

**SRI LANKA
MODEL UNITED NATIONS**



CSW

STUDY GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN

Women's rights have been a concern of the United Nations (UN) since 1945, when the United Nations Charter promised in its preamble "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small."

The Commission on the Status of Women enforces multi-year programs, created in 1987, which establishes priority themes driving discussion and action. CSW will often pick a point of societal contention, a topic that affects women's rights and demands immediate action, to serve as the focus for negotiations and discussion. Every year, representatives from 45 Member States gather at UN Headquarters in New York to discuss and review global progress towards gender equality and the advancement of women's rights. The CSW consists of Member States from around the globe: 13 from Africa, 11 from Asia, 9 from Latin America and Caribbean, 8 from Western Europe and other States, and 4 from Eastern Europe. The Commission on the Status of Women works alongside UN Women to Promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

AGENDA

CONFERENCE TOPIC: Sexual violence against refugees, returnees and internally displaced women and women trafficking focusing on conflicted regions.

PRACTICE DEBATE TOPIC: Threats to the human security of women and children during times of war.

CONFERENCE TOPIC: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND WOMEN TRAFFICKING FOCUSING ON CONFLICTED REGIONS

BACKGROUND

UNHCR first published *Sexual Violence against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response* in 1995. By that time, it had become clear that the magnitude of the problem called for a focused approach and considered concerted actions that had not, until then, been adequately formulated and compiled in any of UNHCR's earlier publications. The 1995 Guidelines helped create a greater awareness and understanding of this serious human rights violation and laid the foundations for developing programs to prevent and respond to it. Yet sexual and gender-based violence against refugees, especially women and children, continues unabated. It has been exacerbated by unequal gender relations within communities of concern; it has been used as a weapon of war and as a means of exercising power; it has been both a cause of forced displacement and a terrible consequence of the breakdown of family and community structures that accompanies displacement. It has also been perpetrated by some of the very people who have been entrusted with the task of protecting refugees and displaced persons.

Since 1995, many lessons have been learned concerning individual, institutional and national responsibilities for implementing the Guidelines and for providing protection to uprooted persons. Throughout those years, UNHCR, other UN agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons have evaluated the programs and activities suggested in the Guidelines in the context of complex emergency situations. The culmination of this evaluation process was the Inter-Agency Lessons Learned Conference on Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Situations, which was held in Geneva in March 2001.

Participants at the Conference identified areas for improvement and highlighted the importance of revising the 1995 Guidelines to reflect progress made over the years and to refine an inter-agency, multi-sectorial approach to addressing sexual and gender-based violence against refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. Recommendations from the Conference included strengthening institutional commitment by developing a Code of Conduct for humanitarian workers; setting common minimum standards for addressing sexual and gender-based violence; supporting the allocation and management of adequate funding and staff; and integrating a gender-equality perspective in institutional practices. Participants emphasized the need to engage the refugee community in all stages of programs delivery: design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Key terms and concepts definitions:

- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Set for the year 2015, the MDGs are an agreed set of goals designed to respond to the world's main development challenges and to the calls of civil society. The MDGs represent a global partnership that grew out of the commitments and targets established at the world summits of the 1990s. The eight MDGs seek to promote poverty reduction, education, maternal health and gender equality and aim at combating child mortality, AIDS and other diseases. As 2015 approaches, consultations are underway to establish the Post-2015 Development Framework or Agenda, which will succeed the MDGs.

- Patriarchy

This term refers to a traditional form of organizing society which often lies at the root of gender inequality. According to this kind of social system, men, or what is considered masculine, is accorded more importance than women, or what is considered feminine. Traditionally, societies have been organized in such a way that property, residence, and descent, as well as decision-making regarding most areas of life, have been the domain of men. This is often based on appeals to biological reasoning (women are more naturally suited to be caregivers, for example) and continues to underlie many kinds of gender discrimination

- Quotas

Quota systems have been viewed as one of the most effective special measures or affirmative actions for increasing women's political participation. There are now 77 countries with constitutional, electoral or political party quotas for women. In countries where women's issues had always been relegated to the lowest priority, increases in the number of women in decision-making positions help move women's agendas up to a higher priority level.

- Women's economic empowerment

Gender equality in the economy refers to the full and equal enjoyment by women and men of their economic rights and entitlements facilitated by enabling policy and institutional environments and economic empowerment. Economic empowerment is a cornerstone of gender equality that refers both to the ability to succeed and advance economically and to the power to make and act on economic decisions. Empowering women economically is a right that is essential for both realizing gender equality and achieving broader development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, and improvements in health, education and social well-being.

- Gender discrimination

Gender discrimination is defined as: "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

- Gender equality (Equality between women and men)

This refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

- Empowerment

According to the Oxford Dictionary, empowerment is defined as "the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights."³ In this context, empowerment of women in rural areas is to recognize their agricultural rights regarding land holding, their financial rights, and educational rights and most importantly their social rights as women in terms of gender equality.

- Gender inequality index (GII)

In 2010, the UNDP developed a new index for measuring gender disparity, called the Gender Inequality Index (GII). This index is a composite measure which shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in three dimensions: (1) reproductive health, (2) empowerment, and (3) the labor market. The index ranges from zero, which indicates that women and men fare equally, to one, which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions. The new index was introduced in the 2010 Human Development Report as an experimental measure to remedy the shortcomings of the previous, and no longer used, indicators, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), both of which were introduced in the 1995 Human Development Report. According to the index, there is no country in the world where women are equal to their men. In other words, gender equality remains a distant reality still.

Past action (by the UN or other authoritative body)

The Creation of UN Women

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Launching Beijing Platform for Action (BFA)

The Beijing Platform for Action is a landmark document that came out of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, convened in Beijing, China in September, 1995. Member States, in dialogue with a vast mass of women and men representing civil society from around the world, reviewed past progress and new requirements to accelerate the global march towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The articulation of their understanding and agreement was contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Declaration embodies the commitment of the international community to the advancement of women and to the implementation of the Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programs at the national, regional and international levels. The Platform for Action sets out measures for national and international action in critical areas of concern for the advancement of women for the five years leading up to 2000.

Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW, which was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is also known as the international bill of rights for women. Currently, over 90% of the members of the United Nations are party to the Convention, making it the second most ratified convention, following the Rights of the Child.

CEDAW articulates the nature and meaning of sex-based discrimination and gender equality, and lays out State obligations to eliminate discrimination and achieve substantive equality. The Convention covers not only discriminatory laws, but also practices and customs, and it applies not only to State action, but also State responsibility to address discrimination against women by private actors. The Convention covers both civil and political rights (rights to vote, to participate in public life, to acquire, change or retain their nationality, equality before the law and freedom of movement) and economic, social and cultural rights (rights to education, work, health and financial credit). CEDAW also pays specific attention to particular phenomena such as trafficking, certain groups of women, such as rural women, and specific areas where there are special risks to women's full enjoyment of their human rights, such as matters related to marriage and the family. CEDAW also specifies the different ways in which States Parties are to eliminate discrimination, including through appropriate legislation prohibiting discrimination, or positive action to improve the status of women.

UN System-wide Action Plan (UN SWAP)

The UN-SWAP (UN System-wide Action Plan) is a UN system-wide framework to enhance accountability and measure progress towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the work of the United Nations entities. It is a unified framework that applies equally to all entities, departments, offices and funds and programs of the United Nations system. The UN-SWAP includes a set of 15 system-wide performance indicators that establish a common understanding of what it means to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and a common method to work towards it. The UN-SWAP also establishes a progressive sliding scale of standards, including the minimum, to which UN system entities are to adhere and aspire to in their work on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the corporate level.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- (I) The current status quo.
- (II) Distinguishing 'Sexual Violence', 'Gender Based Violence' and 'Violence against women'
- (III) Discussion about Refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons as a whole.
- (IV) Human Trafficking
- (V) Sexual violence and women trafficking during time of conflict
- (VI) The causes and contributing factors
- (VII) Kidnapping and slavery by military forces in conflicting territories.
- (VIII) Sexual enslavement
- (IX) Forced pregnancy
- (X) Forced labor
- (XI) Forced Recruitments of fighters.
- (XII) Types of violence during different phases:-
 - E.g.- During conflict and prior to conflict
 - In the country of asylum
 - During repatriation
 - During re-integration

- Understanding the basis causes of sexual and gender-based violence towards refugees, IDPs, and returnees and then developing a preventive action plan while exploiting the results of sexual and gender-based violence to develop response mechanisms
- Making Certain access of women particularly in refugee camps to resources and their equal participation in the decision making process
- Finding ways to ensure accountability to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence
- Making certain safety and security of refugees with programs encompass key service providers and informing refugee women about their rights through all stages of program
- Enhancing the information assortment relating to sexual violence and trafficking involving refugees taking differences of regions under consideration.
- Establishing legal and social compensation mechanisms for the victims of both trafficking and sexual violence to overcome the physical and psychological

trauma through working with the international community

- Making certain women's equal participation in post-conflict resolution programs to overcome trafficking in places as destinations
- Adopting preventive measures for trafficking ensuing from conflicted areas and making certain response mechanisms to criminal networks who especially benefit from refugee routes
- Analyzing and finding ways to enhance previous instruments adopted regarding prevention of trafficking and sexual violence especially to refugees in order for them to fully address the current situation
- Agreeing on a global policy for preventing sexual and gender based violence against women refugees and trafficking against women who were eventually displaced as a consequence of conflict
- The importance of previously adopted legally binding documents on the rights of displaced women

FURTHER READING

https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/gl_sgbv03.pdf

http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201011-af-chad-national-outrage-chad-violence-against-internally-displaced-women-and-girls-in-eastern-chad-country-en_0.pdf

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4115473/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/595b7f344.pdf>

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/thematic.htm>

http://www.ungei.org/REAL_Let_Girls_Learn_Literature_review_A4_20pp_FINAL.pdf

https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/media/en/152.pdf

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30364/combating-trafficking-south-asia-paper.pdf>

PRACTICE DEBATE TOPIC: THREATS TO THE HUMAN SECURITY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN DURING TIMES OF WAR.

BACKGROUND

Every day, we hear reports of new conflicts and old grievances, of escalating tension and violence. During our missions to conflict situations, we met generations of women and girls who have known nothing other than war. Many are gripped by fear and anger; others had learned to dull their feelings with a quality of silence that often follows catastrophe. They hope that their voices would be heard and their triumphs celebrated; that would showcase, through their lives, every reason that women must be considered full citizens and must have a stake in deciding their own future – and that finally, the world would listen. How could we possibly improve their lives? In part, the answer will depend on the seriousness with which the testimony, analysis, hopes and vision of these ordinary but extraordinary women – survivors, leaders and heroines – are both received and acted upon. Women are victims of unbelievably horrific atrocities and injustices in conflict situations; this is indisputable. As refugees, internally displaced persons, combatants, heads of household and community leaders, as activists and peace-builders, women and men experience conflict differently. Women rarely have the same resources, political rights, authority or control over their environment and needs that men do. In addition, their caretaking responsibilities limit their mobility and ability to protect themselves. While an estimated one hundred million people died in war over the last century, men and women often died different deaths and were tortured and abused in different ways sometimes for biological reasons, sometimes psychological or social. While more men are killed in war, women often experience violence, forced pregnancy, abduction and sexual abuse and slavery. Their bodies, deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS or carrying a child conceived in rape, have been used as envelopes to send messages to the perceived ‘enemy’.

The dilemma of describing the atrocities experienced by women in war in a way that will not ascribe to women the characteristics of passivity and helplessness. Women are everything but that. But as with all groups facing discrimination, violence and marginalization, the causes and consequences of their victimization must be addressed. If not, how will preventive measures ever focus on women? How will the resources and means to protect women be put in place? How will the UN system, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) be mobilized to support women? We dwell on this point because, so far, not enough has been done.

This nexus goes to the heart of the debate. Humanitarian and human rights concerns do not compromise military and political decision-making; they are intrinsic to it. This is the human security equation. In setting out this equation, this guide urges you to focus on ten central themes which the UNFPA addressed:

1. Violence against women: The magnitude of violence suffered by women before, during and after conflict is overwhelming. The glaring gaps in women's protection must be addressed. Without dedicating resources specifically for women's protection, and without mobilizing the requisite technical and operational capacity, the neglect of women will continue.

2. Displacement: The gender dimensions of displacement are overwhelmingly neglected. The international community has a responsibility to protect women who are forced to flee their homes. It must help women to rebuild their lives, protect them and their children, and prevent the violence and exploitation often associated with displacement.

3. Health: Sometimes even basic health care is lacking for women in conflict situations. Attention to reproductive health in emergencies has to be institutionalized as part of the response. The knowledge and skills already exist, and experience shows what can be achieved with sufficient resources and political will and with the participation of women in planning.

4. HIV/AIDS: Wherever a woman lives with conflict and upheaval, the threat of HIV/AIDS and its effects are multiplied. Women are more susceptible to infection than men, yet often have little control over their sexuality, and at the same time are forced by conflict conditions to trade sex for money, food, shelter and any other number of necessities. Education, protection and access to treatment are essential for people in conflict zones if the rates of infection are to be reduced.

5. Organizing for peace: Women organize for peace in their communities and at the national and regional level, but they are rarely a part of the official peace process. Formal negotiations that exclude half the population from the political process have little hope of popular support. Women's activism must be supported and their political demands acknowledged at every step, from peace negotiations to post conflict elections and the restructuring of society.

6. Peace operations: A gender perspective must inform all aspects of mission planning and operation, beginning with the very concept of the operation. Currently, gender concerns are often isolated in the form of a single staff person or small unit lacking sufficient seniority and resources. Women in the local community may have little contact with missions and believe that their needs are not taken into account. Violations committed by peacekeepers, United Nations and other humanitarian personnel are inexcusable. The Secretary-General's call for zero tolerance for those who commit such crimes must be honored and stronger investigative and disciplinary mechanisms must be put in place.

7. Justice and accountability: The impunity that prevails for widespread crimes against women in war must be redressed. Accountability means being answerable to women for crimes committed against them and punishing those responsible. In addition, from the International Criminal Court to regional, national and traditional justice systems, gender must be taken into account and women must have full access to the rule of law.

8. Media and communications: The media supplies information for good or ill; it presents images of women that resound throughout communities in complex ways, especially during conflict and post-conflict periods, when tensions are high. Post-conflict reconstruction depends on honest and truthful reporting about all parties and communities. In order to achieve this, women must be involved in creating media, and stories about them must go beyond stereotypes of women as victims or sexual objects.

9. Reconstruction: In the aftermath of conflict, when nations begin to rebuild, they must recognize and provide for women's specific needs. Water, food and energy must be provided in a safe environment. Training and education are essential. Access to land, resources and jobs must be guaranteed. 10. Prevention: Information from and about women in conflict situations has not informed preventive actions. This is as much a problem of expertise as one of organizational shortcomings. Information from and about women must be collected, analyzed, and made available in a way that is politically meaningful. The beneficiaries of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs must not be limited to male combatants. Female combatants, the wives, widows and other dependents of ex-fighters must be included explicitly so that they are invested in rebuilding a new society and ending the cycle of violence.

In recognizing the current militarized climate surrounding national and human security, Rosalind Petchesky questioned whether feminist human security discourse “is a good enough answer to the militarization of people’s minds that’s rapidly becoming ‘normal’ thought.” Her words frame a key challenge for gender and feminist analysts to find ways to incorporate their critiques into mainstream security discourses, particularly in highlighting the key importance of reducing direct and structural violence in girls’ and women’s lives and conveying the necessity of working towards its prevention and eradication using both “bottom up” and “top down” approaches. As I have argued in relation to the countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sierra Leone, gender-based direct and structural violence is a critical issue for women’s human security. Also, girls’ and women’s empowerment through the promotion of gender equality and reduction of gender discrimination is crucial to their security and the protection of their political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights. Because women’s peace-building initiatives are key in addressing and reducing gender inequities and discrimination and related direct and structural violence, their peace building work must be encouraged and supported by policies and programs that underscore its importance in improving human security. (<https://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/heiwa/Pub/E19/chap7.pdf>)

POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the strategies that can be used to address the various types of threats to women and children during times of war?
2. What are the different sources of threats that need to be tackled?
3. Are there other existing UNCSW or UN Programs that can be expanded on to better to address the problem?
4. How can UNCSW member states in better identifying threats to women and children and taking steps to alter it?
5. How can member states better coordinate and share information with one another regarding the issue at hand?
6. What other UN bodies, external parties and organizations can contribute to finding solutions for women and children involved with the issue at hand?

FURTHER READING

<https://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/heiwa/Pub/E19/chap7.pdf>

<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/3F71081FF391653DC1256C69003170E9-unicef-WomenWarPeace.pdf>

https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0840_women_guidance.pdf

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2012HumanSecurityReport-FullText_0.pdf