁴ In 2022, UNDP adopted the *UNDP gender equality strategy 2022-2025*, which underscores UNDP's continued efforts to address gender inequalities through shifting power dynamics at all levels of society and placing a gendered lens when building resilience.¹⁸⁵ As a complement to the 2022-2025 strategy, UNDP adopted the *10-Point Action Agenda for Advancing Gender Equality in Crisis Settings* (2022), which elaborates tangible actions across areas of participation and leadership, engagement of local agents of change, and

¹⁷⁵ African Union. *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. 2003; African Union. *African Union Gender Policy*. 2009.

¹⁷⁶ European Union. *EU Guidelines on Violence Against Women and Girls and Combatting All Forms of Discrimination Against Them*. 2018.

¹⁷⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. "23rd Special Session of the General Assembly." 2000.

¹⁸¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Women's Leadership and political participation*. 2024.

¹⁸² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Peace and Security*. N.d.

¹⁸³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Young women in peace and security*. N.d.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Impacts on gender equality and women's empowerment in crises settings*. N.d.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. pp. 4-6.



overall capacity enhancement.¹⁸⁶ Within this 10-point plan, UNDP establishes priorities to address trends of SGBV in conflicts and recommends that Member States integrate SGBV data in monitoring processes.¹⁸⁸ UNDP also aims to understand the role of gender in fatality rates in wars and disasters.¹⁸⁹ Supporting CSW's annual sessions, UNDP hosts complementary events that range in topics from financing for development to socio-economic empowerment of women in humanitarian and security crises.¹⁹⁰ The side-events at CSW68 emphasized and elaborated on UNDP's strategic goals to address gender equality since 2022, particularly in relation to financing of social protection systems and women's access to government positions.¹⁹¹

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is an active participant with CSW, producing solutions and insights on women and feminist policies at both national and international levels.¹⁹² Through its publication, *Toward a More Feminist United Nations* (2016), ICRW highlights a practical agenda for gender mainstreaming and inclusivity within the United Nations.¹⁹³ The report includes the issues of creating more spaces for women's leadership at the United Nations and ensuring feminist implementation of the SDGs.¹⁹⁴ ICRW's report on "the Critical Importance of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare During Emergency Settings" (2022), highlights the risk of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, and other factors that are worsened in crises, due to the lack of access to reproductive healthcare.¹⁹⁵ In addition, ICRW regularly hosts complementary events at CSW annual meetings, including presentations like "GBV in the World of Work," and "pathways to feminist foreign policy - evidence and implications for advocacy" during CSW65.¹⁹⁶

Non-governmental and civil society organizations work to achieve gender equality and address GBV and sexual exploitation in conflict.¹⁹⁷ Fòs Feminista collaborates with grassroots, regional, and international organizations, activists, and national healthcare providers to reduce SGBV, promote sexual reproductive health in conflict situations, and empower women through policy implementation, awareness programs, and advocacy.¹⁹⁸ Equality Now partners with CSW and Member States to end sexual exploitation and violence in crises by providing and implementing policy recommendations and raising GBV concerns globally.¹⁹⁹ With its work spanning four continents, Equality Now works to implement policy recommendations in every Member State and hold them accountable.²⁰⁰ With its work spanning four

¹⁸⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *The 10-Point Action Agenda For Advancing Gender Equality in Crisis Settings*. 2022. p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 3-5.

¹⁸⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women*. 2024.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² International Center for Research on Women. *Who We Are*. 2022.

¹⁹³ International Center for Research on Women. *Toward a More Feminist United Nations*. 2016.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ International Center for Research on Women. *The Critical Importance of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare During Emergency Settings*. 2022.

¹⁹⁶ International Center for Research on Women. *CSW Side Events: Join Us at the 65th Commission on the Status of Women*. 2022.

¹⁹⁷ Fòs Feminista. *Creating a feminist future together*. N.d; Equality Now. *What We Do*. 2024.

¹⁹⁸ Fòs Feminista. *Creating a feminist future together*. N.d.

¹⁹⁹ Equality Now. *Our Approach*. 2024; Equality Now. *What We Do*. 2024; Equality Now. *What We Do*. 2024.

²⁰⁰ Equality Now. *Our Approach*. 2024; Equality Now. *What We Do*. 2024.



continents, Equality Now also collaborates internationally with Member States and international entities to promote gender equality and collaborate internationally with countries and international entities to achieve gender equality.²⁰¹ Equality Now also participated at CSW68, presenting on “Sexual Violence: Strengthening Institutions to Eradicate Barriers to Justice for Women & Girls with Disabilities.”²⁰²

Wash and Relief Services for Hygiene and Health in Conflict-Affected Regions

Lack of access to WASH services in crisis settings exacerbates the prevalence of diseases and fosters violence.²⁰³ Globally, 2.4 billion people lack the resources for basic sanitation, and in conflict-affected regions, women and girls are often at an increased risk of exposure to unsafe and inadequate water, sanitation, hygiene facilities, and hygiene infrastructure.²⁰⁴ When water is not readily available, in 7 out of 10 households, women and girls are assigned the responsibility of collecting water, which reduces their well-being and the time available for education and work.²⁰⁵ Women and girls globally are at risk of unsafe and insufficient water supply and sanitation facilities, which increases the risk of diarrhea, cholera, and poor menstrual hygiene.²⁰⁶ A lack of WASH infrastructure results in indirect conflict mortality due to the conditions of life in conflict situations and not actual violence itself.²⁰⁷ Depriving people of WASH services, however, can also be used as a strategy of war, in addition to being the cause of conflicts.²⁰⁸ There is evidence that a lack of WASH infrastructure is interlinked with insecurity and violence, which leads to feelings of corruption and inequity thus causing or worsening conflicts.²⁰⁹ CSW has centered many conversations around WASH services, inviting WaterAid to host a panel at CSW63 to present WASH policies and projects from across the international community that have promoted gender equality and the empowerment of women.²¹⁰

Period poverty is regarded as a global health issue and not just a hygiene issue.²¹¹ About 2 billion people menstruate every month, and an estimated 500 million people experience period poverty.²¹² In least-developed countries, 73% of the population lacks access to basic hand washing facilities, exposing women and girls to a range of health issues, including reproductive complications.²¹³ Beyond health and negative mental health issues, period poverty can also lead to missed educational and work

²⁰¹ Equality Now. *Our Approach*. 2024.

²⁰² Equality Now. *Where You'll Find Equality Now at CSW68*. 2024.

²⁰³ United Nations Children's Fund. *FAST FACTS: Nine things you didn't know about menstruation*. 2018; Stockholm International Water Institute. *Peace starts with WASH: 8 steps toward stronger governance*. 2024.

²⁰⁴ United Nations Children's Fund. *FAST FACTS: Nine things you didn't know about menstruation*. 2018; United Nations Water. *Water and Gender*. N.d. International Rescue Committee. *Can WASH services transform health and well-being in vulnerable communities?*. 2023.

²⁰⁵ Kaveri. Health Policy Watch. *Water and Sanitation Crises Hit Women and Girls Harder than Men*. 2023.

²⁰⁶ United Nations Children's Fund. *FAST FACTS: Nine things you didn't know about menstruation*. 2018.

²⁰⁷ Stockholm International Water Institute. *Peace starts with WASH: 8 steps toward stronger governance*. 2024.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ WaterAid. *WaterAid at the Commission on the Status of Women*. 2019.

²¹¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Period Poverty - why millions of girls and women cannot afford their periods*. 2024.

²¹² United Nations Children's Fund. *FAST FACTS: Nine things you didn't know about menstruation*. 2018.

²¹³ Ibid.



opportunities.²¹⁴ Though menstruation does not pause during conflicts, it is usually of the lowest priority, as with the already high cost of menstrual products, when people facing conflict have any income to spend, they will often opt to purchase other necessities, such as food and medicine, over menstrual products.²¹⁵ Women in conflict situations face increased period poverty, as they are often forced to flee their homes, and their access to infrastructure to practice clean hygiene greatly decreases.²¹⁶ For alternative menstrual products, such as cloth, sponges, and leaves, there are additional health risks, such as cholera.²¹⁷ UN Women research found that out of the 690,000 menstruating women and girls in Gaza, more than 540,000 lack access to menstrual products and adequate WASH facilities.²¹⁸ CSW works alongside civil society and other United Nations entities to foster dialogue to address period poverty and menstruation hygiene, as exemplified through the work of The Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective.²¹⁹ The Collective's statement at CSW64 urged Member States to address barriers to menstrual hygiene products, invest in WASH resources and infrastructure, improve sexual education and gender policy, and develop strategies to minimize the stigma around menstruation.²²⁰

Women and girls bear the burden of inadequate WASH infrastructure; however, they also play a significant role in addressing these issues.²²¹ A report by the Human Security Centre provides that in 34 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, women play the primary role in collecting water, and in 8 countries they play a significant role.²²² Because the average distance to clean water access is 6 kilometers away in rural areas, women and girls will often spend considerable time collecting water, which takes away their ability to pursue education and puts them in dangerous environments.²²³ The need to go outside to obtain water or access to safe toilets increases the risk of sexual harassment and violence against women.²²⁴ The UN Women report on "Gender Equality & Water, Sanitation and Hygiene," provides that explicit attention be paid to gender mainstreaming in WASH programs through strengthening women's leadership, voice, and agency in WASH governance.²²⁵

²¹⁴ Shepherd. AIDS Healthcare Foundation. *Menstrual Health Day: We Must End Period Poverty*. 2024.

²¹⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Period Poverty - why millions of girls and women cannot afford their periods*. 2024; Martin et al. Think Global Health. *Periods Don't Stop For Conflict*. 2022; United Nations Fund for Population Activities. *5 reasons why menstruation support is critical in a humanitarian crisis*. 2024.

²¹⁶ United Nations Fund for Population Activities. *5 reasons why menstruation support is critical in a humanitarian crisis*. 2024.

²¹⁷ Victor. HumAngle. *Conflict and Climate Shocks Exacerbating Cholera Outbreaks in Horn of Africa - MSF*. 2023.

²¹⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Period Poverty - why millions of girls and women cannot afford their periods*. 2024; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Scarcity and Fear: A Gender Analysis of the Impact of the War in Gaza on Vital Services Essential to Women's and Girls' Health, Safety, and Dignity - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)*. 2024. p. 9.

²¹⁹ Global Menstrual Collective. *Who We Are*. N.d.

²²⁰ WaterAid. *The Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective statement on the occasion of the 64th session of Commission on the Status of Women*. N.d.

²²¹ House et al. *Violence, gender and WASH: a practitioners' toolkit Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming*. 2014.

²²² Biden. Human Security Centre. *Closing Gender Gaps in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): Challenges, Progress and Equitable Access*. 2023.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Report of the Expert Group Meeting: Gender Equality & Water, Sanitation and Hygiene*. 2017.



Protection of Women and Girls against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SGBV is a prominent tactic of warfare and terrorism used to subjugate civilians, particularly women and girls, in armed conflict.²²⁶ Used as a tool of attack, humiliation, repression, and intimidation, SGBV includes rape, sexual trafficking and slavery, enforced sterilization, and forced marriages, pregnancies, and abortions.²²⁷ Although both men and women experience violence in conflict situations, women and girls make up the majority of victims of SGBV.²²⁸ According to the 2024 United Nations Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), approximately 95% of CRSV is suffered by women and girls.²²⁹ SGBV is heightened in humanitarian circumstances due to the displacement of women and girls, and the breakdown of legal and societal structures that hold perpetrators accountable.²³⁰ This violence also persists in post-conflict situations, where displaced women and girls face SGBV in countries of asylum and resettlement.²³¹ In some circumstances, women and girls are forced to trade sexual favors for food, shelter, or physical protection.²³²

In conflict situations, SGBV is often not prioritized leaving survivors with no recourse.²³³ In 2022, global humanitarian funding for SGBV response was only 18% of what was required.²³⁴ This lack of funding links to the limited data and research collected on SGBV in conflict situations.²³⁵ Further, due to the stigma and shame associated with SGBV, the collection and analysis of the needed data is often difficult.²³⁶ This data is critical for understanding the scope and nature of SGBV in a region and enabling the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of intervention programs that aid survivors in getting justice.²³⁷ Currently, as the world faces the highest number of conflicts since the Second World War, the agreed conclusions of CSW42 emphasize the need to ensure access to gender-sensitive justice for victims of armed conflict.²³⁸ The conclusions highlight the importance of addressing the specific concerns of women refugees and women with disabilities, and their health and psychological needs.²³⁹ The report outlines

²²⁶ United Nations, Fourth World Conference on Women. *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. 1995.

²²⁷ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Strongly Condemning Rise in Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, Speakers Urge Security Council to Better Prevent, Enforce Accountability for Such Crimes*. 2023.

²²⁸ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Armed Conflict*. N.d.

²²⁹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Gender-Responsive Arms Control, Ending Impunity Key to Reverse Record Level of Sexual Violence against Women, Girls in Conflict Zones, Speakers Tell Security Council*. 2024.

²³⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Armed Conflict*. N.d.

²³¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Women's human rights and gender-related concerns in situations of conflict and instability*. N.d.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response*. 1998.

²³⁴ Humanitarian Funding Forecast. *Gender Based Violence*. 2024.

²³⁵ United Nations Population Fund. *The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls: A UNFPA Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming in Areas of Conflict and Reconstruction*. 2002. pp. 23-24.

²³⁶ United Nations, Women Watch. *Women and Armed Conflict*. N.d.

²³⁷ GBV Guidelines. *DATA COLLECTION FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RISK MITIGATION*. 2021.

²³⁸ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *CSW42 Agreed Conclusions (II): Women and Armed Conflict*. 1998. pp. 1-4.

²³⁹ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *CSW42 Agreed Conclusions (II): Women and Armed Conflict*. 1998. pp. 1-4.



actions that can be taken by the Commission, governments, and the international community, including ensuring legal systems provide gender-sensitive avenues of redress for SGBV survivors and mainstreaming gender and gender expertise in decision-making bodies, amongst others.²⁴⁰

A multi-pronged approach with multiple stakeholders is necessary to address SGBV and systemic gender inequality.²⁴¹ Several actors, such as United Nations bodies, international organizations, and non-profit organizations, have taken varied steps to ensure its prevention in fragile contexts and situations.²⁴² These efforts include empowering women and girls, engaging male allies, including women in decision-making spaces and peacebuilding efforts, and supporting local women's rights organizations.²⁴³ UN Women and CSW are making strides to enhance data collection and analysis on GBV in conflict situations, build a cohort of male allies and champions and work with partners to address hygiene facilities and GBV in conflict situations.²⁴⁴ UN Women promotes a gendered perspective by teaming Ukrainian women with activists to change their barriers into opportunities and resources during conflict, and suggest realistic solutions through interactive theater performances to influence government action.²⁴⁵ The World Bank's State and Peacebuilding Fund works in refugee districts and trains service providers to ensure that survivors of GBV have access to essential services, legal aid, shelters, and healthcare services.²⁴⁶ Additionally, the WithHer Fund, established by the United Nations Foundation and European Union Spotlight Initiative, seeks to provide funding to women's rights organizations working to address GBV, particularly in conflict situations.²⁴⁷ The International Rescue Committee also provides case management, mental, emotional, medical, and psychosocial support for SGBV survivors in conflict situations.²⁴⁸

Conclusion

To ensure peaceful societies, women and girls in armed conflict must be protected.²⁴⁹ Both viewed as global public health emergencies, SGBV and the lack of access to WASH infrastructure are constant threats to the lives of women and girls, especially those in humanitarian emergencies.²⁵⁰ Providing WASH, hygiene, and health services, including menstrual products, is necessary for protecting women and girls from diseases, infections, and indirect conflict mortality.²⁵¹ By delivering health services, creating awareness, and collecting and analyzing adequate data on SGBV in conflict situations, women and girls

²⁴⁰ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Follow-Up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: Implementation of Strategic Objectives and Action in the Critical Areas of Concern*. 1998.

²⁴¹ European institute for Gender Equality. *What is gender-based violence?*. 2024.

²⁴² International Rescue Committee. *What is gender-based violence - and how do we prevent it?*. 2023.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch. *Women and Armed Conflict*. N.d; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Ending violence against women*. N.d.

²⁴⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Internally displaced women of Ukraine find voice through interactive theatre*. 2017.

²⁴⁶ World Bank Group. *Tackling Gender Based Violence in Fragile Contexts*. 2023.

²⁴⁷ Zack. United Nations Foundation. *Stand With Her: 6 Women-Led Organizations Tackling Gender-Based Violence*. 2022.

²⁴⁸ International Rescue Committee. *What is gender-based violence - and how do we prevent it?*. 2023.

²⁴⁹ Espinosa. United Nations Chronicle. *Peace Is Synonymous With Women's Rights*. 2020.

²⁵⁰ Zack. United Nations Foundation. *Stand With Her: 6 Women-Led Organizations Tackling Gender-Based Violence*. 2022; World Health Organization. *Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)*. N.d.

²⁵¹ Kaveri. Health Policy Watch. *Water and Sanitation Crises Hit Women and Girls Harder than Men*. 2023.



can be prescribed the necessary protection they need.²⁵² Overall, a gendered perspective must be adopted to ensure an understanding of the varied effects of conflict on women and girls and identify the appropriate protection measures.²⁵³ Gender plays a significant role in armed conflict, and until a gendered approach is taken in addressing conflict situations, lasting peace is distant.²⁵⁴

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can a gendered perspective be applied in responding to conflict and humanitarian emergencies? What are some specific ways Member States can proactively provide proper WASH infrastructure in conflict situations? What measures can be taken to prevent and better respond to all forms of GBV against women? How can CSW partner with existing organizations to better protect women and girls in armed conflict globally?

²⁵² Human Rights Watch. *Women and Armed Conflict*. N.d; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Ending violence against women*. N.d; Kaveri. Health Policy Watch. *Water and Sanitation Crises Hit Women and Girls Harder than Men*. 2023.

²⁵³ WaterAid. *Integrating gender equality into water, sanitation and hygiene projects*. N.d.

²⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch. *Women and Armed Conflict*. N.d.



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