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लेगटो 4.0
THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

LEGATIO 4.0 / STUDY GUIDE SERIES

UNCSW

STUDY GUIDE · AGENDA

UNCSW

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

AGENDA / FOCUS

Addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflicts on women and the weaponization of gender-based violence in occupied territories and conflicted regions.

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THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

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United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)

**Agenda: Addressing the Disproportionate Impact of Armed Conflicts on Women
and the Weaponization of Gender-Based Violence in Occupied Territories and
Conflicted Regions**

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Letter from the Executive Board

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) at the . **The agenda for this session is : “Addressing the Disproportionate Impact of Armed Conflicts on Women and the Weaponization of Gender-Based Violence in Occupied Territories and Conflicted Regions.”** The committee will be conducted in accordance with the **UNAUSA Rules of Procedure (RoP)**. This study guide is intended to serve as a foundation for your research; however, we strongly encourage you to explore new perspectives and dimensions of the agenda beyond what is provided here. Bringing fresh insights, well-researched data, and strong argumentation to the committee will greatly enhance the quality of debate and discussion.

Throughout the session, the Executive Board will encourage all delegates to participate actively. We emphasize that your fluency or oratory style is secondary to the quality, depth, and accuracy of your content. Our goal is to foster meaningful discourse, and we are confident that we will learn immensely from your contributions while ensuring that you, too, have an enriching and intellectually stimulating experience. Should you have any queries, please feel free to reach out to us. We will be more than happy to assist you to the best of our abilities. We look forward to a dynamic, engaging, and insightful committee session with you all.

Until the Committee,

Regards,

Namrata Mishra

Chairperson

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Expectations from the Committee

- Keeping in mind the beginner nature of the committee, the bureau expects all the delegates of the committee to at least be thorough with the contents of the study guide; this document provides you with insight about the functioning of the conference and the main key points for

your research. This document alone, however, should not be your only point of reference for the conference. The executive board appreciates extensive research.

- The committee shall strictly stick to the discussions about the agenda at hand; bringing different perspectives is highly appreciated.
- The executive board shall in no case entertain defaming of peers throughout the conference; however, constructive criticism is generously accepted.
- The committee will be solution-oriented; however, in case of sensitive issues, the bureau will be delighted to entertain debates.
- The final goal of the committee shall be to pass a working paper, which shall in no case plagiarize. The final document passed in the committee will be a work of pure negotiations and consensus-building. Remember, in the committee, all the delegates are on equal footing and shall have full and equal opportunity to participate in the deliberations.
- The committee shall work in accordance with the UNCSW mandate and follow UNAUSA rules of procedure.
- Delegates shall not plagiarize speeches or solutions. This committee is a forum for you to showcase your creativity, so make the best use of this opportunity.

The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) is a global organization established in 1945. Initially composed of 51 member states, the UN has since expanded to include 193 member states. The foundational

principles and objectives outlined in the UN Charter guide organization's operations. This Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco during the United Nations Conference on International Organization and came into effect on October 24, 1945. The UN possesses a broad mandate to address a wide range of issues, as granted by its Charter. Its primary purpose is to safeguard international peace and security by taking appropriate measures to prevent and resolve conflicts. Additionally, the UN aims to promote goodwill among peoples by championing equal rights and the right to self-determination. It seeks to foster international cooperation by addressing global challenges of economic, humanitarian, cultural, and social significance.

The headquarters of the United Nations is in Manhattan, New York City. The organization was founded in the aftermath of World War II to prevent future global conflicts and succeeded the ineffective League of Nations. The UN comprises six main bodies: the General Assembly, the UN Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, International Court of Justice and the Trusteeship Council. Within the UN System, there are numerous funds, agencies, and programs that further its mission. The Secretary-General, currently Portuguese politician and diplomat António Guterres, serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations. He began his first five-year term on January 1, 2017, and was re-elected on June 8, 2021.



The United Nations System



PRINCIPAL ORGANS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

Intergovernmental and Expert Bodies

- Disarmament Commission
- Human Rights Council
- International Law Commission
- Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)
- United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
- Main Committees
- Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

Funds and Programmes¹

- UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
- UNCDF** United Nations Capital Development Fund
- UNV** United Nations Volunteers
- UNEP**⁶ United Nations Environment Programme
- UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund
- UN-HABITAT**⁷ United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- WFP** World Food Programme (UN/FAO)

Research and Training

- UNDIR** United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
- UNITAR** United Nations Institute for Training and Research
- UNSSC** United Nations System Staff College
- UNU** United Nations University

Other Entities

- ITC** International Trade Centre (UN/WTO)
- UNCTAD**^{1,8} United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- UNHCR**⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNOPS**¹ United Nations Office for Project Services
- UNRWA**¹ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
- UN-WOMEN**¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS¹

- CTBTO Preparatory Commission**
Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
- IAEA**¹ International Atomic Energy Agency
- ICC** International Criminal Court
- IOM**¹ International Organization for Migration
- ISA** International Seabed Authority
- ITLOS** International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
- OPCW** Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
- WTO**¹ World Trade Organization



SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

- Counter-Terrorism Committee
- International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
- Military Staff Committee
- Peacekeeping operations and special political missions
- Standing committees and ad hoc bodies
- Sanctions Committees

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

COMMISSIONS AND OTHER SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

Functional Commissions

- Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Narcotic Drugs
- Population and Development
- Science and Technology for Development
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Status of Women
- United Nations Forum on Forests

Regional Commissions⁴

- ECA** Economic Commission for Africa
- ECE** Economic Commission for Europe
- ECLAC** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- ESCAP** Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- ESCWA** Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Other Bodies⁵

- Committee for Development Policy
- Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- UNAIDS** Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- UNGEGN** United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
- UNGIM** Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Research and Training

- UNICRI** United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
- UNIRISD** United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

SECRETARIAT

DEPARTMENTS AND OFFICES⁷

- EOSG** Executive Office of the Secretary-General
- DCO** Development Coordination Office
- DESA** Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- DGACM** Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
- DGC** Department of Global Communications
- DMSPC** Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance
- DOS** Department of Operational Support

- DPO** Department of Peace Operations
- DPPA** Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
- DSS** Department of Safety and Security
- OCHA** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- OCT** Office of Counter-Terrorism
- ODA** Office for Disarmament Affairs
- ODET** Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies
- OHCHR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- OIOS** Office of Internal Oversight Services
- OLA** Office of Legal Affairs

- OOSA** Office for Outer Space Affairs
- OSAA** Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
- SRSO/CAAC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
- SRSO/SVC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
- SRSO/VAC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
- UNDRR** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- UNODC**¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- UNOG** United Nations Office at Geneva

- UN-OHRLS** Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- UNON** United Nations Office at Nairobi
- UNOP**¹ United Nations Office for Partnerships
- UNOV** United Nations Office at Vienna
- UN YOUTH** United Nations Youth Office

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL⁴

SPECIALIZED AGENCIES^{1,3}

- FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- ICAO** International Civil Aviation Organization
- IFAD** International Fund for Agricultural Development
- ILO** International Labour Organization
- IMF** International Monetary Fund
- IMO** International Maritime Organization
- ITU** International Telecommunication Union
- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNIDO** United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- UN TOURISM** World Tourism Organization
- UPU** Universal Postal Union
- WHO** World Health Organization
- WIPO** World Intellectual Property Organization
- WMO** World Meteorological Organization
- WORLD BANK GROUP**⁵
 - IBRD** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
 - IDA** International Development Association
 - IFC** International Finance Corporation

Notes:

- Member of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
- The United Nations Office for Partnerships is the focal point vis-à-vis the United Nations Foundation, Inc.
- These organizations are separate and independent from the United Nations. They have been brought into relationship with the United Nations through relationship agreements.
- The Trusteeship Council suspended operations on 1 November 1994, as Palau, the last United Nations Trust Territory, became independent on 1 October 1994.
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) are not specialized agencies in accordance with Articles 57 and 63 of the Charter, but are part of the World Bank Group.
- The secretariats of these organs are part of the United Nations Secretariat.
- The Secretariat also includes the following offices: the Ethics Office, United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, and the Office of Administration of Justice.
- For a complete list of ECOSOC subsidiary organs see un.org/ecosoc.
- HLPF was established by the General Assembly. Meetings of HLPF are separately convened under the auspices of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council.

This Chart is intended to provide a graphical reflection of the functional organization of the United Nations system and is for informational purposes only. The relevant rules of the organization concerned should be consulted in order to establish the legal status, functions and reporting lines of each entity shown in this Chart. The Chart does not include all offices or entities of the United Nations system. Published by the United Nations Department of Global Communications. 25-00005 - March 2025 © 2025 United Nations. All rights reserved worldwide.

Introduction to the Committee

The **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Established on **21 June 1946** through **ECOSOC Resolution 11(II)**, the Commission functions as one of the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**'s functional commissions and serves as the United Nations' foremost policymaking body on issues concerning the rights of women and girls.

Since its inception, the Commission has played a pivotal role in advancing women's political, economic, social, civil, and educational rights while shaping international standards on gender equality. It provides a platform where Member States, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders convene annually to review progress, identify persistent challenges, and formulate policies aimed at eliminating discrimination and promoting women's full and equal participation in all spheres of society.

A defining milestone in the Commission's evolution came in **1996**, when **ECOSOC Resolution 1996/6** expanded its mandate, entrusting it with the responsibility of monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)** and ensuring that a gender perspective is mainstreamed across all United Nations activities. Through its annual sessions at UN Headquarters in New York, the Commission adopts **Agreed Conclusions** that guide international policy, influence national legislation, and recommend concrete actions to accelerate progress toward gender equality.

Today, the CSW remains central to advancing **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality)** and continues to address emerging global challenges affecting women and girls, including conflict, climate change, economic inequality, digital inclusion, and gender based violence.

Charter and Mandate

The Commission on the Status of Women derives its authority from the **United Nations Charter**, **ECOSOC resolutions**, and internationally accepted legal and policy frameworks dedicated to advancing gender equality.

The primary instruments governing the Commission include the **United Nations Charter (1945)**, particularly Articles 55 and 56, which commit Member States to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination based on sex, race, language, or religion. **ECOSOC Resolution 11(II) (1946)** established the Commission as a functional commission of ECOSOC, while **ECOSOC Resolution 1996/6** expanded its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and mainstream gender perspectives throughout the UN system. The Commission also draws its authority from the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, and the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, particularly **Sustainable Development Goal 5**, which seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The Commission's core responsibilities include reviewing global progress and challenges relating to gender equality, developing international norms and policy recommendations on women's rights, monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other international commitments, promoting gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system, advising ECOSOC and Member States on measures to eliminate discrimination and strengthen women's political, economic, and social participation, and facilitating cooperation among governments, UN agencies, and civil society to advance gender responsive policymaking.

Major Events in the History of the Commission

The Commission on the Status of Women has been instrumental in several landmark developments that have shaped the international framework for gender equality.

In **1946**, the Commission on the Status of Women was established under **ECOSOC Resolution 11(II)** to promote women's rights and advise the United Nations on issues affecting women.

Between **1975 and 1985**, the **United Nations Decade for Women** and the three World Conferences on Women significantly expanded the global agenda for women's rights.

In **1979**, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** was adopted, becoming the most comprehensive international treaty dedicated to protecting women's rights.

The **Third World Conference on Women** held in **Nairobi in 1985** adopted the Nairobi Forward looking Strategies, laying the foundation for future global commitments.

In **1995**, the **Fourth World Conference on Women** in Beijing resulted in the adoption of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, which remains the most comprehensive global framework for achieving gender equality.

The Commission's mandate was further strengthened in **1996** through **ECOSOC Resolution 1996/6**, which assigned it the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and advancing gender mainstreaming across the United Nations.

The **Beijing +5 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly** in **2000** reviewed global progress and adopted further measures to accelerate implementation of the Beijing commitments.

The adoption of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** in **2015**, particularly **Sustainable Development Goal 5**, reaffirmed the international community's commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Every year, the Commission concludes its annual session by adopting **Agreed Conclusions**, which provide policy recommendations on issues such as violence against women and girls, women's political participation, economic empowerment, climate change, digital inclusion, and gender responsive governance.

Relationship with Other UN Bodies

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) works in close coordination with several United Nations bodies and agencies to advance gender equality and women's empowerment across the UN system.

UN Women serves as the Secretariat of the Commission, providing administrative support, policy research, technical expertise, and advocacy while facilitating the implementation of the Commission's outcomes.

The **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee)** monitors States Parties' compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Its recommendations often complement the policy priorities and discussions of the CSW.

The Commission reports directly to the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, which reviews its recommendations and incorporates them into broader economic and social policymaking within the United Nations.

The Commission also maintains close engagement with the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** and the **Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**. The Commission's Agreed Conclusions and policy recommendations frequently inform debates, resolutions, and initiatives concerning women's rights and gender equality across the wider UN system.

Distinction between UNCSW and UN Women

Although closely associated, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and UN Women perform distinct but complementary functions within the United Nations.

The **Commission on the Status of Women** is an intergovernmental policymaking body under ECOSOC. It develops global norms, reviews progress on gender equality, facilitates negotiations among Member States, and adopts policy recommendations that guide international action on women's rights.

UN Women, established in 2010, is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Unlike the Commission, it is an operational organization that implements programmes, conducts research, provides technical assistance to governments, and supports the execution of international commitments, including those adopted by the CSW.

In essence, the CSW sets the global policy agenda, while UN Women helps translate those commitments into practical action through programmes, partnerships, and capacity-building initiatives at the international, regional, and national levels.

Key Terminologies-

1. **Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** A form of violence directed at individuals based on their gender, encompassing physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. GBV disproportionately affects women and girls and is often used as a weapon of war in conflict zones.
2. **Sexual Violence in Conflict:** Refers to acts such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and other forms of sexual violence that occur in conflict settings.
3. **Conflict Zone:** A geographical area experiencing armed conflict where state authority is weakened, leading to heightened vulnerability among civilian populations, particularly women and children.
4. **International Armed Conflict (IAC):** This occurs when hostilities take place between two or more states. It involves the use of armed force between the regular armed forces of sovereign states.
5. **Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC) or Internal Armed Conflict:** This type of conflict involves hostilities between government forces and non-state armed groups or

between such groups within the borders of a single state. NIACs are subject to certain rules of IHL, even if the conflicts are not of an international character.

6. **Impunity:** The failure to hold perpetrators of crimes accountable. In the context of GBV, impunity perpetuates cycles of violence by allowing offenders to act without fear of punishment.
7. **Accountability Mechanisms:** Systems and processes designed to ensure perpetrators of GBV are prosecuted and justice is delivered to survivors.
8. **International Legal Frameworks:** Legal instruments such as CEDAW and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) that provide mechanisms for addressing and prosecuting gender-based crimes.
9. **Survivor-Centered Approach:** A framework that prioritizes the rights, dignity, and needs of survivors, ensuring they receive support and are involved in decision-making processes that affect them.
10. **Humanitarian Access:** The ability of humanitarian organizations to reach and provide services to vulnerable populations in conflict zones without obstruction.
11. **Refugee:** As defined by the United Nations, a refugee is an individual who has fled their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. This person seeks refuge in another country, and their protection is governed by international law, notably the 1951 Refugee Convention. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) plays a crucial role in providing assistance, protection, and finding durable solutions for refugees. The term underscores the necessity of safeguarding the rights and well-being of those forced to seek sanctuary.
12. **Internally Displaced Person:** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), as defined by the United Nations, are individuals or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee their homes or places of habitual residence but have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. Unlike refugees, IDPs remain within the borders of their own country. They often face similar vulnerabilities and protection concerns as refugees but are subject to the laws and authorities of their home country. The UN works to provide assistance, protection, and support to IDPs, addressing their humanitarian needs and advocating for durable solutions to their displacement, including safe return or resettlement.
13. **Post Conflict:** The term “post-conflict,” as recognized by the United Nations (UN), refers to the period following the resolution or cessation of armed conflict or war. During this phase, nations and communities strive to rebuild and recover, addressing the

aftermath of conflict, restoring stability, and promoting sustainable peace. Post-conflict situations often involve efforts to rebuild infrastructure, restore governance, reintegrate displaced populations, and address the root causes of the conflict. The UN and other international organizations play a crucial role in providing humanitarian assistance, supporting peacebuilding initiatives, and facilitating the transition from conflict to lasting peace, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation, justice, and socio-economic development.

14. **Gender Mainstreaming:** The practice of evaluating the implications of policies and programs on individuals of different genders to promote equality and eliminate discrimination.
15. **Stigma:** The negative societal perception and discrimination faced by survivors of GBV, which often discourages reporting and accessing support services.
16. **Religious Minority:** A religious minority, as per the United Nations, denotes a subset within a larger community holding distinct religious beliefs differing from the predominant faith. The UN advocates for safeguarding the rights of religious minorities, emphasizing freedom of religion, belief, and protection against discrimination. Ensuring these rights contributes to a broader commitment to human rights, diversity, and tolerance. Governments and societies are encouraged to prevent persecution, discrimination, or violence based on religious identity, fostering an inclusive global environment that upholds the principles of equality and respect for diverse religious expressions.
17. **Scapegoat:** In psychology, a scapegoat is an individual or group unfairly blamed for the shortcomings, problems, or conflicts of others. This phenomenon often serves as a defense mechanism, allowing individuals or communities to displace their frustrations onto a convenient target. By attributing negative events to the scapegoat, individuals can preserve their self-esteem and maintain a sense of cohesion within their own group. Scapegoating may arise from social, cultural, or political factors and can have detrimental effects on the targeted individuals or groups. Understanding scapegoating is crucial in addressing social dynamics, prejudice, and the psychological mechanisms involved in deflecting responsibility.

Introduction to the Agenda

Gender-based violence in conflict zones remains one of the most severe and pervasive violations of human rights in modern history. Modern warfare has had a devastating effect on the lives and dignity of women and girls, as well as on the health and educational services that are essential to family and community survival. Conflict environments often result in weakened state institutions, lawlessness, and societal breakdowns that exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls. Along with reproductive health complications, the adverse effects of conflict hit women and girls harder than it does their male counterparts, since deliberate gender-based violence and discrimination are rampant in these settings. As such, these gender-specific threats to women and girls compound the challenges of ensuring their protection. This has resulted in gaps in the design and delivery of assistance and protection, short-changing the priority population of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

It is estimated that close to 90 per cent of current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, compared to a century ago when 90 per cent of those who lost their lives were military personnel. Although entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex. The use of GBV as a strategic weapon of war is not a new phenomenon; however, the international community has only recently begun to address it with the urgency it demands. GBV in conflict zones manifests in various forms, including sexual violence, forced marriages, trafficking, and psychological abuse. Parties in conflict situations often rape women, sometimes using systematic rape as a tactic of war. Other forms of violence against women committed in armed conflict include murder, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization. Perpetrators often exploit the chaos of war, where law enforcement mechanisms are weak or non-existent, to commit such atrocities with impunity.

The devastating impact of such violence is not limited to immediate physical harm; it perpetuates cycles of poverty, trauma, and societal instability. In addition to the physical injuries sustained by survivors, the long-term psychological trauma, social stigma, and economic marginalization contribute to a broader societal impact that can last for generations. Essential services such as basic health care, including reproductive health care and counseling, are often disrupted or become inaccessible during conflict situations. This compounds health risks for all affected populations, at times when public health needs soar. Gender plays a significant role in determining which people are most likely to become infected with STIs, including HIV/AIDS.

Armed conflict increases the rate of new infections across affected populations, but women and girls are significantly more likely to become infected than men and boys. A recent post-conflict study in Africa found that the HIV-infection rate of adolescent girls was four times that of adolescent boys. Rape, high-risk behaviors, the inability to negotiate safe sex, and sexual exploitation are risks that have disproportionately impacted women and girls.

Despite this, women should not be viewed solely as victims of war. They assume the key role of ensuring family livelihood in the midst of chaos and destruction, and are particularly active in the peace movement at the grassroots level, cultivating peace within their communities. However, the absence of women at the peace negotiating table is undeniable.

The Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, identified the effects of armed conflict on women as one of 12 critical areas of concern requiring action by governments and the international community, and stressed the need to promote the equal participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels. During its forty-second session in 1998, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women discussed the issue of women and armed conflict and proposed further action to be taken by Member States and the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Platform's strategic objectives in this area, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all relevant policies and programs. Among the agreed conclusions of the session were measures to ensure gender sensitive justice, address the specific needs and concerns of women refugees and displaced persons, and increase the participation of women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, pre- and post-conflict decision-making and conflict prevention.

The weaponization of gender-based violence in occupied territories and conflicted regions represents one of the gravest challenges to international peace and security. In many contemporary conflicts, acts of sexual violence are deliberately employed not only to inflict physical and psychological harm but also to terrorize civilian populations, force displacement, suppress communities, and fracture the social fabric of affected regions. Women and girls belonging to marginalized ethnic, religious, and indigenous communities are often disproportionately targeted, highlighting the intersection of gender, identity, and conflict. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that strengthens accountability, upholds international humanitarian and human rights law, ensures survivor-centered responses, and promotes the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction.

This background guide aims to provide delegates with a comprehensive understanding of the historical context, current situation, key issues, and existing international frameworks related to GBV in conflict zones. Delegates are encouraged to use this guide as a foundational resource for research and debate, with an emphasis on finding actionable solutions that can make a tangible difference in conflict-affected regions.

Case Studies

Rohingya Women in the Myanmar Conflict : The conflict in Myanmar has disproportionately affected Rohingya women, leading to widespread human rights abuses. Rohingya women have been subjected to sexual violence, including rape and other forms of gender-based violence, perpetrated by military forces. These acts were not only aimed at causing immediate harm but also served as a deliberate weapon to instill fear, terrorize civilian populations, force displacement, and inflict long-term psychological trauma within the community.

The consequences for Rohingya women extended far beyond direct physical harm. Many were forced to flee their homes, becoming internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighboring countries. This displacement further heightened their vulnerability, exposing them to risks of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and inadequate living conditions in refugee camps. In the aftermath of violence, returning Rohingya women faced significant obstacles in rebuilding their lives. The lack of legal recognition, restricted access to education and healthcare, economic insecurity, and continued discrimination further compounded their vulnerability. The psychological toll of the conflict, marked by the loss of family members and the atrocities witnessed, posed additional challenges to their well-being and recovery.

International responses to the Rohingya crisis have included diplomatic pressure on Myanmar, humanitarian assistance, and calls for accountability for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The United Nations and various human rights organizations have emphasized the need for survivor-centered responses, access to justice, and comprehensive measures that address the specific challenges faced by women affected by conflict.

This case study demonstrates how gender-based violence is weaponized during armed conflict to intimidate communities, weaken social structures, and exacerbate humanitarian crises. It further highlights the need for strengthened accountability mechanisms, enhanced protection of women and girls in conflict-affected regions, and long-term strategies that prioritize justice, rehabilitation, and the meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.

The Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza and the West Bank): The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry has detailed how sexual and gender-based violence (including reproductive violence) is used against Palestinians to enforce systems of oppression and drive forced displacement. The systematic destruction of reproductive health care infrastructure has further compounded mortality risks for pregnant and lactating women. Read

the Commission of Inquiry's findings in the [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Report](#). [1, 2]

Sudan: The ongoing civil war in Sudan has seen a surge in conflict-related sexual violence, including gang rape and forced sexual slavery, utilized as a weapon of war by fighting factions. Women constitute an overwhelming majority of the internally displaced, putting them at severe risk while they seek safety and food. Review the [Human Rights Watch](#) regional reports for detailed accounts of these abuses. [1, 2, 3]

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): In eastern DRC, rival armed forces and rebel groups have systematically used rape and sexual violence as a tactic of war against displaced women and girls. Explore frontline interventions and survivor responses via the [UN Women](#) resource pages. [1]

Afghanistan: Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the weaponization of gender-based violence has involved forced marriages of young girls to fighters, and the severe restriction of women's mobility, limiting access to life-saving services. The UN's [Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls](#) maintains continuous documentation on these human rights crises.

Historical Context

The use of gender-based violence as a weapon of war is as old as warfare itself, but its formal recognition as a violation of human rights is a relatively recent development. Throughout history, sexual violence has often been used to humiliate, dominate, and terrorize enemy populations, yet it was not until the late 20th century that the international community began to systematically address this issue.

- **World War II and Its Aftermath:** During and after World War II, reports emerged of mass sexual violence committed by occupying forces across Europe and Asia. The experiences of so-called "comfort women" in Japan and the mass rapes during the occupation of Germany highlighted the use of GBV as a wartime tactic. However, despite the scale of these atrocities, survivors were often left without recourse to justice, as societal stigma and patriarchal norms silenced their voices.
- **Post-Cold War Conflicts:** The conflicts in the Balkans and Rwanda during the 1990s marked a turning point in how the international community perceived gender-based violence in conflict. In the Rwandan Genocide (1994), an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women were raped over the course of three months. Similarly, during the Bosnian War (1992-1995), systematic rape was used as a tool of ethnic cleansing. These atrocities led to greater awareness and calls for international legal mechanisms to prosecute perpetrators.
- **Establishment of International Criminal Tribunals:** The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) were among the first to prosecute sexual violence as a war crime and a crime against humanity. These tribunals set legal precedents for holding individuals accountable for GBV in conflict zones.
- **United Nations Security Council Resolutions:**
 - **Resolution 1325 (2000):** This landmark resolution was the first to formally recognize the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and the necessity of women's involvement in peace processes. It highlighted the importance of integrating gender perspectives in conflict resolution.
 - **Resolution 1820 (2008):** This resolution explicitly recognized sexual violence as a tactic of war that requires immediate and concerted action. It emphasized the need for accountability and called for the training of peacekeepers to prevent and respond to GBV.

- **Resolution 1888 (2009):** Building upon the previous resolutions, this mandated the appointment of a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to coordinate efforts in monitoring and reporting cases of GBV in conflict zones.
- **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC):** Adopted in 1998 and entering into force in 2002, the Rome Statute classified rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The establishment of the ICC provided a permanent international judicial body to prosecute these crimes.

Past Actions

International Legal Frameworks

- The **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)**, adopted in 1998, serves as a pivotal legal instrument addressing war crimes, including acts such as rape and sexual slavery. This statute provides the ICC with jurisdiction to prosecute individuals responsible for egregious gender-based atrocities committed in conflict zones, ensuring that such crimes do not go unpunished and reinforcing global accountability mechanisms.
- The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, has been fundamental in establishing international norms aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence. Although not specifically tailored to conflict situations, the principles enshrined in CEDAW have been widely applied in conflict-affected areas to ensure that women's rights are upheld even in the most challenging circumstances.

Establishment of Specialized Bodies

- The **Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict** was established to enhance the United Nations' capacity to monitor, report, and advocate against the use of sexual violence in conflict zones. This body works in close coordination with other UN agencies and member states to implement preventive measures, support survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable under international law.
- **UN Women** has played a crucial role in policy development and advocacy efforts, focusing on empowering women in conflict zones and addressing systemic violence through grassroots initiatives, international partnerships, and policy reforms aimed at creating long-term structural change.

Humanitarian and Health Initiatives

- The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** operates in some of the most challenging environments, providing essential medical and psychological support for survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones. This organization ensures that immediate care is accessible despite the logistical difficulties posed by ongoing conflicts.

Current Situation

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive and critical issue in contemporary conflict zones. The persistence of GBV in these regions is perpetuated by systemic breakdowns, weakened institutions, and deliberate strategies employed by armed groups to terrorize civilian populations. This complex issue continues to undermine human rights, public health, and efforts to achieve long-term peace and stability.

Occupied territories present unique challenges that further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls. Restrictions on movement, limited access to healthcare, humanitarian assistance, education, and justice mechanisms often heighten the risk of gender-based violence while reducing opportunities for survivors to seek protection and support. In many occupied territories, prolonged insecurity, displacement, and weakened institutional capacity create conditions in which perpetrators act with impunity, underscoring the need for strengthened international cooperation, humanitarian access, accountability, and survivor-centered responses in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

- **Systematic Use and Prevalence:** In conflict zones such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups have been reported to systematically employ sexual violence as a method of displacing communities and asserting control over territory. Similar patterns have been observed in Syria, Myanmar, Yemen, and other regions experiencing prolonged conflict, where women and girls are disproportionately targeted due to their vulnerable status in societal hierarchies. The breakdown of legal and law enforcement structures during armed conflicts exacerbates the vulnerability of civilians. In many cases, acts of gender-based violence are committed with impunity, as there is little to no functional judicial oversight to hold perpetrators accountable.
- **Impact on Public Health and Humanitarian Access:** Limited access to healthcare services in conflict zones leaves survivors struggling to receive adequate medical treatment, with sexually transmitted infections and mental health disorders being prevalent consequences. The absence of consistent healthcare infrastructure further compounds the suffering of survivors. Humanitarian organizations frequently encounter logistical and security challenges when delivering aid in conflict zones. Attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel are not uncommon, further complicating efforts to provide timely and effective assistance.

- **Challenges in Legal Accountability:** Domestic judicial systems in conflict-affected countries often lack the capacity or willingness to prosecute perpetrators, resulting in widespread impunity. In cases where international legal mechanisms are invoked, the process is protracted, resource-intensive, and frequently hindered by geopolitical considerations. Sovereignty concerns and geopolitical interests present additional obstacles, as some governments refuse to cooperate with international investigations or allow access to conflict areas. This obstructs the collection of evidence necessary for successful prosecutions.
- **Social and Cultural Barriers:** Cultural stigma and societal taboos surrounding sexual violence deter many survivors from reporting their experiences or seeking help. This perpetuates cycles of violence and marginalization, as victims are left without the support needed for recovery. The disintegration of community structures due to mass violence leaves survivors isolated, with limited social support systems available to aid in their recovery and reintegration. Addressing these social dimensions is crucial to achieving long-term resilience and healing.

International Law and Women in Conflict

In times of conflict, international humanitarian law affords women dual protection: general protection as civilians and special protection recognizing their potential vulnerability to specific forms of violence. This particular safeguarding focuses on women's roles as mothers and the imperative to shield them from sexual violence.

Outside periods of conflict, during internal disturbances, and tensions, women's rights are upheld by international law through various conventions, primarily human rights conventions. These conventions aim to ensure equal rights by prohibiting all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of sex. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, dedicated explicitly to defending women's rights, counts 189 States Parties.

International humanitarian law expressly prohibits rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault in both international and internal conflicts (GCIV Art. 27, API Art. 76.1, and APII Art. 4.2.e). Recognition of rape as a grave breach of humanitarian law gained prominence in recent years, particularly following its widespread occurrence during conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda between 1991 and 1995. The International Criminal Tribunals established to address crimes in these conflicts explicitly categorized rape and sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action reinforced governments' obligation to pursue and penalize perpetrators of rape and sexual violence against women and girls during conflicts. It urged defining such acts as war crimes.

The Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted on July 17, 1998, incorporates rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and any other comparable form of sexual violence into its definitions of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court extends to both international and non-international armed conflicts.

General Protection

- In times of armed conflict, women are entitled to the same guarantees as all protected persons, including respect for their person, honor, family rights, and religious beliefs. They have the right to humane treatment and protection from violence or threats thereof.

Specifically, humanitarian law emphasizes the need to protect women against attacks on their honor, such as rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault (GCIV Art. 27, API Art. 76.1). These rights for women during armed conflicts have attained customary law status, with Rule 134 of the ICRC customary IHL study highlighting the necessity to respect the specific protection, health, and assistance needs of women affected by armed conflict.

- Regardless of armed conflict, women, like all protected persons, must be shielded from violence, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture. Outrages on personal dignity, including humiliating and degrading treatment, are strictly prohibited (GCI–IV Common Art. 3.1).
- International human rights conventions reinforce protection against adverse discrimination for women. For instance, the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) insists that the application and interpretation of the law must align with internationally recognized human rights without any adverse distinction based on gender (Art. 21 of ICC Statute). Moreover, persecution on the basis of gender is explicitly defined as a crime against humanity in the ICC Statute (Art. 7.1.h).
- The Geneva Conventions provide additional specific provisions for the protection of women. Pregnant women and those in labor are classified as "wounded persons" and are entitled to the same particular protection and respect as other wounded and sick individuals under humanitarian law (GCIV Art. 16, API Art. 8). Parties to a conflict must make efforts to evacuate expectant mothers to hospitals or safety zones, ensuring they receive necessary aid. The free passage of essential supplies for children under fifteen, expectant mothers, and maternity cases is obligatory (GCIV Art. 23).
- In cases where pregnant women, mothers of children under seven, and children under fifteen are on the territory of a party to the conflict where they are not nationals, they must receive any preferential treatment granted to women and children who are nationals of that State (GCIV Art. 38.5). An occupying power is prohibited from hindering preferential measures in favor of women and children adopted before its occupation (GCIV Art. 50).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does the impact of armed conflict on women vary on a global scale, taking into account different regions, occupied territories, and conflict dynamics?
2. To what extent do factors such as gender, ethnicity, displacement, and socioeconomic status intersect to create unique vulnerabilities for women during armed conflict?
3. How successful have international institutions, including the United Nations, been in addressing the security concerns of women in conflict zones?
4. What are the long-term psychological, social, and economic consequences for survivors of gender-based violence during armed conflicts, and how do these consequences impact post-conflict recovery?
5. To what extent is international humanitarian law enforced and effective in protecting the rights and security of women during armed conflicts?
6. How can diplomatic efforts and conflict resolution processes be optimized to address the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and prevent gender-based violence?
7. How can humanitarian interventions be designed to ensure survivor-centered support, including access to healthcare, psychosocial services, legal assistance, and rehabilitation for women affected by conflict-related gender-based violence?
8. How can preventive diplomacy and early warning systems be enhanced to proactively identify and address threats of gender-based violence in regions at risk of armed conflict?
9. To what extent does media portrayal and public awareness influence the international response to conflict-related gender-based violence and the protection of women in conflict zones?
10. What role does economic empowerment play in post-conflict reconstruction, and how can it be leveraged to enhance the security, resilience, and well-being of women affected by armed conflict?
11. How can policy coherence and coordination among international actors be improved to ensure a comprehensive and effective response to conflict-related gender-based violence?
12. What steps can be taken to ensure the meaningful participation of women in governance, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction processes?
13. Based on historical and contemporary conflicts, what are the key lessons learned and best practices for preventing the weaponization of gender-based violence and strengthening the protection of women in occupied territories and conflict-affected regions?

Delegates are encouraged to research their country's official position on:

- Women, Peace and Security pertaining to the agenda
- UNSC Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions
- CEDAW ratification status and reservations
- Rome Statute membership
- Refugee and IDP policies
- National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security
- Humanitarian aid contributions
- Peacekeeping participation
- Domestic legislation on conflict-related sexual violence
- Voting patterns in the UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, and Security Council concerning women in armed conflict.

External Research Links

<https://www.unwomen.org/en>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/>

<https://www.ohchr.org>

<https://peacekeeping.un.org>

<https://www.unhcr.org>

<https://www.unicef.org>

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

<https://www.icc-cpi.int>

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library>

<https://www.icrc.org>

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw>

<https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>

<https://www.hrw.org>

<https://www.amnesty.org>

<https://www.rescue.org>

<https://www.msf.org>