(UNCSW)

(United Nations Commission for Status of Women)

AGENDA

Promoting policy and advocacy measures to address gender-based violence against women and girls in humanitarian crises and displacement settings, with a special emphasis on the Middle Eastern and Asian regions.

The Executive Board
Chairperson- tejitha gummadi
Vice chairperson- sukrithi kallurmath
rapporteur - vaibhavi R,

Contents:-

Letter from the EB

Dear Delegates,

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), SILVEROAKS MUN 2025. We are honored to serve as your Executive Board and to guide you through this simulation of one of the most vital platforms for advancing women's rights and gender equality worldwide.

The CSW is not just another UN body. It is the stage where the world negotiates change for half of humanity, where voices silenced in war, displacement, and discrimination demand recognition. Our agenda this year addresses one of the most urgent realities of our time: gender-based violence against women and girls in humanitarian crises and displacement settings. From conflict zones to refugee camps, women and girls bear the heaviest burdens, often facing sexual violence, exploitation, and systemic neglect. This committee calls upon you not just to debate policies but to rethink how the international community can respond to these layered injustices with urgency, accountability, and compassion.

To support your preparation, we have created this Background Guide, which gives you an overview of the agenda, historical developments, international frameworks, and key regional case studies. However, this guide is only the beginning. It is not comprehensive, nor is it meant to limit your research. The depth, nuance, and creativity that you bring into the committee will define the quality of our discussions. We urge you to explore beyond these pages examine your country's policies, study past UN resolutions, and understand the lived realities of women and girls whose rights we are here to defend.

The strength of this committee lies in you, the delegates. You carry the responsibility of representing your allotted nations faithfully while engaging with one another in the spirit of diplomacy. Debate in the CSW is not about empty rhetoric or competition; it is about collective problem-solving. We expect you to challenge one another, negotiate fiercely, but also collaborate to draft resolutions that reflect both realism and ambition. Our role as

your Executive Board is to ensure fairness and order, but the direction and energy of this committee rests entirely in your hands.

Above all, remember that this committee is not an exercise in words alone. The discussions you have, mirror the real struggles of women and girls living under war, displacement, and systemic violence. Approach the debate not just with policy in mind, but with empathy and a sense of responsibility. This conference is your chance to practice the very essence of diplomacy, to think critically, to listen actively, and to build bridges where walls exist.

We are excited to witness your ideas, your passion, and your solutions. We hope this experience will not only sharpen your skills but also leave you with a deeper appreciation of the struggles that the CSW confronts daily.

Godspeed, and see you in committee.

We look forward to seeing you and wish you the very best in your preparations.

Contact: mun2025papers@gmail.com

With Regards,
The Executive Board
United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
Silveroaks MUN 2025

Position paper guidelines

A position paper is a concise summary of your country's viewpoint on the agenda being discussed. Your position paper should include a brief introduction, followed by a detailed breakdown of your country's stance on all aspects of the agenda.The best position papers do not merely state facts, they present clear, practical, and actionable proposals for resolutions.

For UNCSW, you are expected to submit a position paper on the agenda:"Promoting policy and advocacy measures to address gender-based violence against women and girls in humanitarian crises and displacement settings, with a special emphasis on the security

of women and girls in Middle Eastern and Asian regions." Submission is mandatory, and use of AI tools will result in demarcation.

<u>Suggested guidelines are:-</u>

1. *All position papers must be written in Times New Roman, font size 12, with single spacing throughout. Standard one-inch margins must be maintained on all sides to ensure clarity, professionalism, and a clean presentation.*
2. *On the first page, both the emblem and the national flag of your assigned country must be included. The emblem should appear in the top left corner, and the flag in the top right corner. You may switch their positions if preferred, but both symbols must remain clearly visible, properly sized, and must not interfere with the text layout.*
3. *Each idea, argument, or proposal must be presented in its own paragraph to ensure readability and logical flow. Combining multiple points in a single paragraph is not acceptable, as it can create confusion and reduce the impact of your arguments.*
4. *All facts, statistics, and statements must be fully supported with endnotes referencing reliable sources, following MLA format. Every claim should be backed by evidence, official documentation, or authoritative references, not personal opinion.*
5. *The position paper must reflect your assigned country's foreign policy and official stance. Personal opinions or unrelated viewpoints must not be included. All content should align with your country's interests, priorities, and global commitments regarding the agenda.*
6. *The paper must be entirely original, written in your own words. Plagiarism or heavy reliance on AI will result in rejection or negative marking.*
7. *The total length of the position paper should be two to three pages, excluding references. The document must be well-organized, with a clear header including your country, committee name, and agenda. It should demonstrate a strong understanding of the topic, logical argumentation, and well-supported, actionable proposals.*

The format below is provided underneath for your reference

POSITION PAPER

Your Country

Committee

Name Agenda

Begin your paper with a clear header that includes your country, the committee name, and the agenda. This immediately identifies your paper and establishes the context for your arguments. Ensure that both the emblem and the national flag are included on the first page, placed clearly and professionally.

Historical Background:

Provide a summary of the historical and global context related to gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian crises and displacement settings. Highlight important international resolutions, treaties, and frameworks, such as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, and the Geneva Conventions, that guide state responsibilities and humanitarian protections. Explain why this issue remains critical today and why it requires attention at the UNCSW, emphasizing regions like the Middle East and Asia where women and girls face heightened risks.

Country's Position

Clearly articulate your country's priorities, objectives, and concerns regarding the agenda. Support your position with references to international laws, treaties, agreements, or past initiatives that justify your stance. Explain how your country's perspective aligns with or differs from other nations, highlighting unique contributions, strategies, or concerns specific to your country. This section should be persuasive yet factual, showing deep understanding of the agenda.

Proposed Solutions:

Offer concrete, practical policies or measures to address the problem of GBV in humanitarian crises. Suggest strategies for governments, UN agencies, or NGOs, such as funding for local women's organizations, survivor-centered protection programs, and culturally sensitive intervention approaches. Ensure that your proposals are realistic, actionable, and aligned with your country's interests, while demonstrating an understanding of global cooperation.

Previous Actions and Contributions:

Highlight any relevant past actions, programs, or initiatives your country has undertaken regarding GBV, humanitarian protection, or women's rights. Reference participation in international treaties, agreements, or regional efforts that demonstrate your country's commitment. This section should emphasize credibility, showing that your country has a history of engagement and practical contributions to resolving these issues.

Conclusion:

Summarize your country's overall position, key arguments, and proposed solutions in a clear and concise manner. Reinforce your commitment to working collaboratively with other delegates to reach consensus-based solutions. End on a note of constructive diplomacy, expressing willingness to support global efforts to protect women and girls in humanitarian crises.

The deadline to submit the position papers is the 16th of October, 11:00 PM, 2025. Late submissions will not be accepted. The gmail ID to submit the documents is: uncsw.somunhyd2025papers@gmail.com. Please include in the subject: Name of your country, Position Paper. Do not attach the link of any google document. Position papers will be accepted only in PDF format. Kindly do not include any other attachments

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Wars, conflicts, and humanitarian crises strip women and girls of their safety, dignity, and basic human rights. Although the international community has made progress in creating protective frameworks, the truth remains that no country fully safeguards women in times of crisis, nor has any comprehensively addressed the systemic neglect they face. Millions of women continue to endure the consequences of displacement, conflict, and collapsed governance, often invisible and unheard. Millions face sexual violence, forced early marriage, and lack of access to healthcare and essential services. Millions of voices, in Syria, Afghanistan, Gaza, Yemen, Sudan, and the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh and Myanmar, remain silenced as they navigate life under threat, deprivation, and fear.

International frameworks such as CEDAW (1979), UNSCR 1325 (2000), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and the Geneva Conventions formally recognize states' obligations to protect women during conflict. These instruments put survivors at the center of humanitarian responsibility and outline clear duties for governments, organizations, and international actors. Yet, decades after their adoption, implementation gaps persist. Refugee and IDP camps remain unsafe, essential survivor services are underfunded, and local women's organizations, the first line of defense, are frequently sidelined from planning and decision-making processes. The protection of women and girls is often treated as an afterthought, rather than a core obligation in humanitarian responses.

Despite these historic commitments, gender based violence remains widespread and systematic in crisis settings. Data from UNFPA indicates that over 70% of GBV incidents in Syrian displacement camps go unreported due to fear and stigma. In Yemen, child marriage is rising as families struggle to survive. In Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, ongoing bombardments and failing health infrastructure compound the threat of sexual violence. In Afghanistan, restrictions on women's rights since 2021 have left survivors with almost no access to justice or support services. The Rohingya crisis highlights how displacement intensifies

vulnerabilities, with women in overcrowded camps exposed to sexual violence, inadequate lighting, minimal privacy, and insufficient security. In Sudan, sexual violence is explicitly used as a weapon of war. These realities confirm a brutal truth: gender-based violence is not a by product of conflict it is a deliberate, systematic tool that thrives where governance and protection mechanisms collapse.

It is precisely this institutional and systemic failure that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) must address. Polarized policies, insufficient funding, and fragmented responses continue to undermine women's rights and security. The CSW's mandate is to ensure that humanitarian strategies are survivor centered, that local women's organizations are empowered, and that states integrate protection against gender based violence into every aspect of crisis response. Its role is critical in advocating for safe spaces, functional reporting mechanisms, and inclusive planning that prioritizes the needs of the most vulnerable.

The urgency of this agenda cannot be overstated. Without decisive action, wars and humanitarian crises will continue to strip women and girls across the Middle East and Asia of their rights, security, and futures. It is the responsibility of delegates to confront systemic inequities, to hold states accountable, and to ensure that the voices of survivors are central to international responses. The CSW has always been, and must continue to be, a platform to advance holistic protection for the most marginalized, shaping policies that translate commitments into tangible, life saving outcomes. Delegates are challenged to navigate complex cultural, political, and social dynamics, balancing respect for local practices with the enforcement of universal human rights. The task is clear: create policies that are actionable, enforceable, and sustainable, ensuring women and girls can survive and thrive even in the most devastating humanitarian crises.

STAKE HOLDERS ANALYSIS

1. Russia
2. Saudi arabia
3. Iran
4. Iraq
5. Lebanon
6. Syria
7. Gaza
8. Yemen
9. Bangladesh
10. Myanmar
11. Afghanistan
12. Sudan
13. Phillipines
14. indonesia

International organizations these countries are part of

❖ *OIC: Organization of islamic cooperation*
  The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an intergovernmental organization
  that serves as the collective voice of the Muslim world, with 57 member states across four

continents, established in 1969 following an arson attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Its objectives include promoting solidarity, protecting the interests of Muslims, upholding Islamic ideals, and fostering international peace and harmony.

- ❖ *Arab league*
- ❖ The Arab League, or league of arab nations is a regional organization of 22 Arab member states in the Middle East and North Africa, founded in Cairo on March 22, 1945, to strengthen cooperation and coordinate political, economic, and cultural activities. Its goals include safeguarding members' independence and sovereignty, mediating disputes, and promoting economic and social development.
- ❖ *Shanghai cooperation organisation*
  The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent Eurasian intergovernmental organization founded in 2001 by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Its main objectives are to promote regional peace, security, and stability by combating terrorism *,* ethnic separatism *, and religious extremism, while also fostering political, economic, scientific, cultural, and environmental cooperation among its member states.*
- ❖ *BRICS / New Development Bank (NDB)*
  The BRICS acronym refers to five emerging economies—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—which formed the New Development Bank (NDB), a multilateral financial institution, in 2015. Headquartered in Shanghai, China, the NDB's purpose is to finance sustainable development and infrastructure projects in BRICS and other emerging market economies.
- ❖ *Arab Air Carriers' Organization (AACO)*

CASE STUDIES

Historical information:-

<u>Bangladesh & Myanmar: The Rohingya Crisis</u>

The Rohingya crisis stands as one of the gravest humanitarian disasters of the 21st century. In Myanmar's Rakhine State, the Rohingya, a Muslim minority, have endured decades of systematic persecution, denial of citizenship, and institutionalized oppression. In 2017, a brutal military crackdown forced over 700,000 Rohingya to flee into Bangladesh, leaving behind homes, livelihoods, and family members. Displacement was not merely a loss of territory, it was a collapse of security, dignity, and survival.

Women and girls bear the brunt of this catastrophe. Overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar lack lighting, secure facilities, and privacy, creating daily exposure to sexual violence, forced marriages, exploitation, and trafficking. UNFPA reports that more than 70% of incidents of gender-based violence go unreported, victims silenced by fear, stigma, and the absence of justice. This is not a by-product of conflict, it is a weaponized inequality, thriving where governance and protection fail.

Key actors include the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, UNHCR, IOM, and frontline humanitarian organizations such as CARE and Médecins Sans Frontières. Despite CEDAW (1979), UNSCR 1325 (2000), and the Geneva Conventions, implementation remains minimal. Local women's groups, who are the frontline

defenders, are often underfunded or excluded from planning, leaving survivors with insufficient support.

The Rohingya crisis exemplifies a reality: displacement amplifies vulnerabilities. The international community must ensure survivor centered policies, safe spaces, and adequate funding. Without urgent action, women and girls remain invisible victims, trapped in cycles of violence and deprivation.

<u>Afghanistan</u>

Afghanistan's history is a continuous struggle against war, foreign intervention, and internal political collapse. Since 2021, the Taliban's return to power has reversed decades of progress for women and girls. Education is largely denied beyond primary levels, employment is restricted, and public spaces are heavily policed, creating an environment of fear and control. Survivors of gender-based violence face near-total exclusion from justice, with almost no access to legal, medical, or social services.

The impact is catastrophic: forced marriages, domestic violence, and restricted mobility are rising, particularly in rural areas where poverty and insecurity amplify vulnerabilities. UNAMA

reports indicate that women are not just victims of conflict they are systematically silenced, excluded, and stripped of agency.

Key actors include the Taliban regime, neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran, UNAMA, and humanitarian NGOs like Women for Afghan Women and Save the Children. Despite Afghanistan being a party to CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), these frameworks are largely unenforced.

Afghanistan illustrates the consequences of political regression on gender equality. Without decisive international and local intervention, women and girls will continue to lose their rights, health, and futures. The need for survivor-centered humanitarian strategies and robust advocacy has never been more urgent

Lebanon

Lebanon presents a unique crisis at the intersection of political instability, economic collapse, and prolonged refugee displacement. Over 1.5 million Syrian refugees have entered Lebanon since 2011, overwhelming public infrastructure and social services. The compounded crises of hyperinflation, unemployment, and healthcare collapse have disproportionately affected women and girls. Many are pushed into early marriage, exploitative labor, or unsafe work, while refugee settlements expose them to heightened sexual violence, harassment, and exploitation.

Access to healthcare, education, and legal protection is limited. Local NGOs fill critical gaps, but lack the resources to fully address the scale of vulnerability. UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, and Médecins Sans Frontières support both refugees and Lebanese women, but funding constraints severely limit their impact.

Lebanon is a signatory to CEDAW and adheres to international humanitarian law. Yet, gender-based violence remains largely underreported, and local women's organizations are often marginalized in planning, despite being crucial first responders.

Lebanon underscores a sombre reality: compounded political, economic, and humanitarian crises magnify the vulnerabilities of women and girls. Protection against gender-based violence must be embedded into every aspect of humanitarian response. Survivors cannot be an afterthought; they must be at the center of planning, policy, and resource allocation.

North korea

North Korea, one of the world's most secretive regimes, exposes women and girls to extreme vulnerabilities as a deliberate consequence of state control. Decades of political repression, militarization, and chronic poverty have made survival a daily struggle, with women disproportionately affected.Systemic gender-based violence is widespread: women in labor

camps face sexual abuse and forced labor, pregnant women lack access to healthcare, and survivors of abuse remain silenced due to fear of state retaliation. Those fleeing the country are highly vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced marriages.

Although North Korea has ratified international frameworks such as CEDAW (1979), CRC (1989), and the Geneva Conventions (1949), it consistently violates these obligations. International actors, including UNHCR and UNFPA, face severe restrictions in providing aid or protection.

North Korea demonstrates that gender-based violence can be systemic, state-sponsored, and hidden, making international enforcement challenging. Urgent action is required: safe humanitarian access, cross-border protection for defectors, gender-specific aid, and support for women-led initiatives assisting North Korean women and girls. Without decisive intervention, the most marginalized remain trapped in cycles of exploitation and abuse.

RUSSIA

Women and girls in Russia face systemic gender-based violence and discrimination, amplified in conflict-affected areas like Chechnya and Ukraine-adjacent regions. Domestic violence remains widespread, with official reports estimating millions affected annually, yet law enforcement and judicial systems often fail to enforce protections effectively. Cultural stigma discourages women from reporting abuse, leaving survivors isolated. Displaced women, especially from conflict zones, face heightened risks of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and restricted access to healthcare, education, and livelihoods. Despite Russia being a party to CEDAW, gaps in enforcement, limited funding for shelters, and patriarchal societal norms severely hinder women's safety and empowerment.

IRAN

In December 2022, ECOSOC adopted a resolution to remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women for the remainder of its 2022-2026 term. The reason cited by proponents of the resolution: serious concerns over Iran's suppression of women and girls, use of excessive force against peaceful protesters, including deaths. These protests became especially prominent after the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody in September 2022.
Vote result: 29 in favor to remove, 8 against, 16 abstaining
Iran strongly condemned the removal, calling it political and unjust. Iranian officials argued that Iran has made improvements in areas such as education and health for women, and that the move set a precedent threatening sovereignty.

IRAQ

In 2014, ISIS launched a brutal attack on the Yazidi community in Sinjar, Iraq, committing atrocities that the United Nations later recognized as genocide. Among the thousands of women and girls abducted was Nadia Murad, who was subjected to repeated sexual violence, enslavement, and abuse. After escaping captivity, Nadia chose to speak publicly about her experience, breaking deep cultural taboos and bringing global attention to the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Her testimony at the United Nations and other international forums highlighted not only the suffering of Yazidi women but also the broader vulnerability of women in conflict zones. Nadia's courage transformed her into a leading advocate for survivors of sexual violence, culminating in her being awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, alongside Dr. Denis Mukwege. Her case pressured Iraq to adopt the Yazidi Female Survivors Law (2021), aimed at providing reparations and support, though implementation remains slow. Internationally, her advocacy strengthened calls to classify conflict-related sexual violence as crimes against humanity and genocide, reinforcing the mandate of bodies like the UN Commission on the Status of Women to ensure protection, accountability, and justice for women worldwide.

SUDAN

Formation: Sudan gained independence on January 1, 1956, from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, which was joint British-Egyptian rule established in 1899. Before independence in 1955, the southern regions rebelled against the northern Arab-dominated government, marking the start of the First Sudanese Civil War from 1955 to 1972. The country faced decades of internal conflict, including the Second Sudanese Civil War from 1983 to 2005. This conflict ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, leading to South Sudan's independence through a referendum in 2011. This made Sudan one of the few countries to peacefully split in modern history.

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE WAR

The war between Russia and Ukraine has become one of the most pressing crises for women and girls in recent history. Since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, millions of Ukrainian women and children have been displaced, facing trafficking, sexual violence, and loss of livelihood. Reports by the UN and OSCE document cases of conflict-related sexual violence used as a weapon of war, with women deliberately targeted to terrorize communities. Ukrainian women are not only victims but also frontline responders joining the armed forces, running humanitarian aid networks, and leading local governance under extreme conditions. The war has also deepened the economic burden on women, as they shoulder both unpaid care work for displaced

families and struggle with loss of jobs in destroyed industries. Despite these challenges, Ukraine remains highly engaged in international frameworks working with UN Women, UNICEF, OSCE, and the Council of Europe to integrate gender perspectives in conflict response. The Russia Ukraine conflict demonstrates how war does not "pause" gender inequality but multiplies its effects, leaving women with the heaviest costs of both violence and survival.

IRAN AND IRAQ

Iran and Iraq highlight how laws and political systems can trap women in cycles of inequality despite global commitments. In Iran, the state enforces rigid laws rooted in Sharia that restrict women's rights in marriage, dress, mobility, and political participation. The 2022 protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini exposed how women bear the brunt of authoritarian control, with crackdowns marked by arrests, violence, and even executions. Iran's refusal to ratify CEDAW, along with sweeping reservations on other treaties, keeps international protections out of reach.

Iraq, on the other hand, carries the legacy of decades of war, dictatorship, and foreign intervention. Women have been left vulnerable to sexual violence, displacement, and harmful practices like child marriage. Although Iraq ratified CEDAW and has launched National Action Plans under UNSCR 1325, reservations to family and nationality laws continue to weaken women's rights. Controversial amendments to the Personal Status Law, such as lowering the legal age of marriage, risk reversing hard-won gains. Still, Iraqi women's movements remain vocal, working with UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF to push for greater legal protection and participation in peacebuilding.

Together, Iran and Iraq illustrate how patriarchal legal systems, sectarian politics, and selective treaty commitments block women from equality, while women activists on the ground continue to fight back against state and societal oppression.

SYRIA

Syria achieved independence from French rule on 17 April 1946, but the years that followed were marked by political turmoil with frequent coups, unstable governments, and shifting constitutions. From 1958 to 1961, Syria even merged with Egypt as the United Arab Republic, before returning to its own path as the Syrian Arab Republic. As a founding member of the United Nations (1945) and the Arab League, Syria participates in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and works with UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA, which provide crucial

support to women in areas of leadership, reproductive health, and education. Syria is also a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, however, women have been among the most affected facing displacement, gender-based violence, trafficking, and loss of access to education and healthcare. Despite efforts such as the UN Women's Advisory Board (2016) to bring women into peace processes, their participation remains symbolic rather than meaningful, exposing a gap between international promises and the lived realities of Syrian women.

GAZA AND PALESTINE

The story of Gaza is shaped by repeated shifts in control. Once part of Ottoman Palestine, it later came under British rule (1920–1948) before being administered by Egypt after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel occupied Gaza, only to withdraw settlements in 2005 while still controlling its borders, airspace, and sea. Since 2007, Gaza has been governed internally by Hamas, though political and humanitarian pressures remain intense. Palestine holds observer state status at the United Nations (since 2012) and participates in CSW as an observer. Agencies like UN Women, UNRWA, and UNICEF play vital roles in supporting women's rights, humanitarian relief, and education. Gaza is also part of the Arab League and the OIC. For women and girls, however, daily life is defined by blockade, bombardment, and loss of freedom of movement. Access to reproductive healthcare is limited, risks of gender-based violence increase during crises, and opportunities for education and employment shrink. Women are central to community survival, yet their voices in decision-making remain marginalized, making Gaza a powerful example of how women's struggles are overlooked in broader political debates.

Yemen

Yemen's modern history is one of fragmentation and unification. North Yemen became independent after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, later forming the Yemen Arab Republic (1962), while South Yemen gained independence from Britain in 1967. The two states unified on 22 May 1990 to form the Republic of Yemen, though conflicts soon resurfaced. Yemen is a member of the UN, CSW, Arab League, OIC, and hosts UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA programs that focus on women's empowerment, reproductive health, and humanitarian relief. Yet, since the conflict escalated in 2014, Yemen has been described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Over 2.3 million women and girls have been displaced, and women-headed households make up more than a quarter of newly displaced families, facing even greater risks of poverty and violence. Early marriage, restricted freedom of movement, and loss of healthcare access are daily realities. For Yemeni women, the promise of international frameworks like CSW feels distant, as survival takes precedence over empowerment.

Current situation

Women and girls in conflict zones and displacement settings face extreme and systematic violence, including sexual assault, forced marriage, exploitation, and trafficking, making them the most vulnerable in humanitarian crises. Despite international frameworks like CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, the Geneva Conventions, and the CRC, enforcement is weak and inconsistent, leaving survivors unprotected, unheard, and often blamed for the violence they endure. Camps and shelters are frequently unsafe, underfunded, and lack essential services such as healthcare, psychosocial support, and legal aid. Cultural stigma and fear of retaliation prevent countless women from reporting abuse, while women are rarely involved in decision-making or planning humanitarian responses, resulting in policies that fail to meet their real needs. The combination of systemic gender inequality, inadequate protection, and the absence of survivor centered policies creates a cycle where women's rights are constantly violated and ignored. Urgent feminist action is needed to prioritize women's voices, enforce legal protections, and ensure that safety, justice, and empowerment are central to all humanitarian interventions

Past actions

Legal framework

In recent decades, the international community has established a range of legal frameworks and resolutions to protect women and girls, particularly in conflict, displacement, and humanitarian crises. These instruments aim to prevent violence, ensure equal opportunities, and hold states accountable for safeguarding the most vulnerable populations. Despite this, enforcement often remains inconsistent, funding is limited, and survivors frequently go unheard. The following frameworks highlight the global commitment to women's protection and empowerment, while also exposing the urgent gaps in implementation.

<u>CEDAW (1979):</u>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

 CEDAW is widely regarded as the international bill of rights for women. It outlines what constitutes discrimination against women and specifies the obligations of states to prevent it. The convention mandates protection from violence, equal access to education, healthcare, and political participation, and safeguards against workplace and social discrimination. While universally ratified, CEDAW's principles are frequently under-enforced in crisis settings, leaving women exposed to exploitation and abuse.
 Link: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women?

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

 Adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Platform identifies twelve critical areas of concern including poverty, education, health, and gender-based violence and offers a roadmap for governments and organizations to advance women's rights. It emphasizes that gender equality must be mainstreamed into all laws, policies, and humanitarian responses. In crises like Syria, Afghanistan, and the Rohingya displacement, the Platform provides a normative standard for integrating protection measures, yet implementation remains uneven.
 Link: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaratio

UNSCR 1325 and Women, Peace, and Security (2000 onwards)

 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 recognizes that conflict affects women and girls differently and underscores the necessity of their participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. Subsequent resolutions under the Women, Peace, and Security agenda reinforce this, calling for protection against sexual and gender-based violence, inclusion in humanitarian planning, and empowerment in conflict zones. Despite clear mandates, gaps in enforcement leave many women in war-torn regions without access to justice, healthcare, or safe spaces.
 Link: https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)

The CRC safeguards the rights of all children, with special attention to girls, particularly in emergencies or displacement contexts. It obliges states to protect children from violence, exploitation, and abuse while ensuring access to health, education, and safe living conditions. In humanitarian crises, CRC serves as a critical safeguard to prevent children from becoming secondary victims of gendered vulnerabilities.
Link:
https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child?

Geneva Conventions (1949)
The Geneva Conventions establish the rules of war, safeguarding civilians, prisoners, and the wounded. They specifically mandate protections for women and children, prohibiting acts such as sexual violence, forced displacement, and torture. Compliance with these conventions is critical in conflict zones to ensure humanitarian access and the protection of vulnerable populations, yet violations are widespread in contemporary conflicts.
Link:
https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries?

Recent CSW Developments

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has continually reinforced these frameworks, most recently through CSW68, titled *"Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective."* CSW68 emphasized that all humanitarian and development efforts must integrate a gender lens, prioritizing survivor-centered policies, safe spaces, and access to reporting mechanisms. The Commission calls for active inclusion of local women's organizations, ensuring that those most affected have a voice in decision-making.

These frameworks and resolutions collectively represent the international community's commitment to protecting women and girls. Yet, their effectiveness relies on rigorous enforcement, adequate funding, and genuine inclusion of survivors in planning. The CSW, as a central platform for advocacy, is uniquely positioned to hold states accountable, monitor progress, and ensure that women and girls are at the forefront of all humanitarian interventions.

CEDAW (1979) –

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is often called the "international bill of rights for women." It defines what discrimination against women is and requires states to take concrete action to eliminate it. This includes protecting women from violence, ensuring equal opportunities in education, work, and politics, and guaranteeing access to healthcare. Countries that ratify CEDAW must report on their progress to the UN.
 Link
https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women?

Optional Protocol to CEDAW (1999) –

Provides a mechanism for women or groups to submit complaints to the CEDAW Committee if their rights under CEDAW are violated. This ensures accountability at the international level.
 Link
https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women

Beijing Declaration & Platform for Action (1995) –

Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, this platform identifies 12 critical areas, including violence against women, poverty, education, and health. It provides governments and organizations with concrete strategies to protect women and girls, particularly in emergencies and conflict situations, emphasizing that gender equality must be included in all policies and programs.
 Link
https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration?

UNSCR 1325 & Women, Peace, and Security (2000) –

Recognizes that women and girls experience conflicts differently. It calls for their participation in peacebuilding and decision-making, while protecting them from sexual

and gender-based violence. Subsequent resolutions (1820, 1888, 1960, 2242) strengthen monitoring, accountability, and the role of women in preventing conflict. This framework ensures that humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts are gender-sensitive.

Link
https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325-2000-sres1325-2000?

1951 Refugee Convention & 1967 Protocol –

Defines who qualifies as a refugee and what protections they are entitled to, including safety, education, healthcare, and work rights. Special emphasis is given to women and children, who are often the most vulnerable during displacement or crises. The 1967 Protocol extends the Convention globally, removing time and location limits.
Link https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html

Geneva Conventions (1949) & Additional Protocols –

Protect civilians, prisoners, and wounded during armed conflict. They explicitly prohibit sexual violence, forced labor, and inhumane treatment. Women, pregnant women, and mothers of young children receive special protections, including priority for evacuation, shelter, and medical care. Protocols I & II reinforce protections in both international and internal conflicts.
Link https://www.icrc.org/en/international-review/geneva-conventions

Key National Laws –

Many countries have adopted landmark policies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence:

United States –

VAWA (1994): Federal funding for shelters and victim services; stronger penalties for domestic and sexual violence.

United Kingdom –

Domestic Abuse Act (2021): Expands abuse definitions, strengthens protection orders, and sets up a Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

<u>Sweden –</u>

Sex Purchase Act (1999): Criminalizes buying sex to reduce trafficking and exploitation, known as the "Nordic Model."

<u>Brazil –</u>

Maria da Penha Law (2006): Establishes protective measures, special courts, and shelters for domestic violence survivors.

<u>South Africa –</u>

Domestic Violence Act (1998): Covers physical, emotional, and financial abuse; provides quick protection orders.

<u>Integration with SDGs –</u>

 International policies align with Sustainable Development Goals, particularly:

<u>SDG 5 –</u> Gender Equality: End all discrimination and violence against women and girls.

<u>SDG 3 –</u> Good Health: Ensure access to healthcare and support survivors of violence.

<u>SDG 4 –</u> Quality Education: Empower girls through education and awareness of rights.

<u>SDG 16 –</u> Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions: Protect women in conflicts, hold perpetrators accountable, and strengthen legal and humanitarian systems.

These frameworks together provide a global legal and policy structure to prevent violence, protect survivors, and empower women and girls, especially in humanitarian crises, conflict zones, and displacement settings. They guide CSW advocacy, ensuring countries and organizations adopt survivor-centered, gender-responsive approaches.

Possible area of action

Although crises like wars, displacement, and humanitarian emergencies put women and girls at extreme risk, there are clear opportunities to strengthen protection, empowerment, and policy effectiveness. Future efforts should focus on addressing the structural and operational gaps that allow gender-based violence to persist.

1. Strengthening Protection & Services:
 Humanitarian programs can expand safe spaces, shelters, and healthcare services specifically for women and girls. Psychosocial support, legal assistance, and education must be integrated into all refugee and displacement programs. For example, innovative shelter designs and gender-segregated facilities can reduce risks of sexual violence in camps. Future planning should ensure that these protective measures are not just available, but accessible and culturally appropriate.

2. Accountability & Enforcement:
 Even with conventions like CEDAW and UNSCR 1325, enforcement remains weak in many conflict zones. Future policies should focus on holding perpetrators accountable through national and international mechanisms. Monitoring, reporting, and sanctions must be strengthened so that violations do not go unpunished. Strong enforcement also builds trust in humanitarian systems, encouraging survivors to come forward and seek help.

3. Women's Leadership & Participation:
 Involving women in peacebuilding, humanitarian coordination, and local governance is essential to ensure that programs meet actual needs. Evidence shows that women leaders improve safety measures and community resilience. Future initiatives should prioritize training and including women in decision-making roles at every level, from camp management to national policy-making.

4. Data-Driven Policy & Global Cooperation:
 Accurate, gender-specific data is key to understanding the scale and nature of violence, and to shaping effective interventions. Future strategies must invest in systematic data collection, analysis, and sharing among governments, UN agencies, and NGOs. Coordinated efforts will allow for better resource allocation, early warning systems, and targeted programs to prevent and respond to violence.

5. Legal and Policy Innovations:
 Countries and international agencies can develop stronger frameworks that directly address gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. Future prospects include integrating gender considerations into emergency response laws, expanding survivor-centered approaches, and aligning national policies with global treaties. This ensures that rights are not just theoretical, but actively protected in crisis contexts.

CHALLENGES AND GAPS

Despite the existence of global frameworks such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the reality on the ground reveals systemic failures in protecting women and girls in conflict and displacement. The challenges are not just gaps in implementation; they are products of deep-rooted patriarchy, militarization, and political unwillingness that continue to silence women's voices.

1. Normalization of Sexual Violence as a Tool of War:

 Rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, and trafficking are still treated as "inevitable" in conflict rather than deliberate acts of war crimes. In places like Syria, Gaza, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, survivors are stigmatized, silenced, and often punished instead of perpetrators. The lack of survivor-centered justice mechanisms makes sexual violence one of the most ignored weapons of modern warfare.

2. Exclusion of Women from Peace Processes and Political Power:

 Women remain token figures in peace negotiations despite evidence that their inclusion makes peace agreements 35% more likely to last. In contexts like Afghanistan and Yemen, women's voices were systematically erased from negotiations, allowing male-dominated political and military elites to shape post-war societies without addressing women's rights.

3. Weak Accountability and Impunity of Perpetrators:

 Impunity is the rule, not the exception. Even when international tribunals or domestic courts exist, perpetrators of gender-based violence in war rarely face justice. Survivors are forced into silence due to stigma, threats, or lack of legal aid, while states continue to shield soldiers and militias in the name of "national security."

4. Humanitarian Aid that Fails Women:

 Relief and humanitarian programs often ignore gender-specific needs. Displaced women are denied reproductive healthcare, access to contraception, safe maternal services, and menstrual hygiene products. Camps in Yemen, Gaza, and Bangladesh (Rohingya refugees) reveal how women are left vulnerable to trafficking, forced prostitution, and exploitation by aid distributors themselves.

5. Militarization and Shrinking Civil Spaces for Women Activists:

 Women who attempt to organize, document violence, or demand accountability are often threatened, censored, or assassinated. In Iran and Afghanistan, feminist activists face imprisonment and torture, while in authoritarian regimes like North Korea, women lack even the right to organize, speak, or report abuse.

6. Patriarchal National Agendas Overriding International Commitments:

 States sign treaties but rarely align domestic policies to reflect them. For example, Iraq and Syria have ratified certain conventions but continue to uphold discriminatory family laws that strip women of autonomy. Governments manipulate religion, culture, and "tradition" to justify restrictions on women, undermining global progress.

7. Weak International Coordination and Donor Fatigue:

 The international community continues to produce overlapping mandates and fragmented responses. Local women's organizations the true first responders in crises are sidelined in funding and decision-making. International agencies design policies in New York or Geneva boardrooms, with little input from women living in camps in Gaza, Cox's Bazar, or Aleppo.

8. Digital Erasure and Silencing of Voices:

 In conflicts like Ukraine and Gaza, women attempting to share stories of sexual violence are often censored, targeted by disinformation campaigns, or digitally harassed. In authoritarian states such as Iran or North Korea, reporting gender-based violence is criminalized, effectively erasing survivors' voices from global discourse.

9. Intersectional Blindness:

 Refugee women, minority women, women with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals in conflict settings face layered discrimination, yet their specific vulnerabilities are almost absent from policy responses. For example, Rohingya women in Bangladesh not only face displacement-related violence but also statelessness, making them invisible in international protection systems.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

★ How can Member States and CSW ensure the protection of women and girls in conflict zones, displacement settings, and humanitarian crises, while addressing systemic gender-based violence?

★ What frameworks and policies can be implemented to guarantee women's full participation in peacebuilding, leadership, and decision-making in post-conflict and crisis-affected areas?

★ How can governments and international organizations effectively monitor and hold accountable actors responsible for gender-based violence during conflicts and

humanitarian emergencies?

★ What strategies can ensure women's economic empowerment in crisis contexts, including access to employment, financial services, and education, while overcoming structural barriers?

★ How can humanitarian aid and development programs be designed and delivered in a gender-sensitive manner that prioritizes the needs of women and girls?

★ What global standards, agreements, and collaborative mechanisms can be strengthened or introduced to prevent gender discrimination and protect women's rights during armed conflict and displacement?

★ How can CSW, UN agencies, and Member States ensure meaningful and sustained inclusion of women's voices in policy formulation, crisis response, and recovery planning?

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