



SAFT MOCK MUN UNHRC Study Guide



IT STARTS WITH US



Topic: Combating Violence against Women and Girls

IT STARTS WITH US



Introduction

The issue of violence against women and girls is the direct consequence of two United Nations' prominent issues: first, gender and social equality and second, decent standards of Living. Indeed, these principles are some of the fundamental rights enshrined in the preamble Of the United Nations Charter (UN Charter), which defines the very first aims and objectives Of the United Nations Organization itself:

“We the peoples of the United Nations determined, 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 and to promote social progress and better Standards of life in larger freedom”

Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recalls the Preamble Of the United Nations' Charter in its preamble, before affirming in its articles the illegality of Gender and social discrimination and the fundamental rights recognized to all human Beings, including women and girls:

- “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all Members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”
- “Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in Fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal Rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better Standards of life in larger freedom”

- Article 1:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights [...]”

- Article 2.1:

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without Distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, National or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

IT STARTS WITH US



The following articles of the UDHR proclaim human rights, with absolutely no distinction of any kind (including gender). As a result, women and girls should be protected against any form of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, economic). Solving the issue of violence against women and girls comes with the question of gender equality, which is one of the main guidelines of the United Nations, along with its specialized bodies and agencies (especially the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women –UN Women), its various programs and its entire work.

1. Definition and key resolutions/conventions

The United Nations established a general definition of violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

There are different types of violence, the main ones being physical violence, sexual violence and psychological violence. To these 3 main types can be added the economic violence. Each of these types of violence can have dramatic effects on women and girls, their health and life including. As a response to these unacceptable violations of women’s rights, the United Nations and its specialized agencies and bodies decided to take measures to end violence against women and girls. Many conventions and resolutions have been adopted as a result, progressively building an international law ensuring the protection of women and girls against violence:

- 1979: The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), originally not mentioning violence against women and girls explicitly but clarified by the General Recommendations 12 and 19
- 1985: The General Assembly Resolution on Domestic Violence (A/RES/40/36);
- 1989: The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);

IT STARTS WITH US



- The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, recognizing violence against women as a human rights violation and leading to the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, explicitly and entirely addressing the issue for the first time;
- 1995: The Beijing Platform for Action, identifying the end of violence as one of the twelve Areas for priority action;
- 2011: The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against Women and domestic violence;
- 2013: The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly adopts bi-annual resolutions on the Issue of violence against women, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) has been created in 2010 to reach gender equality and end all forms of discrimination against women, ending violence being one of the Frameworks of the Entity. Finally, in 2008 has been launched the major UNITE campaign to End Violence against Women, mainly to raise awareness and encourage political action on The issue.

2. Discussion of the topic

Delegates must tackle the issue of violence against women and girls through the Different types of violence which exist (physical, sexual, psychological, all 3 being Interdependent), and the main phenomenon linked to these types of violence (intimate Partner violence, sexual violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, female Genital mutilation, and child marriage). Economic violence against women can also be Brought into debates, which may not be only limited to the point raised in this study guide.

3. Definitions and key facts on different forms of violence

a. Intimate Partner Violence

Violence by an intimate partner can be define as a “behavior by an intimate partner or ex-Partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression,

IT STARTS WITH US



Sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors.” It is the most common Form of violence experienced by women and girls worldwide and refers to women Being beaten, coerced into sex or abused in any other way. In 2012, 1 in 2 women killed Worldwide were killed by their partners or family, when only 1 out of 20 men were killed In such circumstances, which illustrates the scale of the problem. Regarding internal laws, 2/3 of all countries have legislation regarding domestic violence and only 52 countries Have legislations recognizing marital rape as a crime, which means that 2.6 billion women And girl are not legally protected.

b. Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is defined by the United Nations as

“Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality Using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the Vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object.”

As a consequence, sexual violence refers to rape (within marriage, by stranger or during Armed conflicts), unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, sexual abuse of Children, and forced marriage or cohabitation. This type of violence is present in all countries. For instance, in the European Union, studies have shown that 45% to 55% of women Have faced sexual harassment by the age of 15.

Sexual violence comes with many health risks for women and girls suffering of this Violence. Indeed, there is a high risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS and possibilities of traumatic Gynecologic fistula for instance.

c. Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Human trafficking is defined as

“The acquisition and exploitation of people, through means, such as force, fraud or

IT STARTS WITH US



Deception.”

This practice still occurs in the twenty-first century and often results in sexual exploitation.

On the 21 million people estimated to be forced to labor, 4.5 million would face

Sexual exploitation, and 98% of these people are women, according to UN Women.

d. Child Marriage

Child marriage refers to forced marriages of young girls without their consent. 700 million

Women worldwide were married before the age of 18, and a third of them before 15. In many

Countries, child marriages results from poverty, and area real threat to the education of young

Girls. Furthermore, young girls married under 18 are more exposed to intimate partner

Violence and sexual violence.

e. Other forms of violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is expressed in many different ways, not only including

The previously mentioned types of violence. There is also dowry murder, “honor killing”,

Violence during pregnancy, sexual harassment, economic violence, and many other forms of

Violence based on discrimination resulting from women’s ethnicity, caste, class, migrant

Or refugee status, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, etc.

4. Consequences of violence against women and girls

Violence can have a dramatic impact on the victim. Indeed, consequences are really

Diverse and occur in many different areas: physical, sexual and psychological consequences

(Highly linked to health issues) as well as economic, educational or cultural

Consequences. Indeed, some types of violence lead to lower levels of education,

Exposure to child maltreatment, antisocial personality disorders, or even to the acceptance

Of gender inequality as a normal practice.

Many types of violence have direct or indirect consequences health. The main risk for women

IT STARTS WITH US



And girls exposed to violence is the exposure to HIV/AIDS, especially in case of sexual Violence. It can also result in more dramatic circumstances such as homicide or suicide. Sexual violence in particular has many heavy consequences: injuries, unintended Pregnancies (and abortions), gynecological problems, sexually transmitted infections (STDs, Including HIV). Psychological effects of sexual violence are also very diverse: depression, Post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, emotional distress and Suicide attempts. Studies have shown that alcohol problems and addictions can result of such Violence.

Moreover, health effects can include headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, Fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility and poor overall health, especially in Countries where the access to healthcare is limited.

Finally, violence during childhood can impact the comportment and attitudes of children Regarding smoking, drug and alcohol issues. Children are also subject to mortality, Malnutrition or diseases. It can also lead to sexual or violent behaviors in later life, mostly as Perpetration for males and victims for females.

5. Response to the issue of gender-based violence

Prevention

Violence against women and girls is a gender discrimination based on multiple Stereotypes, which need to be deconstructed and eliminated. There are different ways to fight This type of violence, and prevention is a key in the response to the issue. Indeed, Through prevention, violence can be reduced and avoided in many cases. Prevention is Effective thanks to education for boys and girls, men and women but also thanks to A larger access to information and awareness campaigns.

• Education

Education is the key in the prevention of violent acts against women and girls. It Targets boys as well as girls. Indeed developing education in rural areas and countries

IT STARTS WITH US



Especially concerned by gender-based violence is fundamental. This type of prevention must start in the early life of children in order to promote gender equality in a better and durable way. It must concern boys in order to avoid them to perpetrate acts of violence, but also girls to give them a sufficient knowledge of their fundamental rights. Education also comes with the empowerment of women in order to reach gender equality. Programs such as “Voices against Violence” must be encouraged by the United Nations and Government. This program is “a co-educational curriculum designed for various age groups ranging from 5 to 25 years. It provides young people with tools and expertise to understand the root causes of violence in their communities, to educate and involve their peers and communities to prevent such violence, and to learn about where to access support if violence is experienced.”

This way of educating young people provides large prevention, covering the understanding of the issue, the ways of avoiding it, and even more important, services related to victims of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, this specific program can be “adapted to national context, translated into local languages, and rolled out in schools and communities in partnership with youth organizations, UN partners and governments. “

Indeed, an educational program of prevention must be adapted to the population targeted in order to be efficient and largely diffused to urban areas, as well as local and rural ones.

- **Awareness campaigns**

Raising awareness is a complementary action to education. Indeed, it provides information, not only to young people, but more largely to men and women. The aim of such an action is to change attitudes and behavior towards women and girls, and mobilize populations to promote gender equality (through local projects, global petitions, information on women’s rights, etc.). The United Nations Secretary General’s Campaign to

IT STARTS WITH US



End Violence against Women (Unite campaign) has been implemented in order to fulfill Awareness objectives but not only. It aims the end of gender-based violence through Different means and awareness is one of the main ones. The campaign established 5 goals, The fourth one being “Increase Political Awareness and Social Mobilization” which proves The relevance of communication and prevention through awareness campaigns. This Campaign is however not the only one which has been launched regarding violence Towards women and girls. Many more exist, added to the international days focusing on the Different types of violence. There are many specific awareness campaigns, regarding a precise Form of violence regarding women and girls. Finally, awareness must adapt itself to Countries and populations targeted. As a consequence, in a globalized world, internet And social media represent a key point for the prevention of violence against women And girls.

Direct support to women and girls victim of violence

Prevention is essential to reduce and eliminate gender-based violence. However, Numerous women and girls still experience violence everyday around the world. This Is the reason why, it is absolutely necessary to create structures which can bring help to the Victims of violence.

These structures are implemented in “multi-sectorial national action plans. “It means that Each country must internally provide support to women and girls who experience violence, Through many different ways (multi-sectorial plans).

Direct support can be brought with centers providing health services for victims of Violence. Hotlines and helplines can also provide information to women and girls, but Essentially support to avoid any dramatic psychological condition for instance. The existence Of free legal services for women and girls into these centers is also required to Organize a complete support of victims. Finally, measures such as the creation of safe Spaces or more recently “safe cities” would provide women and girls the security they

IT STARTS WITH US



Require, even if they never experienced gender-based violence. These fundamental and Basic services must be accessible to any woman or girl victim of violence, without any Distinction on religion, sexual orientation, class, social status, etc. Vulnerable groups such As refugees, women with disabilities, indigenous or women living in rural areas must benefit Equality of such services.

Strengthening domestic legislations

At an international level, progress has been made in the past 20 years in order to create a Legal framework to protect women and girls from violence. As a consequence, the International legislation has been largely enforced. However, this legal framework is useless if Countries do not take internal measures to punish the perpetrators of violence against women And ensure women's fundamental rights. Indeed, laws and policies of many countries do not Criminalize some types of violence against women and girls, arguing that it only relies on Private matters. As a result, there is a clear tolerance of gender-based violence. The United Nations bodies and specialized agencies such as UN Women, and NGOs work to Encourage the adoption of a legal framework regarding gender-based violence by all Countries. Indeed, the aim is the punishment of perpetrators and the recognition of Women's rights, but also to provide human and financial resources to create awareness Campaigns, ensure a direct support to women and girls victims of violence, and provide Security to all women and girls.

6. Cooperation of UN bodies and specialized agencies

The different responses to violence against women and girls can only be efficient in The perspective of a cooperation between the United Nations bodies and specialized Agencies, but also with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), national and local Governments, as well as national and local associations and religious leaders. The following UN bodies and specialized agencies, commissions and programs appear as essential for A cooperation on the issue of violence towards women and girls:

IT STARTS WITH US



- The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women);
- The World Health Organization (WHO);
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF);
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP);
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPD);
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

7. Questions a resolution should address

- i. How violence against women and girls is precisely defined? What are all forms and types of such a violence?
- ii. What are the causes and consequences of gender-based violence? How important is the impact on women?
- iii. What kind of support can be provided to the victims of this type of violence?
- iv. What are the main ways of action to reduce and end gender-based violence?
- v. Are there precise examples of responses to the issue? What do the programs already implemented can provide to create new and more efficient programs?
- vi. How to highlight the strong links of gender-based violence with gender inequalities? How can education be one of the main ways of action regarding the issue?
- vii. Which areas are the ones being the most impacted by gender-based violence?
- viii. Why and how is the cooperation of the UN bodies and agencies with local and National Governments, associations and religious leader a key in solving the issue?
- ix. How the implementation of strong and effective legislations in all countries is fundamental to provide an efficient response to violence against women and girls?

IT STARTS WITH US