Agenda Item: Eliminating Gender Based Violence Linked to Traditional Gender Roles

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1. **Letter from the Under Secretary-General of UN WOMEN**

Esteemed Delegates,

As the Under Secretary General of the UN Women Committee, it is my privilege to extend warm regards to the distinguished members of this committee.

Our agenda 'Eliminating gender-based violence linked to traditional gender roles' addresses a worldwide problem that is still important in the 21st century, yet not getting the attention it needs. Today, many women and girls around the world are facing all forms of gender-based violence by their spouses, relatives, and even strangers. Most of these women are afraid to admit this, not just to the police but to their family.

In light of the challenges we face globally, we must continue to work collaboratively to achieve sustainable development goals related to gender equality. The efforts of the UN Women's Committee are pivotal in ensuring that we leave no one behind and create opportunities for women and girls to thrive in all aspects of life.

As we move forward, I am confident that the UN Women's Committee will continue to be at the forefront of efforts to create a more inclusive and gender-equal world. The United Nations remains committed to supporting your endeavors and collaborating with you to achieve our shared objectives.

We are here to support you, ensure productive discussions, and amplify every delegate's voice. Let's propose impactful solutions and demonstrate the power of youth-driven change. Best of luck with your preparations, and I look forward to our engaging discussions. I encourage you to research utterly, consider diverse perspectives, and embrace compromise. If you ever have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Best Regards
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2. Introduction to the Committee

a) What is UN WOMEN?

UN Women is the UN organization delivering programs, policies, and standards that uphold women's human rights and ensure that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential.

b) What does UN WOMEN do?

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress in meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and work with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs, and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:

- Women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems
- Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy
- All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts, and humanitarian action

UN WOMEN also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing equality, and all deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals and a more inclusive world.

3. Introduction to the Agenda Item

a) Understanding the Agenda: Key Terms and Definitions

Gender Based Violence: Any harmful act directed at an individual based on their gender. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse, and disproportionately affects women and girls.

Traditional Gender Roles: Socially constructed roles and behaviors traditionally associated with men and women. These often define men as dominant and providers, and women as submissive caregivers, reinforcing gender inequality.

Patriarchy: A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. Patriarchal norms often serve as a foundation for traditional gender roles.

Toxic Masculinity: A cultural concept of manhood that glorifies dominance, aggression, and emotional suppression, often pressuring men to assert control through violence or coercion.

Femicide: The gender-based killing of women, often committed by partners or family members and rooted in traditional notions of male ownership or honor.

Honor-Based Violence: Violence committed to protect or defend the perceived honor of a family or community, often targeting women and girls who deviate from traditional roles or expectations.

Socialization: The lifelong process through which individuals learn and internalize the values, norms, and behaviors considered appropriate in their society, including gender roles.

Cultural Relativism: The idea that beliefs and practices should be understood within the context of a particular culture. While often used to promote tolerance, it can be controversial when used to justify gender-based violence.

Intersectionality: A framework for understanding how various aspects of a person's identity (such as gender, race, class, sexuality) combine to create different modes of discrimination or privilege.

Empowerment: The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into actions and outcomes. In gender contexts, it often refers to enhancing the status and rights of women and girls.

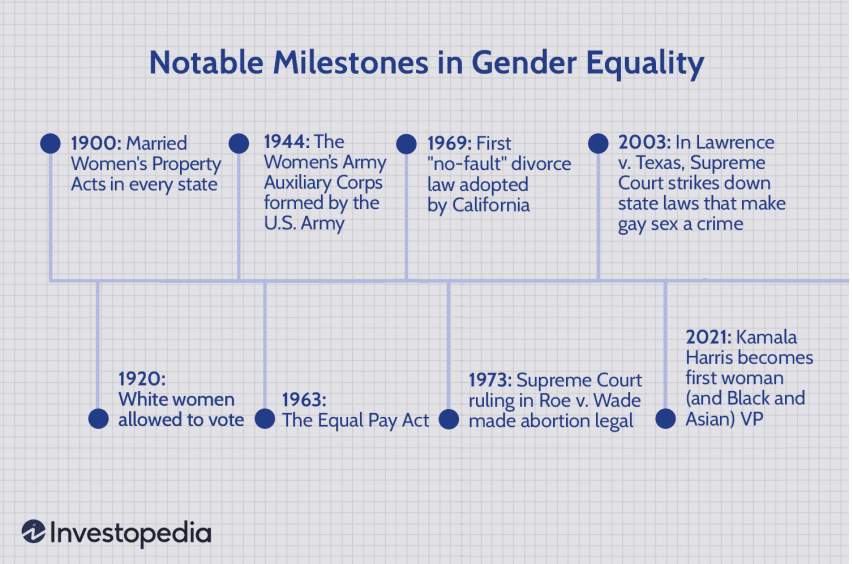
Gender Mainstreaming: A strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs.

4. Understanding Traditional Gender Roles

a) Historical Context

Traditional gender roles have deep historical roots in patriarchal systems where societal functions were strictly divided based on sex. In Ancient Rome and Greece, men dominated public spheres such as politics, warfare, and philosophy, while women were confined to domestic duties and child-rearing. Similarly, in the Ottoman Empire, legal and social norms dictated that men were the heads of households, while

women's roles were limited to private spheres. These historical divisions institutionalized gender inequality and still influence gender perceptions globally.



a) Cultural and Religious Influences

Cultural narratives and religious interpretations often reinforce gender binaries. In countries such as India, cultural traditions like dowry and arranged marriages stem from gendered expectations. In some interpretations of Islamic or Christian texts, men are often portrayed as providers and leaders, while women are expected to be obedient and modest. Although many reform movements challenge these views, they remain prevalent in numerous communities due to their perceived divine or ancestral authority.

Example: In **Saudi Arabia**, until recent reforms, women required male guardianship to travel or access healthcare. Though laws are evolving, cultural perceptions still pose barriers to gender equality.

b) Socialization and Stereotypes

Socialization—the process through which individuals learn societal norms—begins in childhood and is a major vector of gender role transmission. In many countries, toys, clothing, and behavior are gendered from birth: boys receive cars and construction kits, while girls receive dolls and play kitchens. In **Japan**, the "good wife, wise mother" ideal remains influential, shaping women's roles in family and career choices. Stereotypes such as "men are naturally better leaders" and "women are more emotional" restrict career paths, political participation, and personal freedoms.

Example: In **Turkey**, textbooks and classroom materials have historically shown men as active professionals and women in caregiving roles. Despite curriculum reforms, implicit gender messaging persists.

5. Gender Based Violence

a) Definition and Forms of Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence and violence against women are two terms that are often used interchangeably, as most violence against women is inflicted (by men) for gender-based reasons, and gender-based violence affects women disproportionately. There are several forms that gender based violence (GBV) can take:

Sexual violence is any act, attempted or threatened, that is sexual and carried out without the consent of the victim. Sexual violence includes rape, sexual abuse and harassment, exploitation, and forced prostitution. It can happen within marriages, especially when there is a lack of consent for sexual activity by one of the spouses.

Any sexual activity with a child (any person who has not yet completed 18 years of age) constitutes sexual violence. It has devastating effects on the development of the child involved, as well as on his or her physical and mental health.

Physical violence such as beating, punching, maiming, and killing (with or without weapons) is often combined with non-violent forms of SGBV, including emotional and psychological violence.

This refers to any behavior that consistently demeans, intimidates, and humiliates a partner.

Emotional/Psychological Violence This particular type of violence is covert and manipulative in nature, and it frequently co-occurs with other forms of intimate partner violence.

a) Verbal Abuse: This is the repeated demeaning and humiliation of an individual, either in private or in public. It includes yelling, screaming, insults, name-calling, sarcasm, and ridiculing her for her religious or ethnic beliefs
b) Social/Non-Verbal Abuse: Any behavior that results in the isolation and alienation of a woman from her friends and family, or any actions that imply she is inferior because of her gender or socioeconomic status (e.g., controlling what she does, whom she sees and talks to, treating her like a servant, making a scene in public, etc.)

Socio-economic violence, which excludes a person from participating in society. This includes the denial of access of the person to health services, education and work, and the denial of his or her civil, social, economic, cultural and political rights.

Domestic violence is any physical, sexual, psychological, verbal and economic violence between one person and another within the family. It may be committed by family members and/or people considered as family members, whether or not they live in the same household.

Harmful practices include female circumcision, honour killings, polygamous marriages (marriages to more than one person), marriage of a child (any person who has not yet completed 18 years of age) and forced marriage (any marriage imposed against the will of a person).

b) Global Database on Gender Based Violence

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most widespread human rights violations globally. Despite decades of advocacy, awareness campaigns, and international frameworks, the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) remains alarmingly high, and in many regions, it is exacerbated by entrenched traditional gender roles and socio-cultural norms.

Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence

- According to UN Women (2023), *1 in 3 women* worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, most often by an intimate partner.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that nearly 27% of women aged 15–49 who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.
- In some low-income and conflict-affected countries, the rates are significantly higher, with over 50% of women reporting lifetime exposure to violence.

Violence in the Domestic Sphere

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of GBV. It is often underreported due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of legal protections.
- UNODC (2022) found that *around 81,000 women and girls were killed globally in 2021*, and over half (56%) were killed by intimate partners or family members.

Cultural and Harmful Practices

- Over 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), with the practice concentrated in about 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.
- More than 650 million women and girls worldwide were married before the age of 18, often due to traditional norms that prioritize early marriage as a means of control or economic necessity.

Conflict and Crisis Settings

- In conflict zones, women face heightened risks of sexual violence, including rape as a weapon of war.
- In humanitarian emergencies, rates of GBV, including sexual exploitation and abuse, tend to spike due to displacement, lack of protection, and breakdown of social structures.

Digital and Emerging Forms of Violence

- With the rise of digital platforms, online harassment and cyber violence against women have become increasingly common, especially for journalists, activists, and politicians.
- Studies show that women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online, often with threats of sexual violence or exposure.

Reporting and Justice Gaps

- Globally, less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help of any sort. Among those who do, very few approach formal institutions such as police or healthcare providers.
- Legal systems in many countries lack strong enforcement mechanisms, and 43 countries have no legislation specifically addressing domestic violence (UN Women, 2023).

c) Psychological and Societal Impacts

Several studies explored the mental health issues and behavioural disturbances among victims of GBV. A survey with 273 respondents, conducted in Australia, concluded that GBV results in a complexity of mental health challenges that include social isolation, which worsens the effects of GBV, as victims are unable to seek help and reduce the occurrence of GBV. In a narrative review of literature, in the United States, GBV was also associated with increased childhood exposure to trauma. In Africa, a survey with 209 women in Kenya concluded that GBV resulted in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder in women and girls. In another survey with 283 respondents conducted in Kenya, the authors found that GBV was associated with poor mental health, high-risk sexual behaviour, and sexually transmitted infections. In addition, GBV resulted in disordered alcohol usage among women. A Nigerian study revealed that 31% of the participants agreed that women suffered GBV because they were viewed as ‘inferior to males, incompetent and worthless’.
This Nigerian study further concluded that women were not allowed to associate with male relatives or male friends. On this issue of social isolation, South African statistics reveal that most women (60%) did not report GBV, while 40% reported to law enforcement. Also, in South Africa, a longitudinal study with a sample size of 415 participants found that GBV results in depression and suicidal ideation. These issues highlight the seriousness of GBV, should prompt society to respond to these victims and increase awareness on the need to prevent GBV.

Inter-Generational & Socio-Economic Consequences of Violence Against Women

Effects on children of women who experience abuse	- Higher rates of infant mortality - Behaviour problems - Anxiety, depression, attempted suicide - Poor school performance - Experiencing or perpetrating violence as adults - Physical injury or health complaints - Lost productivity in adulthood
Effects on families	- Inability to work - Lost wages and productivity - Housing instability
Social and economic effects	- Costs of services incurred by victims and families (health, Social, justice) - Lost worklace productivity and costs to employers - Perpetuation of violence

Health and Social Consequences of Violence Against Women

Fatal Outcomes	**Non-fatal Outcomes**		
	Physical	**Sexual Reproductive**	**Psychological & Behavioral**
- Femicide - Suicide - AIDS-related mortality - Maternal mortality	- Fractures - Chronic pain syndromes - Fibromyalgia - Permanent disability - Gastro-intestinal disorders - Obesity (children)	- Sexually-transmitted infections including HIV - Unwanted pregnancy - Pregnancy complications - Traumatic gynecologic fistula - Unsafe abortion	- Depression and anxiety - Eating and sleep disorders - Drug and alcohol abuse - Poor self-esteem - Post-traumatic stress disorder - Self harm - Increased sexual risk taking - Smoking - Perpetrating or being victims of violence later (children & adolescents)

6. Understanding the Link Between Traditional Gender Roles and Gender Based Violence

a) Patriarchy and Power Structures

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control over property. It is both a historical and structural framework that influences how societies function, shaping expectations, behaviors, and institutions.

In patriarchal systems, traditional gender roles are both a consequence and a tool for maintaining male dominance. Men are often expected to be assertive, strong, and

authoritative, while women are viewed as nurturing, passive, and subordinate. These roles are not merely cultural ideals—they are embedded in legal systems, religious doctrines, economic institutions, and even language, perpetuating unequal power relations

How Patriarchy Fuels Gender-Based Violence

1. **Normalization of Male Dominance:**
   Patriarchy normalizes male control over women, often framing violence as a "private matter" or a justified means of enforcing discipline within families.
2. **Control over Female Sexuality and Autonomy:**
   Many forms of GBV—including honor killings, forced marriage, and restrictions on mobility—stem from the belief that women must be "controlled" to protect family or community honor.
3. **Unequal Access to Justice:**
   In patriarchal societies, legal systems often reflect gender bias. Laws may minimize punishments for perpetrators of domestic violence or rape, and survivors may be blamed or stigmatized.
4. **Economic Dependence:**
   Patriarchy frequently restricts women's access to education, employment, and property, making it harder for them to leave abusive situations or assert independence.
5. **Silencing of Voices:**
   Cultural norms discourage women from speaking out against abuse. In many cases, survivors face social backlash, victim-blaming, or further violence for challenging male authority.

Institutionalization of Patriarchy

- **Legal Systems:**
  Some countries lack comprehensive laws against domestic violence or allow discriminatory practices like child marriage or marital rape.
- **Religious and Cultural Institutions:**
  While many religious teachings promote compassion and justice, patriarchal interpretations are often used to justify control over women's bodies and roles.
- **Political Representation:**
  Globally, women hold only around **26.5%** of parliamentary seats (as of 2023, IPU), limiting their influence on policymaking that could address GBV.
- **Media and Education:**
  Stereotypes in media and school curricula often reinforce gender roles from a young age, shaping perceptions of what is "appropriate" behavior for men and women.

b) Harmful Practices and Gender Norms

Harmful practices are a violation of human rights that put women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights at great risk. A variety of harmful practices exist, including female genital mutilation (FGM), child and forced marriage, virginity testing and related practices, extreme dietary restrictions, including during pregnancy (force-feeding, food taboos), binding, scarring, branding/ infliction of tribal marks, corporal punishment, stoning, violent initiation rites, widowhood practices, accusations of witchcraft, son preference and gender-selected abortion, infanticide, incest and body modifications that are performed for the purpose of beauty or marriageability of girls and women.

These harmful practices persist due to a combination of **social pressure**, **legal loopholes**, **cultural justifications**, and **lack of education**. In many communities, families feel intense pressure to conform to tradition out of fear of social exclusion, gossip, or dishonor. Deviating from these norms can result in stigma or even retaliation. Moreover, weak legal systems, lack of enforcement, or the complete absence of protective laws allow these practices to continue without consequence. In some regions, harmful practices are justified through rigid interpretations of cultural or religious teachings, which are often patriarchal in nature and resistant to change. Additionally, limited access to education and awareness, particularly regarding human rights and gender equality, means that many individuals are unaware that these traditions are harmful or even illegal. As a result, these practices are passed down through generations, deeply embedding gender inequality into the fabric of society.

7. International Legal Frameworks and Conventions

As a result of the imposition of a patriarchal social order, religious and local influences, women, who constitute half of the population, have been kept in the background for many years in many societies. In addition, the biological difference between men and women has been transformed into a social difference, justifying inequality between the genders, and men have been considered superior to women. The humiliation or subordination of women on the basis of their gender is not a local problem, but a universal problem that has been and still is experienced in every society from time to time. This historical inequality has led to women not being adequately protected against violence. Violence against women still exists in our world today as a violation of human rights. Despite these violations of rights, governments have signed both national and international agreements.

In order to solve these problems, the first written document on women's rights in history was the "Declaration des droits de l'femme et du citoyen" "Declaration of the Rights of Citizens and Women" dated 1791. Today, human rights, which are considered to be one of the distinctive features of the twentieth century, have come to include the concept of 'women's human rights' as an integral part. Although the principle of enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms for all human beings - regardless of gender - has been accepted since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948, international and

national human rights understandings that have developed in the context of historical process and basic cultural structures have not succeeded in ensuring that women's rights arising from their humanity are recognized, protected and developed with the same effectiveness and sensitivity as men's rights in any society in terms of purpose, discourse and means. Since the 1970s, however, the international arena has developed a clear sensitivity to the fundamentally unacceptable nature of this situation; discrimination against women has been recognized as a real problem all over the world, and more concrete steps have begun to be taken to eliminate this situation.

a) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW is an important international legal convention that brings together standards to eliminate gender-based discrimination against women and protect women's rights, and has the potential to influence States Parties. CEDAW has been ratified by 189 UN member states. It occupies an important position among international conventions aiming to improve women's rights. CEDAW embraces the principle of women's equal status with men in social, economic and cultural life, directs States to take specific, temporary measures to achieve these goals and encourages them to take measures to transform traditional and cultural patterns of behavior and attitudes that define women and men in discriminatory social roles. Some of the objectives of the Convention are as follows:

- CEDAW treats women not as an invisible part of society but as an individual whose rights are violated and whose problems require urgent solutions. It is based on the principles of the full enjoyment of her rights as an individual in societies and the full prevention of discrimination against women. It aims to ensure that women are equal before the law and do not suffer any loss of rights, as well as to eliminate gender inequalities and to fully establish an equal life.
- CEDAW aims to offer solutions to the discrimination experienced by women by opening a new perspective. Violence against women, which is one of the most urgent problems to be solved among the problems experienced by women, is a problem that needs to be addressed with an ‘ordinary’ human rights violation approach and concrete solutions that affect daily life rather than the principles of equality before the law that remain on paper. The institutions established within the framework of the convention do not approach the problems encountered in these issues superficially, but aim to offer solutions for social transformation by showing approaches that go deeper into the problem in a critical issue such as violence.
- CEDAW aims to regulate gender equality by taking it as a concrete area rather than an invisible framework in which inequality between women and men is determined and to benefit from the rights it provides. By becoming a party to this convention, UN member states undertake to define the various discriminations women face at the theoretical and practical level, to provide women with the necessary support against these violations of rights, to establish mechanisms to punish those who foster and manifest these discriminations through laws and to guarantee them at the legal level.

General Recommendation No. 19 on "Violence against Women" adopted by the CEDAW Committee at its 11th Session in 1992 was updated on July 18, 2017 and adopted by the Committee as General Recommendation No. 35 under the title of "Gender-Based Violence against Women". General Recommendation 35 was drafted taking into account the various trends and developments observed on gender-based violence against women in the 25 years since Recommendation 19. General Recommendation 35 states that the prevention of violence against women is recognized as an international legal norm for States. General Recommendation 35 makes distinctions, such as recognizing gender-based violence against women as torture in some cases and recognizing restrictions on reproductive rights as violence against women.

b) The Istanbul Convention

The "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence", signed in Istanbul and therefore known as the "Istanbul Convention", first entered into force in 11 countries on August 1, 2014.

- The countries where the Convention entered into force the earliest were Turkey, Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia and Spain.

The European Union signed the convention on June 13, 2017. Some Council of Europe member states that signed the Istanbul Convention did not ratify it and did not put it into practice.

- Some countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Latvia refuse to ratify the Istanbul Convention.
- Among the member states of the Council of Europe, Russia and Azerbaijan have not even signed the Istanbul Convention.
- Although Turkey was one of the countries where the convention entered into force at the earliest, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan decided to terminate the convention as a result of the presidential decree No. 3718 published in the Official Gazette on March 20, 2021.

The Convention draws special attention to "women" as victims of violence based on gender, gender imbalance and power relations, but also includes the protection of children. In the Convention, the term "women" includes not only adults but also girls under the age of 18 and determines the policies to be implemented in this direction. Prevention of violence is the primary emphasis of the Convention. Accordingly, it expects the state parties to end all kinds of ideas, culture and political practices that put women at a disadvantage in the social structure. In this context, it is the obligation of the state party to take preventive measures to prevent thought patterns shaped on the axis of gender roles, culture, custom, religion, tradition or concepts such as "so-called honor" from justifying widespread violence. It is stated that these preventive measures should be based on fundamental human rights and freedoms as a reference point.

The protection and support section of the Convention emphasizes the measures to be taken to prevent the recurrence of negative situations experienced by victims and the necessity of support services after victimization. The legal measures to be taken for the protection and support of victims of violence are set out in Chapter IV of the Convention. While the States Parties should protect and support victims and witnesses against the violence outlined in the Convention, an effective and efficient cooperation should be established with state institutions such as judicial units, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, local administrations (governorships, etc.), as well as NGOs and other relevant organizations. In the protection and support phase, the focus should be on basic human rights and freedoms and safety for victims. This part of the Convention also includes an article on supporting women victims of violence and aiming for their economic independence.

Legal procedures and measures related to the principles set out in the Convention are set out in Chapter V. In this context, States Parties should ensure that the victim can receive all kinds of legal support against the aggressor. The general principles of international law should be taken as a reference in this monitoring. Parties should take legal measures to remove the perpetrator of violence to protect the victim or person at risk in situations involving risk. Parties are also obliged to take legal measures to ensure that details of the victim's sexual history and behavior are not included during the investigation unless they are relevant to the case.

c) UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed as part of the “2030 Agenda” and set out the international approach. The SDGs cover 17 global goals and 169 sub-goals. The Sustainable Development Goals represent a holistic approach to sustainability with a wide range of content. This approach emphasizes the importance of protecting the environment, ensuring social development and achieving economic growth, which are at the heart of sustainable development. These issues are reflected across the 17 goals, guiding everyone towards a better future. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals is “Gender equality”. There are 9 targets under the “Gender Equality” goal. Some important items are as follows.

- 5.1. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere

5.1.1. Whether legal frameworks are in place to implement, strengthen and promote non-discrimination and equality on the basis of sex

- 5.2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls, including trafficking in women, sexual and all forms of abuse, in public and private spaces

5.2.1. Proportion of women and girls aged 15 and over who have ever been in a relationship who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former partner in the past 12 months, by type of violence and age

5.2.2. Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and over who have experienced sexual violence by someone other than their partner in the past 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

- 5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices such as child marriage, early forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.3.1. Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before the age of 15 and before the age of 18

5. 3.2. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age

- 5.c. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and legally enforceable legislation to advance gender equality and empower women and girls at all levels

5.c.1 Proportion of countries making public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment and having monitoring systems in place

8. UN WOMEN's Role and Past Actions

a) Global Campaigns and Programs

UN Women works to prevent and respond to violence, increase survivors' access to services and make private and public spaces safer for women and girls. At the global level UN WOMEN works to improve international policies by providing support to the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women and ensuring that the post-2015 development agenda includes specific targets to end violence against women and girls. Some of the campaigns and programs carried out as part of this work are as listed below.

Expanding Access to Services: Although progress is being made globally, many women and girls who experience physical and sexual violence still lack access to quality services. Such services include keeping women and girls safe, providing health care for their injuries, responding to their sexual and reproductive health needs, including provision of post-rape care and counselling, and facilitating their access to the police and justice system. UN Women, in partnership with UNFPA and other UN agencies, has developed the Essential Services Programme to improve the quality of and access to services by reaching a global understanding on the range of services and responses required and the corresponding standards for providing such services.

Safety in Public Spaces: To address sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces, UN Women, in partnership with UN-Habitat and UNICEF, implements the Safe Cities Initiative with a presence in over 20 cities, including New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Kigali, Port Moresby, Quito, Dublin and Sakai.

Improving Knowledge and Evidence: The Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls features detailed guidance on how to implement laws, policies and programmes with access to promising practices, case studies and recommended programming tools from around the world.

Supporting Innovative Approaches to Ending Violence: UN Women manages the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women on behalf of the UN System to provide support to innovative approaches to stem and prevent the pandemic of violence. Since its inception, the fund has provided grants to 426 initiatives in 136 countries, amounting to a total of USD 116 million.

Advocacy: UN Women manages the Secretary-General's campaign "UNITE to end violence against women", which amongst its many activities initiated Orange Day, proclaiming every 25th of the month as a day to raise awareness. It has garnered support for other high-profile initiatives from celebrities, including sports stars in Europe, to raise the profile of the issue. COMMIT, an advocacy initiative launched by UN Women in 2012, has prompted 60 countries from every region to make concrete pledges to take action on ending violence against women.

Education for Prevention: Putting young people at the heart of prevention efforts, UN Women and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts have developed a non-formal curriculum to end violence against women and girls, designed for various age groups ranging from 5 to 25 years.

b) Partnerships with Governments and NGOs

Support from governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) are crucial to preventing violence against women. UN Women relies almost entirely on voluntary financial contributions to continue its work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Since its inception, UN Women has been funded primarily by government partners committed to making gender equality and women's empowerment a global priority. According to a document published by UN Women in 2021, the 10 governments providing the most economic support are as follows:

1. Sweden

2. European Commission (The European Commission is a Government member organization. This includes funding for the Spotlight Initiative (USD 35.28 million)

3. Finland

4. Norway

5. Canada

6. Germany

7. Switzerland

8. Australia

9. Japan

10. United States of America

Women-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as powerful agents of change in various sectors, from health and education to human rights and environmental sustainability. These organizations are often founded and operated by women who possess a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by their communities. By prioritizing women's voices and experiences, these NGOs not only address gender-specific issues but also contribute to broader societal transformations.The rise of women-led NGOs is a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of women, who are increasingly taking the reins in advocating for their rights and the rights of others. The significance of women-led NGOs extends beyond their immediate impact; they play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering marginalized groups. These organizations often focus on grassroots initiatives, ensuring that the needs and aspirations of women are at the forefront of development agendas.

UN Women has been instrumental in supporting women-led NGOs around the globe, recognizing their vital role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Through various programs and initiatives, UN Women provides financial assistance, technical support, and capacity-building opportunities to these organizations. This support is crucial, as many women-led NGOs operate on limited budgets and face significant barriers in accessing resources.

The impact of UN Women's support on women-led NGOs is profound and multifaceted. By providing resources and expertise, UN Women enables these organizations to expand their reach and effectiveness. For instance, many women-led NGOs have reported increased capacity to implement programs that directly benefit women and girls in their communities. This includes initiatives aimed at improving access to healthcare services, promoting education for girls, and advocating for legal reforms that protect women's rights.

Moreover, the support from UN Women has helped elevate the visibility of women-led NGOs on national and international platforms. This increased recognition not only attracts additional funding but also fosters partnerships with other stakeholders, including governments and private sector entities.

Several Important International NGOs Working in the Field Of Violence Against Women:

- Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE): Was established in 1994. WAVE is a network organization composed of more than 160 women's organizations in 46 European countries. A few members of WAVE represent governmental organizations. WAVE's central office is located in Vienna, Austria.
- European Women's Lobby (EWL): The European Women's Lobby (EWL) was founded in 1990 on the initiative of EU public officials in the context of the institutionalization of feminism. Inspired by the 1983 European Network of Women (ENOW), its aim was to inform women's associations and influence European institutions in favor of women. Twenty-five years and multiple waves of enlargement later, the lobby group has become the largest coalition of European women's organizations.
- Global Fund for Women: Global Fund for Women was founded in 1987 in Palo Alto, California, by four bold women: Anne Firth Murray, Frances Kissling, Laura Lederer, and Nita Barrow. They were convinced that women's human rights were essential to social, economic, and political change around the world. Frustrated by a lack of interest in funding women's human rights, they founded an organization to fund grassroots feminist movements directly.Over the course of nearly 40 years, Global Fund for Women has supported feminist movements and grassroots organizers to end civil wars, get female Presidents elected, and secure laws giving new protection to millions.
- Women for Women International: Since 1993, Women for Women International has invested in the power of over 500,000 women who are forgotten — the women survivors of war and conflict — to learn the skills they need to rebuild their families and communities. Women for Women International's vision is to create a world in which all women determine the course of their lives and reach their full potential.

9. Challenges and Gaps

Even though various laws and public awareness campaigns exist to eliminate gender based violence, numerous challenges and systemic gaps continue to hinder actions to combat gender-based violence. These challenges are often deeply embedded in social, legal, political, and cultural systems, making the change complex and slow.

Many countries still lack comprehensive laws that protect against all forms of GBV. Marital rape, for instance, remains legal in over 30 countries, reflecting deeply entrenched beliefs about male entitlement and female submission. Even where laws exist, implementation is often weak due to a lack of training among law enforcement, limited resources, or corruption within the justice system. Survivors may also be discouraged from reporting violence because of fear of retaliation, social stigma, or mistrust of authorities.

Efforts to eliminate harmful practices frequently encounter resistance from traditional or religious institutions that view such change as a threat to cultural identity. Community leaders, elders, and even women themselves may support harmful norms out of a desire to maintain social cohesion or out of fear of ostracism. As a result, reforms that challenge the "status quo" often face pushback, especially in rural or conservative areas.

In many regions, particularly in the Global South, limited access to education and awareness campaigns prevents communities from understanding the harmful nature of certain practices. Without adequate education on gender equality, human rights, and consent, traditional gender roles remain unquestioned and continue to shape attitudes and behaviors from childhood.

Women's voices are often underrepresented in political and legislative processes, making it difficult to prioritize gender equality on the policy agenda. In contexts where men dominate political institutions, issues like domestic violence, reproductive rights, or economic empowerment may be deprioritized or dismissed altogether.
Combating GBV requires sustained investment in shelters, legal aid, healthcare, education, and prevention programs. However, many countries—especially those in conflict or low-income settings—struggle to allocate sufficient funds. International aid is often short-term, project-based, and not always culturally sensitive or aligned with local needs.

Certain groups—including Indigenous women, LGBTQ+ individuals, refugees, and persons with disabilities—face multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination, which increase their vulnerability to violence and limit their access to support. GBV interventions that do not consider intersectionality often fail to reach those most at risk.

10. Challenge-Based Case Studies

Although India has laws addressing domestic violence (e.g., *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*), marital rape is still not criminalized. Cultural norms in many parts of the country view marriage as a domain where consent is assumed, thus undermining women's bodily autonomy. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2021), over 30% of married women in India have experienced spousal violence, yet only 14% seek help.

In northern Nigeria, where religious and traditional laws often override federal statutes, **child marriage remains highly prevalent**. According to **UNICEF (2023)**, **43% of girls are married before the age of 18**, despite national laws setting the minimum legal marriage age at 18. Religious leaders often justify early marriage based on faith or custom, making enforcement extremely challenging.

Sweden is often cited for its progressive gender policies. It was one of the first countries to criminalize domestic violence, marital rape, and psychological abuse. Yet, according to **BRÅ (Swedish Crime Survey, 2022)**, **1 in 5 women** reported experiencing intimate partner violence during their lifetime. Even in egalitarian societies, **cultural myths and underreporting remain barriers**.

Brazil has robust legislation such as the Maria da Penha Law (2006), which criminalizes domestic violence and provides protections. However, implementation remains weak, especially in low-income and rural areas. In 2022, over 1,400 femicides were reported (FBSP – Brazilian Forum on Public Safety), and many more likely went unrecorded due to fear of retaliation or police inaction.

Following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, **girls were banned from secondary and higher education**, and women were barred from most public roles. Forced and child marriages surged as **traditional gender roles were strictly reimposed**. Reports from **UNAMA and Human Rights Watch** indicate increasing cases of domestic and sexual violence, with **no legal recourse** available for survivors.

11. Questions a Resolution Should Address

1. What role can international organizations and development partners play in providing resources, training, and expertise to tackle GBV linked to traditional roles?

2. How can survivors of GBV be protected, supported, and encouraged to report violence in communities where stigma is high?

3. How can Member States ensure that national laws criminalize all forms of gender-based violence, including those justified by “tradition”?

4. How can public awareness campaigns be made more effective in changing harmful gender norms and gender-based violence, especially in rural or conservative areas?

5. What funding mechanisms can support long-term GBV prevention programs?

6. How can countries improve data collection on GBV, especially in communities where underreporting is common?

7. What legal reforms are necessary to close gaps in protection?

8. What policies can support the economic empowerment of women as a tool to reduce dependence on abusive households and traditional power structures?

9. How can digital platforms and media be used to shift public perception and raise awareness on the harms of gender-based violence rooted in traditional roles?

10. What measures can be introduced to engage men and boys in preventing GBV and challenging harmful masculinity norms?

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