

COMMITTEE GUIDE

UNCSW



UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Presidents' Letter

Honourable delegates,

Welcome to CCBMUN, we are Gaia and Sofía, and we want to give you a warm welcome to this year's United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. We are eleventh and twelfth grade students at Colegio Bolivar and have been in the MUN class for about six years. Gaia recently had the chance to work as the chair of the GLS commission in a previous model and found that presiding is an optimal manner to pass along knowledge and guide delegates to pursue their greatest abilities. Likewise, Sofía has also experience of being a chair, presiding over three different committees, HRC, IOM, and, more recently, HSC. In these experiences, she has found a way to widen her delegates' global and historical panorama. She has been able to help delegates throughout the enriching experience of Model UN, as well as teach them the importance of listening to young voices.

UNCSW is meant to be a space for delegates to stand up for women's empowerment and promote gender equality. The topics we will address are: discussing the actions that should or shouldn't be taken by governments regarding women's basic needs; the lack of education for women in the sub-Saharan Africa region; and the effects that sexual violence has on women's health. As a delegate in this commission, you must consider the reality that women nowadays face and the problems that different cultures and governments pose for them. You are also meant to be respectful and should be open-minded to new ideas or perspectives. We expect that through discussion and debate, the delegates will find viable and optimal solutions, proposals, or even answers for the current issues that women have to live with. We hope that this commission will not only be another MUN debate that you go through as a delegate, but a learning experience that will help change some perspectives and paradigms that exist around women and their role in society.

We want to make sure you always feel comfortable and to know that we will always be here to help you and guide you through this process. If you have any doubts, or questions, or are just looking for advice, we will always be happy to help. You can contact us through the commission email at unsw@ccbcali.edu.co. We can't wait to see you at CCB!

Yours sincerely,

Gaia Gallizugaro & Sofía Barrios
UNCSW presidents

Simulation Topic: *Governmental aid for feminist movements promoting gender equality*

I. History/Context

The history of feminism can be traced back to Ancient Greece, when the philosopher Plato started to advocate for women, stating that they had the same capacities as men. Despite his declarations, though, Plato's stance was supported by women in different regions, such as in ancient Rome, leading to a series of protests for their rights; other leaders did not share his point of view. Such was the case of Marcus Porcius Cato, who, in light of the uprising movements in Rome, decided to establish laws restricting women's rights. These actions were taken with the excuse that women would not only achieve equality, but eventually become superior to men if granted rights.

After Plato, other women took charge of fighting for the rights of their equals. Authors Christine de Pizan, Margaret Cavendish, and Mary Wollstonecraft all argued for the rights of women throughout their writing, and in the US, during the presidency of John Adams, his wife Abigail sought the education of women. Emmeline Pankhurst was a strong figure in the United Kingdom, who sometimes used violence to back up her cause. Later, the feminist movement was divided into three waves.



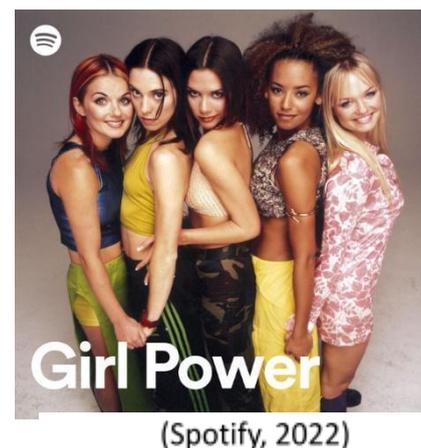
(Suffragettes holding signs in London, c. 1912. Britannica.com)

The first wave of the feminist movement started in 1848 when abolitionists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott in the USA, along with other feminists, demanded their right to vote. Following this, the suffrage movement began and started to be successful globally; thanks to the campaigns, several countries granted women the right to vote between the end of the 19th Century and the start of the 20th Century. The first country to grant voting rights to women was New Zealand in 1893, followed a few years later by Australia and Finland.

Other situations where women would show that they deserved equal treatment to men were during WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII. Through doing the work of the men and their overall efforts in these periods, women proved they deserved equal rights and recognition.

The second wave of feminism was called Women's Liberation, which started as a consequence of the feeling women had of being secluded in homemaking and childcare roles. This movement developed into the Equal Rights Amendment in the USA, where women sought to end gender discrimination; this amendment passed in 1972 and later, in 1973, the Roe v. Wade case established the legality of abortion.

The third wave of feminism started in the mid-1990s, when women questioned the inequalities between men and women in things like equal pay for equal work and access to university. Women did not want to follow society's norms about things such as their place at work, their beauty or sexual orientation. "Girl power" was a very popular phrase at the time. Access to the internet helped women to make their voices heard to a wider audience.



Although many advances were made in developed countries with respect to women's rights, it is important to understand that this movement did not happen in all parts of the world. In many countries, women have very few rights, especially in Africa and Asia. In countries such as Pakistan and Sierra Leone, women have very little education and involvement in political

life; they are expected to marry young and look after their families.

II. Current Situation

Feminist movements across the globe are put in a vulnerable position when taking into consideration the economic aid they receive. The misconception of feminism has led to many cases where these movements are ridiculed or ignored. For more than twenty years, feminist movements advocating for women's rights have been severely underfunded. In the year 2010, the AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) conducted research that revealed that a collective of 740 women's organisations all around the world, received an average budget of only \$20,000. The budget for women's rights movements is shamefully low compared to campaigns or movements classified as "more important" and of a "more urgent matter". The AWID composed a list of points for governments to accomplish which are required for a systematic impact on women's rights to occur and to ensure an advancement in the SDGs that have a focus on equality. They are the following:

1. Ensuring sufficient resources to support civil society organizations (specifically feminist organizations).
2. Different forms of governmental and intergovernmental finances.
3. This work deserves all resources that are needed, so there should be a collective responsibility for the mobilisation of these.
4. Ensuring that the political will is backed up by enough resources that can support the movements and shape transformations in the system.
5. Support of initiatives that don't just empower women and show simple solutions for more complex problems.
6. Ensuring that resources become available for diverse types of organisations (taking into account diversity amongst women).
7. Making sure that resources are available for feminist movements in all countries, reaching equality through international solidarity.

Besides AWID, the 2010s have been recognized for their various campaigns encouraging

women to speak out against sex-based violence. Movements like #MeToo, Time's Up, and the Women's March in DC have been some of the feminist events that have taken precedence in the US throughout the last year, advocating for women no matter their career or status.

In other parts of the world, such as Latin America, marches such as 8M or 28S in Mexico, have taken place annually. These marches advocate for women's rights, including abortion, assistance for women who have been victims of sexual violence, and protection against femicide. These movements try to bring justice for those women who feel they can't speak up.

Though Latin American governments know about the existence of these marches, they are many times unsupportive of them, to the point where these marches may even be satanized and criticised by the opposition. An example of this is a march in Bogotá, Colombia in 2021, which was supposed to be a cultural demonstration filled with folklore and the purpose of advocating for women. Unfortunately, a few women took things too far and set fire to a church. The women on the march were then accused of carrying out "satanic acts" in social networks.

As mentioned before, in many parts of the world, women are not allowed to protest or demand their rights at all. In Afghanistan, recently taken over by the Taliban, a march was violently dispersed. The small group of women chanted, "bread, work and freedom" in front of the ministry for education, and many were beaten by the security forces.

In many African countries, women are harassed if they try to speak up for their rights. In Sudan, for example, women's rights activists may be told that "good girls don't protest" and they are often treated in abusive ways by the government's security forces.

In July 2021, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention which is aimed at protecting gender-based violence, and neighbouring countries are seeing more anti-rights movements. In the same year, different states in the USA reduced the number of weeks that an abortion could be carried out or even banned the practice altogether. Women often face threats and

violence around the world when they stand up for women's rights.

III. Key points of the debate

- The importance of gender equality in society
- The problems of gender inequality in the world
- The need for women's rights advocates around the world
- The stigmatisation of the women's rights movement
- Lack of support for women's rights by many governments
- Ways in which governments can increase aid towards feminist movements

IV. Guiding questions

1. In what ways, if any, does your country support feminism and gender equality?
2. Are there any political parties or movements in your country that are in favour or against gender equality?
3. Does your government have financial facilities to aid movements and campaigns to tackle gender inequality and support the promotion of feminism? If so, what type of resources are given to them? If not, why not?
4. What advances or setbacks has your country had towards achieving gender equality?
5. Should gender equality be a priority for the world with respect to the Global Goals?

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Topic 1: *Lack of Education for women in the sub-Saharan Africa region.*

I. History/Context

The situation for women in the sub-Saharan Africa region has always been challenging due to certain traditions and conservative mentalities in the culture of the people who live there. For example, according to UN Women, around 70% of all contributing family workers on family farms in this region are women, which ultimately results in no direct payment or any wage at all. Most of these women have to live under these circumstances due to low economic resources and the lack of education they receive.

There are still many cases of extreme inequality of gender in the region, which is constituted of 47 countries. In 5 of these nations, the law requires that women obey their husbands. In others, married women cannot apply for a passport. Also, in 2017 it was recorded that 1 in 3 girls aged 15 to 19 had suffered female genital mutilation, which is a practice that is highly criticized globally for its dangers and harm to women, and which happens mostly in countries in the region. It was also recorded that 21.5% of women aged 15 to 49 had been a victim of physical and/or sexual violence by a partner. Additionally, in countries like Angola, Equatorial Guinea, and Eritrea there are exemptions for perpetrators for charges of rape if they marry the victim.

Family laws regarding marriage, divorce, child custody, and adoption are often discriminatory in the countries that make up this African region. Consequently, the results that are seen are countless cases of child marriage and adolescent birth rates. In 2019, 12% of girls were married before the age of 15 and 37% before turning 18. The previous statement seems to disregard the fact that the legal age of marriage for girls in the region is 18 (with Mali as an exception) but is explained by the exception that with parental consent or judicial authorization, a girl can marry before becoming an adult. Additionally, in countries such as Equatorial Guinea, girls can marry as early as 12 with parental consent. That same year, it was discovered that *"27.8 percent of women aged 20-24 [gave] birth before age 18, a*

figure that rises to 41.3 percent among women in the poorest quintile” (UN Women, 2019). This poses unacceptable challenges for young women who are receiving education in countries like Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the United Republic of Tanzania, since they expel pregnant girls from schools.



(Sonke Gender Justice, 2015)

The common lack of education for women results in misinformation about sexuality which is important to avoid issues such as early pregnancies, violence, or unsafe practices. In countries like Benin, Burkina Faso, and Congo, 10 to 15% of women stated that their economic situation kept them from utilizing contraceptives. While in countries like Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, and

the United Republic of Tanzania it was found that women didn't access contraceptives due to the fear of infertility, which is an example of a lack of education.

II. Current Situation

A famous African proverb states that "if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation." However, it seems that in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, this is perceived as unimportant. Whatever progress humanity has made towards achieving gender equality, many of the countries constituting this region still hold traditional prejudices regarding women and their inferiority to men. The fact that these males-dominated societies take away the basic human right of education from their girls reflects just how far from progress certain nations are. On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down global education. UNESCO predicted in 2020 that at least 5.2 million girls globally would not be able to return to school. Not only that, but UNESCO has also reported that the percentage of female school dropouts has increased in the past few years and has happened at a faster rate than male school dropouts.

III. Key points of the debate

- Ways in which governments and other organisations can aid women to access education
- Ways in which lack of education has affected women in the Sub-Saharan African region
- Achieving equitable education
- Sexual education for girls in the Sub-Saharan African region and the world
- Importance of female education in the Sub-Saharan African region
- Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on female education
- Effects of prejudices and traditions on lack of female education

IV. Guiding questions

1. Does your country supply free education to all children?
2. Does your country support gender equality and parity?
3. Does your country have the resources to finance education campaigns and institutions for girls? What percentage of girls have the opportunity to study in primary/secondary school?
4. Does your country have policies regarding educational rights?
5. Is the culture of your country supportive of the conservative gender roles in a family? How does this affect girls' education?
6. What are the challenges that your country faces in providing quality education for girls, if any?
7. How could your country help/invest in education for the sub-Saharan region?

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Topic 2: *The effects of sexual violence on women's health*

I. History/Context

If women in the present day undergo enormous difficulties and suffering in the process of healing and pressing charges against their oppressors, imagine what it was like for women hundreds of years ago. Throughout most of early history, sexual abuse and, more specifically, rape were seen and judged as a defilement of a man's property, rather than as a violent crime against women. Women's health or wellbeing wasn't a topic of importance in the case of a rape, yet in most cases the aggressors would receive punishment (which is not the main focus of this debate yet is important as context to the situation).

Going back thousands of years to 1750 BC, we can find what one of the oldest code of laws in the world stated about rape and its punishment. The code of Hammurabi, which was written by Hammurabi, the sixth king of the Babylon empire, stated that the rape of a virgin was punishable by death, and the victim remained blameless, whereas if the rape victim was a married woman, the act was treated as adultery and both the victim and her attacker were to die by drowning. The victim could only survive if her husband decided to save her and pull her out of the water.

Other cultures, such as the ancient Assyrians, punished rape using "an eye for an eye". This means that the father of the raped virgin could do the same to the rapist's wife as a form of punishment. The Celtic law, which was the pre-British law in the Middle Ages, considered rape a crime not only against women but also against men. It was punished by fines and was defined into two different kinds, forcible rape, which was rape against a woman's will, and rape where the victim was incapable of consenting because of mental illness or some sort of intoxication. But there were some exceptions to this law; the first was that when getting assaulted the woman had to cry for help and report it as soon as it happened. The other was that this law excluded promiscuous and adulterous women. Often rape was seen as a crime against the father or husband, rather than a crime against the woman herself.

In centuries closer to the present day (11th-12th), rape stopped being considered a property crime, and was more appropriately treated as a serious crime where women were allowed to file a civil suit to result in a trial by the jury. Consent started coming to the table and playing an important role when determining the punishment of rape in the jury. Even though it was immense progress for women, marital rape and rape of prostitutes still remained exempt from the protection of the law. It was also very difficult for a woman to bring about a rape conviction.

II. Current Situation

Even though in twenty-first century there have been great changes in the laws about sexual violence, it is still an issue that puts women in a vulnerable position regarding their physical and mental health, and the justice system. According to UN Women, sexual violence is defined as a sexual act which is performed against the will or consent of a person, including if she or he cannot give consent because of a mental disability, alcohol poisoning, or unconsciousness. Sexual violence encompasses different behaviours such as rape, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse.

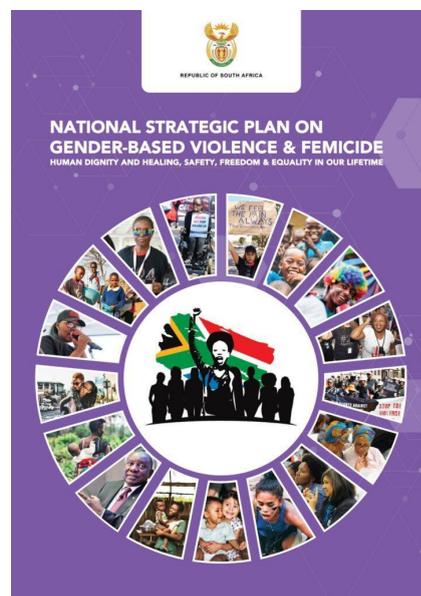
Today the figures regarding sexual violence are disturbing: it is estimated that more than 15 million teenage women have experienced forced sexual relationships; between 45% to 55% of European women have been subjected to sexual harassment before turning 15; and according to The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), every 68 seconds, a woman in the United States is sexually assaulted. Sexual violence towards women is a crime



(Nore Women's Health)

that happens every few minutes, but it is important to understand that anyone can be the aggressor - intimate partners, family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers - so there is very little a woman can do to avoid becoming a victim. The matter in question is what can a government do to stop this violence? What must be done to punish the criminals who rape, assault, and even kill women?

Many rapes go unreported around the world, and different countries have different definitions of what constitutes rape, which makes it difficult to track and compare what really happens with regard to rape. One country with a high level of rapes reported is South Africa. South Africa is a deeply violent society, which is still recovering from the setbacks brought about by strongly institutionalised sexism, racism, structural violence, and exclusion. The South African government decided to carry out the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide, which aims to improve human dignity, healing, safety, freedom, and equality. In this plan's foreword, South Africa's president, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa states that, *"South Africa holds the shameful distinction of being one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman. We have amongst the highest rates of intimate*



(GBVF)

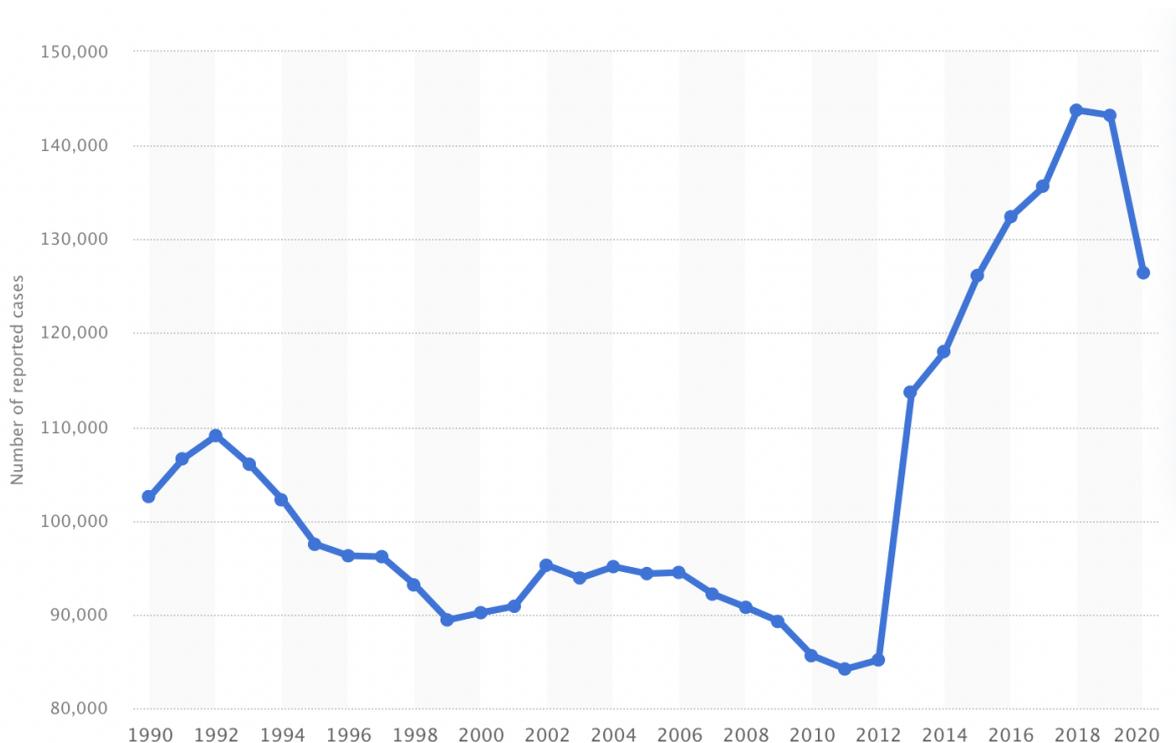
partner violence, and recently released data from Statistics SA show that rape and sexual violence have become hyperendemic. This is a scourge that affects us all: young and old, black or white, rich and poor, queer or cis, rural or urban. It pervades every sphere of our society" (Ramaphosa, 2020). [Click for more information about South Africa's strategic plan.](#)

On a similar note, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it was reported that the women had to choose between staying home and starving, or going to the fields in search of food, and risk getting raped. According to the award-winning filmmaker, Fiona Lloyd-Davies who conducted a study while living in Congo, *“Women told [her] how they expected to be raped. Not once but many times”* (Davies, 2011). Insecurity and the violation of basic human rights, as an effect of the armed conflicts that the DRC has undergone throughout its history, are not a topic of importance to the Congolese government, hence they do not penalize sexual violence, which impedes the process of providing safety to the women in the country. [Click for more information concerning sexual violence in the Congo.](#)



(San Francisco Bay View, 2017)

According to Statista, a virtual article which measures crime statistics, the amount of forcible rape cases in the US increased by a huge scale. The rape cases reported in 2011 were at an already high level of 84,175, but this went up by almost one third over the next nine years, with 126,430 rapes reported in 2020.



(Stastica, 2021)

The United States, just like many others, has proven to be a highly insecure country when it comes to women’s safety. But what actions has the country taken to fight this issue? In 1994, the American congress proposed the Violence Against Women Act, which was passed by President Bill Clinton, with the means to address the increasing cases of violence against women in the country. This bill provided economic aid to campaigns promoting rape prevention, victim services, law enforcements, and more. Since then, many other campaigns have appeared in the United States to help put an end to these violations of human dignity.

[Click for more information on US’s actions taken against violence to women.](#)

According to [Rape Crisis- England and Wales](#), in the United Kingdom, one out of four women are subjected to sexual violence, and a total of 5 million women have been raped or sexually assaulted since the age of 14. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom is one of the global leaders in tackling different forms of violence including sexual violence against women and girls advocating for their rights internationally. The British prime minister signed multiple agreements and initiatives, such as the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative, which advocate for the rights of children, women and people

in general who have been subjected to violent treatments in conflicts. [Click for more information about the UK's actions against violence.](#)

It is important to understand that even though with the passing of time political attention has been drawn to women's rights, millions of women have yet to reach a point where their rights as citizens of the world are being respected. Therefore, it is important to understand that their faith is in the hands of the governments, and the actions they decide to take when addressing the most pressing conflict which haunts women – sexual violence. Some countries have programmes which emphasize the funding campaigns to spread awareness, others take action by enforcing the penitentiary system, and some do not even acknowledge the issue. Throughout this debate, the delegates must discuss the most effective methods of ending sexual violence against women, or even if the governments should get involved in the conflict or not.

III. Key points of the debate

- Sexual violence rates in different countries
- Universal definition sexual violence
- Cultural norms that expose women to sexual violence
- Punishment for aggressors of sexual violence against women
- Government plans/programmes to reduce sexual violence towards women

IV. Guiding questions

1. What are your country's statistics regarding different types of sexual violence?
2. What is considered to be sexual violence in your country?
3. What sort of laws against sexual offenders exist in your country?
4. How frequently are sexual offenders prosecuted in your country?
5. What sort of effects does sexual violence have on women's sexual health in your country?
6. Does your country have any cultural setbacks when it comes to tackling sexual violence awareness and action?

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