8th Annual Conference
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UNW
BACKGROUND GUIDE

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WELCOME NOTE

Letter from dais

Dear Delegates,
We are pleased to have you join us for United Nations Entity For Gender Equality And The Empowerment Of Women (UN WOMEN) at this year's Model UN Role Play Exercise. As your chairs- Ayesha, Karma and Zedan, we are excited to take this journey with you as we tackle some of the most pressing challenges on gender equality & women rights. Over the years UN Women has stepped up in hope and optimism a silent witness to change, fighting for gender equality as an independent agency managed by women on behalf of global leaders who are bold enough. We hope that through this committee, you will be able to play the role of world leaders discussing with others on developing unique solutions to tackle our issues. To get you as prepared for the new world order of things, we have put together this background guide that will hopefully equip you with a deep-enough understanding of the agenda and show its reach across other continents. We expect you to do your research, come prepared for every session with open heart and mind; be respectful of these conversations in a thoughtful way. Remember that this committee, above all else, is a space for collaboration and constructive critique, a place for us to come together and lead with empathy, striving to be our best. We are your chairs and will be here to help you navigate the waters of this dynamic journey! This is our opportunity to change that and ensure we center equity, justice, empowerment. Have a productive and enjoyable conference everyone!
Sincerely, Chairs of UN Women
unwomen.wesmun25@gmail.com

Introduction to Committee

Welcome to the UN Women Committee, one of the key institutions of the United Nations which focuses on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the international level. After being established in 2010, UN Women has engaged in various advocacy programs for the rights and grievances of women, as well as addressing issues that impede their development. Our committee is instrumental in assisting and funding the international efforts to fight against gender discrimination and violence.

UN Women seeks to assure gender equality across all sectors, such as political representation and economic development. The committee faces some of the greatest relevant global women's issues such as ending violence against women, ensuring education and access to healthcare, and women's participation in peace and security. Delegates in this committee are tasked with crafting resolutions that propose actionable solutions to these challenges, fostering collaboration among member states and organizations.

The inception of UN Women brought together various efforts that were once scattered across multiple UN entities. Throughout the years, the committee has led initiatives like the HeForShe campaign and UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which underscores the critical roles women play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. These achievements showcase the committee's capacity to rally global efforts and drive meaningful change.

Countries with a history of championing women's rights, such as Sweden, Canada, and Rwanda, play a significant role in shaping the agenda and funding of UN Women. However, countries dealing with gender imbalances take specific perspectives to the committee, which guarantees that the committee also pays attention to the needs of various populations. The committee's strategic cooperation with non-governmental organizations and grassroots movements has increased its efficiency in the field.

While UN Women adheres to standard MUN procedures, its discussions focus on ensuring inclusiveness and integration. Delegates are encouraged to use gender-specific language in decision-making. In addition, the committee values qualitative contributions alongside quantitative data to address deeply rooted cultural and societal issues.

This committee offers an opportunity for dedicated delegates to engage with critical global gender issues and develop impactful solutions that extend beyond the scope of this conference. Together, we aim to inspire meaningful change and advance the rights of women and girls, working toward a future rooted in equality and fairness.

TOPIC 1:

Addressing the impact of traditional practices on gender inequality and women's right

Introduction

Gender disparity fostered by deep-rooted norms including child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and alienable guarantees of inheritance rights is of undoing. The practices violate cultural, religious, and socio-economic rights of women through inhibiting their educational, economic, and power bases, while strengthening masculinity in society. And this is the reason why this issue needs to be addressed. To accomplish goals like gender equity, inclusive quality education and economic growth, sustainability development's agenda is comprehensive. Such mechanisms require legal provisions, community involvement and changes in the attitude of the society towards women to start changing the dominance of man in the society. The main of UN, Women's agenda is education, cooperation at the bottom, and joint actions of states with civil society to not let bilateral discrimination norms of women to exist and to create better and more just society.

Analysis

Harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), child marriage, dowries, and gender-biased inheritance laws, continue to undermine the rights and equality of women worldwide. These practices stem from deeply rooted cultural, religious and social norms, violate human rights and perpetuate gender inequality. Their effects are far-reaching, denying women access to education, healthcare and economic participation, while exposing them to violence and exploitation.

Efforts to address these issues have shown mixed results. Legislative reform and international cooperation have been prompted by global frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goal 5. Culture, resource deprivation, and politics are the main reasons for the difficulty in enforcing these policies. Community-driven initiatives, such as those supported by UN Women, demonstrate that engaging local leaders and integrating culturally sensitive approaches can yield sustainable change

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Tackling these issues requires a careful approach that respects different cultures while standing up for basic human rights. Delegates must propose culturally sensitive yet resolute measures that empower women, engage local leaders, and ensure accountability. Achieving this will not only protect women's rights but also drive broader societal progress by fostering equality and reducing poverty.

Historical background

The origins of these practices are deeply intertwined with societal structures, often serving as tools for controlling women's autonomy. FGM/C and child marriage have been around for centuries, justified by myths about purity, fertility and social cohesion. Efforts to combat them gained momentum in the 20th century with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). In recent years, global campaigns like UNICEF's to end child marriage and UN Women's community based advocacy have been advancing the fight against these practices.

For instance, in rural Kenya, UN funded projects have enabled local leaders and law enforcement to challenge FGM/C and early marriage through education and legal support. These initiatives have significantly increased community awareness and reduced prevalence rates in targeted areas.

Key terms
●Harmful Traditional Practices: Cultural practices that infringe on human rights and disproportionately impact women and girls.
●Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): Non-medical procedures involving the partial or total removal of external female genitalia.
●Child Marriage: The union of individuals under 18, often leading to health risks, early pregnancies, and education loss.
●CEDAW: A UN treaty aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.
●Patriarchy: A social system in which men hold primary power, influencing societal norms and practices that subordinate women.
●Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Any harmful act directed at an individual based on their gender, including physical, sexual, or psychological abuse.
●Intersectionality: A framework that examines how overlapping social identities (e.g., gender, race, class) create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege.
●Social Norms: Unwritten societal rules that influence behaviour
●Empowerment: Processes enabling women and girls to gain control over their lives, including political, social, and economic dimensions.
●Honour-Based Violence: Violence committed to protect or defend family or community "honour," often involving women who are perceived to have defied cultural expectations.

Major Parties involved

Kenya
● Significant efforts to combat Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage.
● Community-based projects like those supported by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) have raised awareness and reduced these practices in rural areas

Ethiopia
● High prevalence of child marriage, but ongoing government-led programs aim to reduce it through legal reforms and community education

India
● Challenges with child marriage, dowries, and honor-based violence. Laws like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act have been enacted to tackle these issues

Sudan and Somalia
● Among the countries with the highest prevalence of FGM/C. Efforts include local and international campaigns to enforce laws and educate communities.

Bangladesh
● High rates of child marriage despite laws prohibiting the practice. Advocacy groups work to shift cultural norms and empower young girls

Nigeria
● Significant advocacy against FGM/C and child marriage by local organizations and global partnerships, but cultural resistance remains strong

UN Women
● Leads efforts to combat harmful practices globally by promoting legal frameworks, supporting community-based initiatives, and driving cultural transformation.

UNICEF
●Focuses on protecting children from child marriage and FGM/C through education and health programs

WHO (World Health Organization)
●Advocates for the elimination of harmful traditional practices through public health interventions and global research initiatives.

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)
●Provides a legal framework for addressing gender discrimination and traditional practices worldwide

Current challenges and opportunities

challenges:
Cultural Resistance: Highly entrenched negative behaviours are difficult to change, and in many cases are viewed as being embedded in the culture, as being intrinsic to cultural identity. Attempts to reform are resisted, because reform is seen to be from elsewhere. Education plays an important role in the prevention of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in outlying groups.

Economic Factors: Economic dependence drives women and girls into degrading practices such as child marriage, which can be seen as a safety net by families. Without support, escaping these cycles is difficult.

Geographic & Social Positioning: Women living in rural or marginal areas have greater risks because of their lack of access to education, health care, and legal assistance. Social isolation hinders their ability to escape harmful practices.

Weak Legal Framework: Legislation prohibiting practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation has insufficient enforcement capacity as a result of limitations in resource availability, legal education in adequacy and societal bias, permitting these to continue.

Opportunities

International Collaboration and Advocacy: Global efforts can raise awareness and hold governments accountable. UN and regional agencies have the means to eradicate harmful practices in the countries that they target.

Community-Led Change: Action for change can be taken locally by community members working to change damaging practices. Once man and woman are engaged, the fight goes well against custom.

Technology and Education: Technology, such as mobile phones and social media, can educate, and also connect victims to support, enabling change.

Legal and Policy Reform: Strong legal frameworks are needed to address harmful practices. The increase of legislation has a role to play in the fight against gender inequality and the promotion of gender-sensitive policies.

Gender-Based Violence & Education as Empowerment: Education breaks traditional practices. Teaching about gender equality and the negative effects and consequences of child marriage equips women and reinforces communities.

Questions a resolution must answer
●What are the most effective strategies to recognize, understand, and impose sanctions on those promoting traditional practices that are detrimental to gender equality and women's rights?
●What should be the roles of education and empowerment in combating these sociocultural practices, and how do we transfer those facets to people, particularly girls and women from minority communities?
●What responsibilities should governments, civil society and international agencies have in curbing hazardous traditional practices that infringe the gender equality and women's rights?
●What are the most effective methods to combat and to instigate the effects of harmful traditional practices on women's rights and gender equality, and how do we ensure that these methods are effective?

Subtopics:

1) Legal Frameworks vs. Cultural Practices
2) Youth Empowerment and Changing Traditional Practices
3) The Impact of Child Marriage on Education and Empowerment
4) Addressing the Psychological and Emotional Impact of Harmful Traditional Practices
5) The Global Impact of Traditional Practices on Migrant and Refugee Women

Past resolutions

1.UN General Assembly Resolution 67/146 (2012): Resolution of the UN General Assembly 67/146 (2012): Intensification of efforts to eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM): The harmful practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) was given this focus: one of the most ingrained, harmful traditional practices which causes severe physical and psychological pain to women and girls. It called upon states to make laws prohibiting FGM and take measures to prevent this practice, paying attention to the health and social perspectives of this issue. The resolution underscored the role which education and social mobilization can play in changing cultural attitudes towards FGM. On the one hand, focusing on FGM within the context of gender-based violence underscores the broader problem of TBCs and gender disadvantage and calls for a comprehensive international response at all levels to prevent such practices.

2 UN General Assembly Resolution 68/151 (2013): Elimination of practices which are harmful, and which affect the health, dignity and well-being of women and girls: This resolution tackled specific gender-based traditional practices including but not limited to child marriage, dowry-related violence, honor killings and FGM. It urged states to adopt laws and policies to eradicate these customs and safeguard the rights of women, while encouraging interstate efforts to learn and bolster such protections. In that sense, the resolution recognizes the role of traditional cultural practices in curtailing women's rights and dignity and calls for progressive measures by governments without compromising on cultural ethos.

3   UN Women Campaigns and Commitments on Ending Violence Against Women (Ongoing Initiatives): The prevention of VAW, as a campaign intervention strategy, has become a trademark for UN Women. Coordinating across many global campaigns focusing on the ban of child marriages, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and other longstanding problematic practices towards women and girls. The Educate Women campaign and the Safe Cities Global Initiative are other flagship campaigns of UN Women, which provide resources, technical help and reform frameworks to apivate networks of governments and communities. It also works in complement with social normative change social and legal forms to address the women discrimination issues.

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3. UN Women Africa. Engagement with Traditional Leaders and Cultural Authorities in Ending Harmful Practices Against Women and Girls: africa.unwomen.org
4. United Nations Women: https://www.unwomen.org/en
5. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals: https://sdgs.un.org/goals
6. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda
7. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): https://ecosoc.un.org/en
8. United Nations E-Subscription - https://esubscription.un.org/en
9. UN Women - Ending Violence Against Women - https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women
10. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - https://www.un.org/ecosoc/
11. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) - https://www.ohchr.org
12. UN Women - In Focus: Ending Violence Against Women - https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/ending-violence-against-women

TOPIC 2:

Addressing the impact of traditional practices on gender inequality and women's rights

Introduction

The economic empowerment of rural women is very instrumental in the pursuit of gender equality and the realization of sustainable development at a global level. It is therefore important that barriers related to education, finances, and technology are addressed for rural women, who often suffer from poverty and other environmental challenges. CSR provides an opportunity through strategic interventions, including skill development, access to finance on equitable terms, and environmentally viable agricultural programs. The CSR activities in a gender-sensitive manner could enable the rural woman to be an active agent in the process of economic development and build up leadership or entrepreneurial roles. This can align CSR strategies with Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), for both social impact and business success. This collaborative approach will go a long way, wherein the private sector and UN Women come together to create sustainable and inclusive development, improvement in the economic status of rural women, and polarization of systemic inequalities.

Analysis

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provides businesses with a framework to address societal and environmental issues while maintaining profitability. For rural women, CSR initiatives offer critical opportunities, including access to education, resources, and entrepreneurship programs. When companies invest in rural women through social responsibility programs, they create ripple effects that benefit entire communities. By focusing on sustainable practices - like smart farming methods that protect the environment while boosting crop yields - these initiatives give women the tools to thrive economically. The results are remarkable: as women gain access to resources and training, they're able to build more resilient businesses while preserving local ecosystems. These efforts demonstrate the transformative potential of CSR when aligned with rural women's specific needs.

Effective CSR programs tailored for rural women can significantly reduce poverty and gender inequality, contributing to sustainable development. Such initiatives strengthen community resilience through multifaceted approaches to economic development and environmental conservation. Addressing fundamental challenges, particularly inequitable land distribution and restricted financial access, necessitates coordinated action between governmental bodies, corporate entities, and community stakeholders. The successful implementation of these CSR frameworks serves as a replicable model for sustainable development initiatives across global contexts, thereby advancing economic progress on an international scale.

Historical background

CSR initially focused on philanthropy, Over the last hundred years, CSR has expanded to address systemic social issues, including gender inequality. The role of corporations in advancing women's rights has been emphasized by global movements such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and frameworks such as UN Global Compact (2000). In rural areas, CSR initiatives became prominent with the rise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Combining CSR with sustainable development strategies has proven effective in programs like the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JPR WEE). For example, JP RWEE in Ethiopia and Rwanda enhanced rural women's access to land, training, and resources, fostering economic independence and resilience.

Key terms
● Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Voluntary business practices that contribute to societal well-being beyond profit-making.
● Sustainable Development: Development that meets present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs.
● Economic Empowerment: The process of increasing the ability of individuals, particularly women, to make economic decisions and access resources.
● Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA): Sustainable farming practices that adapt to climate change while increasing productivity and reducing environmental impacts.

Major Parties involved

Ethiopia:
● Focuses on empowering women in agriculture through CSR-backed programs.
Rwanda:
● Implements gender-responsive policies for women's land ownership and farming.
Nepal:
● Promotes women entrepreneurs in rural areas with CSR initiatives.
India:
● Uses CSR to support self-help groups and microfinance for women in rural sectors.
Kenya:
● Engages in CSR for technology access and financial inclusion.

UN Women:
● Advocates for gender equality and supports CSR initiatives targeting rural women.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization):
● Focuses on sustainable agricultural practices and women's role in food security.

IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development):
● Promotes rural development through CSR and gender-sensitive programs.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme):
● Supports CSR-backed microfinance and entrepreneurship projects.

Current Challenges and Opportunities:

Challenges::

Cultural Resistance and Gender Roles: Deep-rooted cultural beliefs in rural areas restrict women's roles, especially in economic decisions. CSR programs must be sensitive to these norms to effectively address them.

Economic Dependency: Women in rural areas often depend on kinship structures with limited access to credit, land, and markets. CSR must address financial barriers through microfinance and entrepreneurship support.

Geographic and Social Isolation: Rural women face isolation due to poor infrastructure and limited connectivity. CSR programs must address logistical challenges like digital literacy, mobile banking, and remote training.

Weak Legal Support: Despite laws for gender equality, rural women face weak enforcement and lack of legal services. CSR can help by supporting stronger legal frameworks that ensure women's economic rights.

Opportunities:

International Collaboration: CSR can enable global, business, and government stakeholders to work together, sharing resources and best practices to empower rural women through sustainable development.

Technological Solutions: Technology offers opportunities for education and market access. CSR initiatives that use digital platforms and mobile tech can significantly boost economic empowerment for rural women.

Community-Led Change: Local authorities and community groups can drive change. CSR programs involving women's groups ensure initiatives are culturally appropriate and widely accepted.

CSR and SDGs: CSR can align with the UN's SDGs, especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work), contributing to rural women's economic empowerment.

Policy Advocacy and Legal Reform: CSR can advocate for policy and legal reforms to improve women's access to land, credit, and markets, promoting economic empowerment.

Education and Capacity Building: CSR can provide education and skills in areas like agriculture, renewable energy, and digital literacy, enabling rural women to thrive in a sustainable economy.

Questions a resolution must answer
●What is the potential of education and empowerment in enabling rural women to capitalize on CSR programmes, and how can these methods be applied at the community level?
●What responsibilities should governments, civil society, and international agencies have in ensuring that CSR programs are aligned with the goal of improving the economic status of rural women through sustainable practices?
●How can we effectively integrate rural women into sustainable development programmes under CSR models and make sure that these programmes are impactful and inclusive?

Subtopics:
1) Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship Through Corporate Investment and Mentorship
2) Leveraging Technology and Innovation to Empower Rural Women
3) Corporate Contributions to Women's Education and Skills Development in Rural Areas
4) Encouraging Corporations to Support Gender-Responsive Public Policies
5) Promoting Gender Equality in Rural Employment through Corporate Initiatives

Past resolutions
1 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (2015): Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:
In this resolution, the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment has been underscored as the basis for the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs).
It emphasizes the need for economic empowerment in enhancing the condition of women, also rural women, and for international cooperation in this field. The resolution offers a global reference platform to harmonise measures of CSR which serve to improve rural woman's economic condition by the means of sustainable practices.

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2 UN Women Resolution (2016): Strengthening the Role of Women in Sustainable Development:
This resolution addresses the contribution of women to sustainable development, with a focus on rural areas. It highlights the importance of gender-responsive CSR approaches and urges companies to contribute to activities that improve the economic prospects of rural women by using environmentally wise means.

3 United Nations Global Compact – Women's Empowerment Principles (2010):
These guidelines motivate enterprises to introduce CSR initiatives that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment in both the workplace and communities. It highlights the need for consistency between corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and sustainable development that will guarantee rural women to have the same opportunities for economic activities, resources, and decision-making processes.

4 The 2017 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Report on Sustainable Development:.
This paper publicly focussed particularly on the economic empowerment of women in rural contexts via CSR&sustainable ways. It also brought to light the ways businesses can support gender equality in agribusiness, renewable energy, and other sectors offering rural women a sustainable practice of work.

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●The 17 Goals - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): https://sdgs.un.org/goals
●United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): https://ecosoc.un.org/en
●UN Women: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: https://www.unwomen.org/en
●Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

Recommended resources: (For both topics)

United Nations Documents
- UN Women
- UN General Assembly Resolutions and Reports
○ UN Treaty Collection

2. International Treaties and Declarations
- UDHR
- SDGs

3. Research Institutions and Think Tanks
- ICRW
- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International

4. NGOs and Advocacy Groups
- Girls Not Brides
- End FGM
- The Elders

5. Government and Policy Reports
-World Bank Gender Equality

6. Documentaries and Media Coverage
- Half the Sky and The Girl Rising
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