



THE 71ST SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK

1. Indigenous Women and Girls
2. Protecting against Gender-based Violence
3. Affordable Access to Healthcare



The Main Committees of the UN General Assembly consider agenda items referred to them by the General Assembly and prepare recommendations and draft resolutions for submission to the General Assembly plenary. The Committees correspond with the General Assembly's major fields of responsibility.

The General Assembly's Third Committee focuses on topics relating to social, humanitarian, and cultural issues. The Committee discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.

The Third Committee issues book was prepared by the students of Weber State University for the 71st session of Model United Nations of the Far West

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

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MUNFW 71th Session – Third Committee

Indigenous peoples represent extraordinary diversity throughout the world. More than 5,000 different groups reside in over 90 countries. Indigenous groups comprise more than 5% of the world's population, an estimated 370 million people.²⁷ Yet, these groups are among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. Many indigenous peoples struggle to preserve their land rights and access to natural resources. Other indigenous peoples have been forcibly removed from their homes for education, relocated for eminent domain, denied their culture, their languages, and traditional ways. In 1982 a group of extraordinary women decided to tackle this issue and participated in a working group on indigenous populations in Geneva, Switzerland.²⁸ Due to their participation, indigenous issues, and in particular the rights of indigenous women and girls, are more prominent today.

Overcoming Discriminations

Significant progress on indigenous rights have been made. These rights include The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples (2019) and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2016). On September 22 and 23, 2004, the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples took place at the United Nations headquarters which included the participation of powerful indigenous women. The conference adopted an agreement at the

²⁷ "Indigenous Peoples." Amnesty International, June 1, 2021.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples>

²⁸ Indigenous Women and the UN System for Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 10, 2021.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/indigenous-women.html>.

opening of the conference, which resulted in resolution A/RES/69/2 which refers to indigenous women in sections 10, 17, 18, and 19. This resolution was organized based on inclusive and open informal discussions with Member States and indigenous peoples, in which indigenous women were involved through their own representatives. These paragraphs included the following:

10. The Heads of State and Government, ministers, and representatives of Member States commit to working with indigenous peoples to disaggregated data, as appropriate, or conduct surveys and to utilizing holistic indicators of indigenous peoples' well-being to address the situation and needs of indigenous peoples and individuals, in particular older persons, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities.

17. We commit ourselves to supporting the empowerment of indigenous women and to formulating and implementing, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women and their organizations, policies and programmes designed to promote capacity-building and strengthen their leadership. We support measures that will ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas and eliminate barriers to their participation in political, economic, social, and cultural life.

18. We commit ourselves to intensifying our efforts, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous peoples and individuals, in particular women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, by strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks.

19. We invite the Human Rights Council to consider examining the causes and consequences of violence against indigenous women and girls, in consultation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and other special procedures mandate holders within their respective mandates. We also invite the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the issue of the empowerment of indigenous women at a future session."²⁹

Despite the progress that has been made, there are still many obstacles to the advancement of both indigenous peoples' rights and women and girls rights specifically. The following sections will review these challenges.

²⁹ Indigenous Women and WCIP for Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed November 1, 2021. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/indigenous-women/indigenous-women-and-wcip.html>

Right to lands, territories, and resources

On September 13 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration identifies that indigenous peoples have important collective human rights in a multitude of areas, including freedom, spirituality, lands, regions, and natural resources. At the core of indigenous peoples' struggles are their rights to lands, territories, and resources. Ancestral lands are the cause of indigenous peoples' culture, spiritual, social, and political identity and the foundation of traditional data systems. Jose Martinez Cobo, a special rapporteur of the sub-commission on prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities emphasized the following:

It is essential to know and understand the deeply spiritual special relationship between indigenous peoples and their land as basic and their existence as such and to all their beliefs, customs, traditions, and culture. For such peoples, the land is not merely a possession and a means of production. The entire relationship between the spiritual life of indigenous peoples and mother earth, and their land, has a great many deep-seated implications. Their land is not a commodity which can be acquired, but a material element to be enjoyed freely.³⁰

Thus, the connections between the land and the people are deeply embedded in indigenous peoples' cultural and spiritual identities. Cases which support the abuses and government neglect are cases such as *Mayagna (Sumo) Awas Tingni Community v. Nicaragua*. The Mayagna Awas (Sumo) Tingni Community lives in the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and is made up of nearly 142 families. Jaime Castillo Felipe, a leader of the community, submitted a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) criticizing the State of Nicaragua for failing to demarcate the Awas Tingni Community's communal land. Felipe expressed the importance to take necessary measures to protect the Community's property rights over its

³⁰ "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." Accessed January 08, 2022. https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

ancestral lands and natural resources.³¹ This resulted in establishing for the first time that indigenous peoples' identities are interwoven with lands that they have historically used. In addition, the community complained that the Government had failed to guarantee access to an effective remedy for the community's claims regarding the then-imminent concession of 62,000 hectares of tropical forest to be commercially developed by a company on communal lands.³²

Human Rights Abuses

Violence against indigenous women is generally found in greater portions than violence against non-indigenous women. Many indigenous women experience first-hand being helped last or not at all, one being access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health as one of many basic rights. Across the globe, indigenous women and adolescent girls significantly experience worse maternal health outcomes than most of the population. Indigenous women and girls experience a multi-layered and complex spectrum of human rights abuse. In the report of the special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people's state that, "the spectrum is manipulated by multiple and intersecting forms of vulnerability, including patriarchal power structures; multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization, based on gender, class, ethnic origin and socioeconomic circumstances; and historical and current violations of the right to self-determination and control of resources."³³ Indigenous women influence and contribute to society, and continue to suffer from discrimination, both as women and as indigenous people. They are exposed to extreme poverty, trafficking, illiteracy, lack of access to ancestral lands, and

³¹"Case of the Mayagna (SUMO) AWAS Tingni Community v. Nicaragua [Eng]." ESCR. Accessed January 13, 2022.

<https://www.escr-net.org/caselaw/2006/case-mayagna-sumo-awas-tingni-community-v-nicaragua-eng>.

³²"Inter-American Court of Human Rights Case of the Mayagna ...". Accessed January 13, 2022.

https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_79_ing.pdf.

³³ "UN Women from Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the ...". Accessed January 11, 2022.

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-COVID-19-References-en.pdf>.

lack of basic health care. In addition they experience higher rates of violence and sexual violence in their lifetime. For example, while 7 out of every 10 women in the world report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence, most of them at the hand of intimate partners, it is 4 out of every 5 indigenous women who experience this.³⁴

Indigenous leaders and advocates have also noted that despite the process achieved, systematic attention to the vulnerability of indigenous women remains limited in relations to the magnitude of abuse against them. Nevertheless, there has been continued growth and achievements towards indigenous women empowering themselves through organizations and networks created by Indigenous women, allowing the global world that they are visible domestically and internationally. On October 30, 2000, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. This was the first resolution to connect women's experiences of conflict to maintain international peace and security. Since then the Security Council has passed seven additional resolutions concentrating on women's participation in conflict prevention. These resolutions are 1325(2000), 1820(2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015).³⁵

Violence against women and girls is a universal violation of human rights that can be seen in every country in the world and across all socioeconomic groups and cultures. This viciousness is intensified when indigenous communities find themselves in the center of conflicts which has made women targets of violence. Indigenous women experience extensive, complex human rights abuses.³⁶ That range is influenced by many forms of discriminations such as gender, class, and socioeconomic status. In addition, history and current events has

³⁴ Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women.” UN Women. Accessed August 8, 2021.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/5/breaking-the-silence-on-violence-against-indigenous-girls>.

³⁵ “About Women, Peace and Security in the Security Council.” PeaceWomen, June 8, 2020.

<https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/WPS-in-SC-Council>.

³⁶A/HRC/30/41 - e - A/HRC/30/41 -desktop. Accessed November 16, 2021. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/30/41>.

also allowed us to see the centuries of abuses and violations towards indigenous women and girls.

Participation and Inclusion

The world is gradually acknowledging the negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on health, food security, and overall peace and conflict situations. During these conflictual times, indigenous knowledge is crucial in promoting the conservation of the environment and territorial rights. These rights are beginning to be more fully acknowledged by society at large. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development offers further opportunities to promote the rights of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources due to its cohesive approach of economic, environmental, and social development within a human rights framework. The United Nations has encouraged all nations “to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress and the contribution of indigenous peoples”.³⁷ This includes the most vulnerable, which is often indigenous women and girls.

Despite working alongside the United Nations committees, there continues to be an interface between indigenous women’s movements, domestically, and internationally. Empowering indigenous women is crucial for poverty eradication and for achieving sustainable development. For centuries they have not been considered as part of the solution to many of the world's issues; however, this needs to change. Fully integrating indigenous women and girls’ knowledge and experience is essential to making progress towards the sustainability goals. It has been found that, while indigenous viewpoints are not always included, when their concerns

³⁷<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2016/10/Briefing-Paper-on-Indigenous-Peoples-Rights-and-the-2030-Agenda.pdf>

are listened to, the resultant framework includes a foundation of human rights, equality, and environmental sustainability.³⁸

In addition, Indigenous women have been calling upon the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to adopt a universal recommendation on indigenous women. In support of this call, the Permanent Forum was created and involved to be adopted in the 2030 agenda. The forum recommended that “the Committee consider issues related to individual and collective rights to equality, non-discrimination and self-determination; social and economic rights, including the rights to decent work and to land, territory and resources; the right to water and food; cultural rights; civil and political rights; and the right to live free of any form of violence.”³⁹ The forum also recognized the work of the working groups on violence against indigenous women and girls and urges Canada, Mexico, and the United States of America, in support with United Nations entities to organize an international experts on ongoing issues of violence against indigenous women and girls including trafficking, as well as the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women.⁴⁰

More recently in 2021, the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on March 15 to 26. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended this session. The main goal was to have women’s full participation in decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for reaching gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. [5] The United Nations Gender Equality forum addressed the historical and inequality which exists due to power relations and irreplaceable knowledge of

³⁸<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2016/10/Briefing-Paper-on-Indigenous-Peoples-Rights-and-the-2030-Agenda.pdf>

³⁹ “Indigenous Women and the UN System for Indigenous Peoples.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed November 16, 2021.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/indigenous-women.html>.

⁴⁰ E/2019/43 - e - E/2019/43 -Desktop. Accessed November 16, 2021. <https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/43>.

marginalized groups, such as indigenous women. This forum included increasing direct access to financing for gender climate solutions, specifically for organizations led by women and girls at the grassroots and rural level. It also included building the resilience of women and girls to fully integrate their diversity to climate impacts and disaster risks, diminish climate change while including land rights and contract security. Also included in the Action Coalition are steps in which it will help engage women and girls to transition into an inclusive green economy through investing knowledge hubs and digital platforms focusing on grassroots and indigenous women and girls globally.⁴¹

Conclusion

Indigenous women and girls are overwhelmingly over-represented in statistics of poverty, hunger, and premature death. They need to be part of global discussions in order to raise awareness and find solutions to prevent the further victimization of indigenous women, to eliminate inequalities which lead to violence, trafficking, illiteracy and non-existent or poor health care, in addition to honoring their land rights that are essential to their identities. One way to do this is to include indigenous women and girls specifically in the 2030 agenda. Indigenous women have long been engaged in calling for women's rights and equality in their communities as well as all over the world. By empowering indigenous women and girls it will allow solutions towards combating violence and eradicating poverty as well. The United Nations will continue to push this agenda to achieve a safer society for all.

⁴¹ "Next Steps." Accessed November 12, 2021.
<https://soon-young.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Caucus-briefing-SY-1-1.pdf>.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the demographics within your country and region in relation to indigenous populations?
2. What steps has your country taken to implement/integrate/further the rights of indigenous peoples found within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
3. What steps has your country/region/voting blocks taken to integrate indigenous women and girls into the political sphere?
4. Why is it important to empower indigenous women and girls? How has your country addressed this issue?
5. What steps has your country taken to eliminate poverty and hunger within your country? Has this or can this be extended to eliminate poverty and hunger within indigenous communities? If so, how?
6. How can the international community address the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls?

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<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/indigenous-women/indigenous-women-and-the-commission-on-the-status-of-women.html>

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<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>.

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https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf.

PROTECTING AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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The United Nations (UN) defines gender-based violence as “discrimination based on gender, the acceptance of violence due to social structures, and stereotypes that continue and further violence against a gender.” While gender-based violence can be targeted at men, this paper focuses on women, since gender-based violence has a disproportionate effect on the global female population. “Globally, 95% of perpetrators of intentional homicide are male, with 64,000 intentional homicides being committed a year, two thirds of the victims are female.”¹ Additionally, according to the WHO, “at least, 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners.”² Furthermore, at least 5,000 women and girls are killed each year in honor killings³ by their male family members.

In regards to what constitutes an act of gender-based violence against women, the UN has stated that “violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”⁴ According to UN Women, “736 million women (thirty percent of all women fifteen years and older), have suffered from sexual violence either from a sexual partner, non-partner, or both

¹ Sylvia Walby et al., “The Concept and Measurement of Violence Against Women and Men” (Policy Press University of Bristol, 2017),

<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/31892/623150.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

² “Violence against Women,” World Health Organization (World Health Organization, March 9, 2021), <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

³ Tanya D’Lima, Jennifer Solotaroff, and Rohini Prabha Pande, “For the Sake of Family and Tradition: Honour Killings in India and Pakistan,” SAGE Journals, May 23, 2012, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2455632719880852>.

⁴ United Nations. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. New York : UN, 1993.

at least once in their life.”⁵ Thus, with a global population of almost four billion women, about 1.4 million women worldwide have suffered from sexual violence.

Globally, violence against women and girls is regarded as a human rights violation. The immediate and long-term physical, sexual, and mental consequences for women and girls can be devastating, ranging from psychological strain, to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and in the worst cases death.⁶ Moreover, prevalence of gender-based violence in a community can impact the social and civic rights of women and girls in that community, regardless of whether they were a victim. Gender-based violence is not just a human rights violation, but an intertwined network of oppression against women and girls that prevents females from reaching their full potential as a global community.⁷ Gender-based violence can lead to women becoming less engaged in civic society and their private lives, furthering the narrative that women and girls are worth less in the eyes of society.⁸

UN Response to Gender-based Violence

Women and girls have the right to not fear violence, in addition, governments, agencies, and workplaces should uphold these rights and protect women. When women feel safe, they participate more in society, raise healthier children, and live a better quality of life. To support this, the UN adopted the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 1979. In 1981, it became an international treaty after the twentieth country signed to ratify it. This convention’s purpose is to bring female human rights to the center of attention. The goal of the convention is: to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity, and

⁵ “Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women: What We Do,” UN Women, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures#notes>.

⁶ “What We Do: Ending Violence against Women,” UN Women, accessed August 21, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>.

⁷ Ibid., UN Women

⁸ Ibid.

worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women. Additionally, a main focus in this convention is listed in Article 16.e, which guarantees “women’s rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and space of their children and to have access to the information, education, and means to enable them to exercise these rights.”⁹ This commission is also focused on the legal rights of women, which promotes their equality on the legal front, meaning women can no longer be property of men.

Preventing gender-based violence against women and girls is encompassed in the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), passed in 2016, which were built on the momentum of the successful Millennium Development Goals. The 17 SDGs call on all member states to focus on creating a more equitable world by eradicating poverty, mitigating climate change and switching to sustainable options, and promoting social equality and equity.

Sustainable Development Goal Five

The following targets are provided to end inequality and harm against women and girls in SDG five, and are to be completed by 2030:

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

⁹ “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,” OHCHR, December 18, 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>.

5.7 Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

5.9 Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.¹⁰

A brief analysis of these goals is included in subsequent sections.

Discrimination Against Women and Girls Furthering Gender-Base Violence

When women are seen as lesser than men it furthers the societal norm of abusing women sexually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commission (OHCHR) defines discrimination as an act of violence against women and girls. The act of discrimination hinders the rights and freedoms of women that are given to men freely and disproportionately.¹¹ The act of discrimination also furthers the likelihood of the violence discussed in subsequent sections occurring.

Honor Killings

One type of gender-based violence that is often ignored are honor killings: when a woman dishonors her family in some way and a male family member kills her in order to “restore the family honor”. This can occur if she is seen flirting with a man, as it may be perceived that she may have lost her virginity or is promiscuous, when in actuality none of that may be true. The data on honor killings is limited – only 5,000 a year are reported, but it is estimated that up to 20,000 honor killings may be committed a year. “In this system, a ‘good woman’ is one who can

¹⁰ “Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality,” UN Women | Europe and Central Asia, accessed August 22, 2021,

<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>, 3.

¹¹ The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commission, “Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls,” OHCHR (The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commission, OAD), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/Gender-based-violence.aspx>.

fulfil the socially sanctioned roles of daughter, wife and mother. 'Good' women are typically expected not to actively express their sexuality, and are discouraged from expressing independent desires or making decisions."¹² This is a violation of human rights, because it limits the freedoms that women have with the punishment being murder if they do not obey. This does not just extend to sexual expression, but acts of enrolling in education, wanting to work, or showing any independence that indicates that she is stepping outside of the societal norms and expectations.

Human Trafficking

While human trafficking affects the entire global population, it excessively affects women and girls. According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) 71 percent of all trafficking victims are women and girls, 72 percent of the females being used for sexual exploitation.¹³ The UN has reported: "Worldwide, 28 percent of trafficking victims are children, but children account for 62 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 64 percent in Central America and the Caribbean."¹⁴ Areas that experience armed conflict from terrorist organizations are particularly vulnerable for women, for example they can be kidnapped or forced into sexual slavery or marriage with little or no retribution due to the unstable political systems in those countries. While some of the developed world has outlawed the selling of brides, many countries have not and some developed nations have populations that buy brides from different nations, which is considered an act of human trafficking. All forms of trafficking are human rights violations and constrains the freedoms and choices of women and girls.

¹² Ibid "For the Sake of Family Tradition"

¹³ The American Association of University Women, "Where We Stand: Human Trafficking," AAUW, March 24, 2020, <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/position-human-trafficking/>.

¹⁴ The United Nations, "Report: Majority of Trafficking Victims Are Women and Girls," United Nations (United Nations, OAD), <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/12/report-majority-of-trafficking-victims-are-women-and-girls-one-third-children/>.

Child Marriages

When girls marry under the age of 18, they are more likely to experience domestic violence and leave the education system. Child marriage also causes worse economic standing for women and girls and increased health concerns and danger. Health concerns are furthered due to adolescent birth rates, which increase birth complications for the mother and child.¹⁵ Each day, 37,000 girls under the age of 18 are married. One in nine girls under 15 in the developing world are married.¹⁶ Around the world,

based on data from 87 countries, one in five women and girls under the age of 50 will have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months... In Central and Southern Asia, the corresponding figure is 23.1 percent... Harmful practices, such as child marriage, steal the childhood of 15 million girls under age 18 every year... Central and Southern Asia has the highest rates of child marriage, with 16 percent of women currently aged between 20 and 24 married before they turned 15, and 43 percent before age 18... In Tajikistan, girls who married before age 15 delivered their first child at the average age of 17, compared to age 21 for girls who married at 15 or older.¹⁷

Aggressive legislation banning the act of child marriages is needed in every country to protect the rights, economic standing, and health of girls around the world.

Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

When societies do not recognize the value of unpaid care and domestic work this furthers the narrative that women, and what they contribute to society, is not valuable. It promotes the act of discrimination and places a low value on the time, hardwork, and effort that it takes for a women to bear children, raise them, and physical domestic labor. When a country has divorce laws that do not value the unpaid care and domestic work of women, it makes it

¹⁵ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund., "Child Marriage," UNICEF, March 7, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>.

¹⁶ International Women's Health Coalition, "The Facts on Child Marriage," International Women's Health Coalition, May 23, 2018, <https://iwhc.org/resources/facts-child-marriage/>.

¹⁷ "Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality," UN Women | Europe and Central Asia, accessed August 22, 2021, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>.

incredibly difficult for women to pursue a divorce when in a dangerous marriage, which furthers domestic violence. Additionally, the idea that a man's work in their career field is more valuable than a woman's work in the home, creates disproportionate rights and freedoms between men and women.

Reproductive Rights and Choices

Restricting reproduction rights are at the forefront of gender-based violence. Women who are unable to make independent decisions on sexual relations, contraception, and other body autonomy issues directly correlates with societal inequality, especially in their personal and civic lives. Only 52 percent of women worldwide have reported the ability to make their own decisions when it comes to issues such as health care, including contraceptions, and sexual relations, regardless of their relationship status.¹⁸ Many regions where women do not have bodily autonomy rights, one sees the right to make these kinds of decisions defaulting first to the husband, and then second to male family members.

Additionally, female genital mutilation is a major issue within reproductive rights. Female genital mutilation is the partial or complete removal of the external female reproductive organ. When performed on minors, consent is almost never given.¹⁹ This is therefore considered a type of gender-based violence.

According to data from 31 countries and territories in which the practice is concentrated, at least 200 million women and girls have been subjected to female genital mutilation. Despite some progress, there are still countries and territories in which at least 9 in 10 girls and women ranging from 15 to 49 years of age have been subjected to such mutilation, making the harmful practice almost universal.²⁰

¹⁸ UN Economic and Social Council, "Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality," UN Women, 2017, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>.

¹⁹ World Health Organization, "Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation," World Health Organization (World Health Organization, October 7, 2019), <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/about/en/>.

²⁰ "Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," United Nations (United Nations, 2021), <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.

Women and girls reproductive rights must be protected in order to reduce inequality within society.

Property, Financial Services, Inheritance and Natural Resources

When women are not allowed to own property this means that they are not equal in the eyes of society to men, and that men are more valued. "In South Asia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Maldives do not provide for equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters. This is also the case in all countries in the Middle East and North Africa except in Malta."²¹ The World Economic Forum reports that women own less than twenty percent of the world's land.²² Legislation is needed to lessen this disparity of wealth and freedom.

Conclusion

The global community has made some strides in reducing gender-based violence, but with the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affecting women more than men, almost all progress has been lost. "Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, more than 100 million girls were expected to marry before their eighteenth birthday in the next decade. Now, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic."²³ Due to the lack of available child care, this responsibility was automatically defaulted to women causing them to have a large economic setback.

²¹ The World Bank , "Where in the World Do Women Still Face Legal Barriers to Own and Administer Assets?," World Bank Blogs, OAD, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/where-world-do-women-still-face-legal-barriers-own-and-administer-assets>.

²² Monique Villa, "Women Own Less than 20% of the World's Land. It's Time to Give Them Equal Property Rights," World Economic Forum, January 11, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/women-own-less-than-20-of-the-worlds-land-its-time-to-give-them-equal-property-rights/>.

²³ Ibid.

“The recently released report shows that the pandemic will push 96 million people into extreme poverty by 2021, 47 million of whom are women and girls. This will bring the total number of women and girls living on USD 1.90 or less, to 435 million.”²⁴

This is not the only place that women and girls will suffer unequal effects of the pandemic, “estimates show that an additional 11 million girls may leave school by the end of the COVID crisis; evidence from previous crises suggests that many will not return.”²⁵

According to the SDG 5 tracker provided by the UN:

“According to data for 2020 from 95 countries and territories, more than half lacked quotas for women in the national parliament; 83 percent included budgetary commitments to implement legislation addressing violence against women, although 63 percent continued to lack rape laws based on the principle of consent; more than 90 percent prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of gender, yet almost half continued to restrict women from working in certain jobs or industries; and almost one quarter did not grant women equal rights to men for entering into marriage and initiating divorce proceedings.”²⁶

This progress has not just been lost in regards to protecting against gender-based violence targeted at women and girls, but in all aspects of the fifth SDG.

²⁴ UN Women, “Covid-19 and Its Economic Toll on Women: The Story behind the Numbers,” UN Women (UN Women, September 16, 2020), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What policies and strategies have been implemented to promote SDG 5 and the status of women within your country, and how do these intersect with gender-based violence?
2. What (if any) instruments or evaluation tools has your country implemented to evaluate the impact of gender-based violence?
3. What systems and policies further gender-based violence within your country? What measures has your country taken to mitigate these problems?
4. What measures has the international community taken to mitigate gender-based violence? Have these measures been implemented in your region and country?
5. What is the impact of gender-based violence in your country? What are the statistics and evaluation metrics in relation to gender-based violence within your country?
6. What has been the impact of COVID on your country's progress towards SDG 5?

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INCREASING THE AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

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MUNFW 71st Session – Third Committee

Women empowerment has been a driving force to challenge and change the disadvantages in healthcare that women have been facing and enduring for a very long time in different areas of their lives. These specific issues for women like pregnancy, childbirth, contraception, abortion, breast cancer, maternity leave, and many others. To add even further disadvantage, women also have been given much less access to healthcare resources when compared to men as well as typically having more expensive medical bills due to lack of insurance coverage for the medical needs of women and girls. So, while it is shown that women have a longer life expectancy than men in most countries, the World Health Organization has indicated that women have more constant, recurring, and year round issues when compared to men. It is a global issue that has also become worse in underdeveloped countries that lack the infrastructure to support the needs of specific womens health.

UN Women advocates for States in order to provide and coordinate better health services for women survivors of violence and in need of specific medical care. They also partner with and help support non-government organizations so they can provide health services for women and girls everywhere. UN Women work to end practices that bring danger to mother and child, including child marriage, female genital cutting, dietary restrictions, inequalities in cost and coverage of healthcare, and all other forms of violence, discrimination, and bias against women and girls. More recent progress has been shown with the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, it was one of the most important advancements in women's health policy in the US since 1965. The act increased the number of American women who were eligible to get health insurance, it lowered the overall cost of healthcare plans for many women, improved the

quality of the healthcare that women received, and set a progressive example for many others to follow. The Affordable Care Act also improves preventive care for women, providing evidence-based preventive services at no cost to women. Under the new act women cannot be charged more just because they are a woman, they also cannot be denied health insurance coverage because of a specific preexisting health condition that comes from being a woman, such as breast cancer, pregnancy, iron deficiency, or depression. This included annual exams and visits, birth control, and breastfeeding support and supplies. The act also got rid of annual and lifetime dollar limits on insurance coverage.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, global progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals targets to improve women's health and save the lives of women and children was already behind target by ~20%. 3 billion people in the world, half of whom are women who still did not have handwashing facilities during the pandemic. On top of that many women and girls were already going through health issues related to sexual and reproductive health and menstrual hygiene. Before the pandemic the global estimates from WHO and UNICEF approximated that nearly 810 women died every day due to preventable issues during or related to pregnancy due to not having access to clean water or private toilets, 94% being in low to middle income countries.

Achieving the Global Strategy to ensure the health and well-being of women and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is going to require new approaches based on evidence and supported by modern and financially stable institutions. In 2015 the World Health Organization released a report by the Every Woman Every Child movement titled "The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030)" which was built on what worked in the past. The vision of this report is as follows;

“By 2030, a world in which every woman, child and adolescent in every setting realizes their rights to physical and mental health and well-being, has social and economic opportunities, and is able to participate fully in shaping prosperous and sustainable societies.”⁴²

There are health services specific to women like pre- and post-natal care, getting access to sexual and reproductive health, as well as giving care and support for survivors of gender-based violence. When these healthcare systems were overburdened and resources were taken and distributed elsewhere in response to the pandemic it further disrupted a lot of the services that are only applicable to women and girls. These health service complications can be devastating, more so in rural and low-literacy communities, in which women are less likely to have things like access to quality health services, essential medicines or insurance coverage. There are many other inequalities that can further these complications, such as ethnicity, economic status, if you have a disability, your age, your race, geographic location or even sexual orientation, ect...

Sustainable Development Goal 3 & 5

The 3rd Sustainable development goal is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. However, there are also more specific targets to within the individual goals themselves that specifically pertain to access to healthcare and specifically for women, they are as follows:

3.1- By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

3.7- By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

3.8- Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.⁴³

⁴² Every Woman Every Child, “THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR WOMEN’S, CHILDREN’S AND ADOLESCENTS’ HEALTH,” WHO, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.who.int/life-course/partners/global-strategy/globalstrategyreport2016-2030-lowres.pdf>.

⁴³ UN, “The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed November 16, 2021, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls globally. This goal is specifically targeted towards all forms of equality for women and girls but we can still highlight those more pertaining to women's health and well-being. Those intergoal targets being:

- 5.1- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 5.3- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 5.6- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences⁴⁴

More Women as Leaders

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres urged governments to put women and girls at the center of their focus to recover from COVID-19 a few weeks into the pandemic by saying that “it starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power” and “Gender equality and women's rights are essential to getting through this pandemic together, to recovering faster, and to building a better future for everyone.”

Over a year later the World Health Organization, the United Nations special Human Reproductive Programme, the United Nations University International Institute for Global Health, and the British Medical Journal, released a special series of 13 papers, articles, and even podcasts, worked on together by 40 authors across 15 countries, they titled it Women's Health and Gender Inequalities. The series was made to celebrate and interrogate collective progress towards making the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action a successful reality for all women and girls globally. The series reveals the new and emerging threats present in society by analyzing past successes and using new evidence-based methods to further progress women's health and

⁴⁴ UN, “The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed November 16, 2021, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

equality. The Women's Health and Gender Inequalities series also gave us a more modern and progressive agenda towards the following:

- "Bodily autonomy – enabling women and girls to make informed sexual, reproductive, and healthcare decisions—a human right for all.
- Promoting equitable gender norms, including those that make violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as early/forced marriage and female genital mutilation, unacceptable.
- Financing universal health coverage and social protection to cover health costs, child care, paid parental, sick and family care leave and old age pension.
- Valuing paid employment and unpaid care work equally and enabling men to share care work with women.
- Addressing male bias in the development of vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics.
- Strengthening health systems to include safe, decent working conditions for the majority female health workforce including eliminating sexual harassment and violence.
- Investing in feminist movements, which have been instrumental in fostering progressive changes towards gender equality.
- Ensuring women's and feminist leadership in governments, health and development agencies, and other global organizations."⁴⁵

Conclusion

The Director of the WHO Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research, Ian Askew, when talking about the articles and the new agenda they presented said;

National governments and the global community need to do better together to support and enable women and girls to enjoy their health and fulfill their rights. This BMJ series on Women's Health and Gender Inequalities takes us on a powerful journey: from understanding the barriers, to sharing effective modes of change and inspiring possibilities for the future,⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Joint News Release, "The Future We Expect: Women's Health and Gender Equality," World Health Organization (World Health Organization, June 28, 2021), <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-06-2021-the-future-we-expect-women-s-health-and-gender-equality>.

⁴⁶ Joint News Release, "The Future We Expect: Women's Health and Gender Equality," World Health Organization (World Health Organization, June 28, 2021), <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-06-2021-the-future-we-expect-women-s-health-and-gender-equality>.

Organizations that are dedicated to advancing the rights of women and persons with disabilities are the key driving force pushing to allow them to have full inclusion and rights in society while still being on an equal basis with everyone else. Unfortunately, Gender gaps in global health leadership and a lack of access to sustainable funding frequently result in the needs of women and girls being neglected during the development and implementation of policies, programmes, and intergovernmental processes.

Questions to Consider

1. How does gender affect women's ability to get healthcare and essential hygiene services?
2. What impact has your country had on women's health and providing affordable access to healthcare?
3. Do you think the focus should be first on those women and girls in low-income areas at most risk or countries, or should the first focus be on promoting and actively seeking female leadership in the government and global system?
4. What strategies and policies can your country or others come up with to increase accessibility of healthcare services, especially those specific to women and girls?
5. How can we deal with the effects that COVID-19 has had and is continuing to have on access to sexual and reproductive health services?

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