

Delegates,

Welcome to UGAMUNC XXVII! My name is Claire Myers and I am so excited to serve as your chair for The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at this year's conference. The Commission on the Status of Women plays a vital role in advancing the rights of 50% of the population. I know each one of you has the potential to be an outstanding delegate and I am very excited to see your creative and well thought out solutions to the issues that personally affect millions of women across the globe.

Before I get into my expectations for this committee, I'd like to introduce myself. I am a second-year from Baltimore, Maryland, studying Political Science and Economics. This is my second year on the Model UN team, as well as my second year chairing a committee at UGAMUNC. Outside of Model UN and my academics, I am also involved in University Judiciary and Greek Life. If you are ever on campus, which is rare these days, you can most likely find me on the second floor of the MLC or waiting in line at the Tate Panda Express (I'm a sucker for the Chicken Teriyaki).

As a delegate in this committee, you are expected to be prepared, professional, and ready to be an active part of the important discussions that will take place during our sessions. I recognize that there is a lot of uncertainty right now, but I want to assure you no matter what our committee looks like, I want this to be a positive learning experience for everyone. That being said, I expect you to compete to the best of your abilities regardless of the format the committee is in. You must submit a research paper about your assigned country in order to be considered for an award! In both your position papers and your proposed solutions in committee, I expect that you represent your country's positions and opinions, even if you may not personally agree. With that being said, I'd like to repeat my expectation that you be professional and aware of the importance of the representation of diverse ideas in this body. While preparing for our session, I hope that you will all evaluate the underlying causes behind each topic and analyze how your resolutions may relate and interact with each other.

At the beginning of our first committee session I will be going over general rules and procedures, however, I do encourage you to go over some basic rules of Parliamentary procedure prior to the conference. As a general reminder, your position paper is due by **Monday, February 1 at 11:59 pm** to my email which is **claire.myers@uga.edu**. If you have any questions about this committee, UGAMUNC, UGA, or college in general please feel free to reach out!

Go Dawgs and Good Luck!

Claire Myers

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1 Committee Background

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established on June 21st, 1946 through an Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 11(II). The task of the CSW is to promote women's rights, document the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shape global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is deemed as the principal global intergovernmental body on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.¹ Its initial intent was to focus on legal measures to protect the human rights of women and awareness-raising on the status of women.² Economic and Social considerations became more prevalent in the 1960s with particular attention to rural communities. By the mid 1970s, the CSW had gained significant traction and influence where the first global Women's Conference was held in Mexico City in 1975. At such conferences, the CSW adopted a global plan of action to improve the status of women. This global plan became a catalyst for change in the international community, and ultimately led to the Commission's mandate being expanded through ECOSOC resolution 1996/6 to include a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as providing a gender-based perspective on UN proceedings.³

Member states of the CSW meet to decide further actions to promote women's enjoyment of political, economic, and social rights through multi-year programs of work that critically analyze prior recommendations and implement supplemental advice on implementation of their platforms for action. Following recommendations, it is the responsibility of this committee to forward outcomes to ECOSOC for follow-up and support. The Commission places specific focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and methods to advance gender equality through that agenda. The CSW takes care to recognize and reaffirm political commitment to the realization of gender equality and prioritizes discussion on efforts to close gaps and meet challenges. Each year the CSW selects "priority and review themes" that are to be the focus of conversation for the specified year. The 2021 priority theme is outlined as follows, "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Review theme: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session).". In our session, we hope to keep in mind the priority theme for 2021 when discussing Child Marriage, Access to education for Women, and reproductive health. The CSW deals with deeply rooted intersectional issues, so there is not a black and white answer for any topic. When seeking solutions, the CSW identifies the problems and seeks to find comprehensive solutions within the context of women empowerment.⁴

The CSW has made some major advancements to the status of women since its creation. They have ensured that equality between women and men were included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as created the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that was soon adopted by the UN General Assembly.⁵

¹<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

²<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/index.htm>

³<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

⁴<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/index.htm>

⁵<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/index.htm>

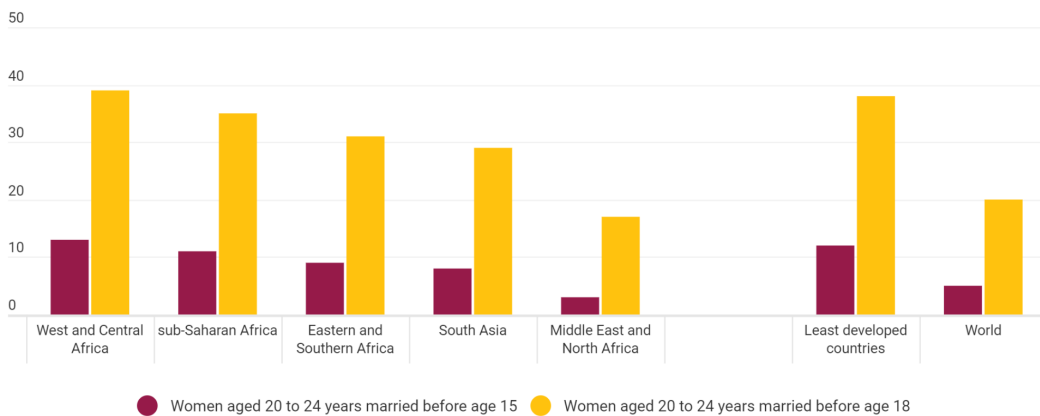
10 “Preventing Child Marriage.” UNICEF Europe and Central Asia, February 11, 2019. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/child-marriage>.

with the expectation that these children “grow up” and take on adult responsibilities, including sexual relationships and childbearing, child brides are at increased risk of becoming depressed. The isolation that they feel is often exacerbated by domestic violence at the hands of their spouse. The greater the age gap between partners increases this risk.¹¹

2.4 Reasons for Prevalence

There are three main reasons why child marriages are prevalent in certain regions, and exist in general. Poverty is a driving force behind child marriages. Child marriages are most prevalent in less developed countries where birth rates are high. The graph below depicts the regions in which child marriages are more common.⁷

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18, by region



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As a result of high birth rates, families are larger. Girls are often seen as financial burdens so families are incentivized to marry their young daughters to ease their economic situation. Dowries are also a common practice in some cultures, so there is an additional economic incentive in this payment. Outside of economic reasoning, child marriage is sometimes seen as a way to protect girls from violence. Unmarried girls are often at a higher risk of gender based violence, including rape, in some regions. Some also see marriage as a way to protect against STIs, including HIV. Social pressures can also be a driving factor behind child marriages. Marriages can create connections between families and by default connections between social statuses. Combined with social norms, the pressure to marry into a “good” family can also result in child marriages.⁷

2.5 Conclusion

Child marriage not only threatens the physical and psychological well being of girls around the globe, it is also a violation of their human rights. Girls are forced into union where they are expected to engage in a sexual relationship and bear children, as children themselves. Child marriage is tied to decreased education and as a result lower income throughout their lives. It is tied to high maternal mortality rates and intimate partner violence.¹⁰ Child marriage prevents progress in gender equality and it directly harms millions of girls.

¹¹Girls Not Brides. “Violence against Girls.” Girls Not Brides, March 25, 2018. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/themes/violence-against-girls/>.

¹²“Child Marriage.” UNICEF DATA, October 7, 2020. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>.

2.6 Key Terms

- **Child Marriage:** This term refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.
- **Gender Equality:** The state in which access to rights or opportunities are unaffected by gender
- **Child bride:** Any marriage which is done before the individuals complete their development is an 'early marriage'; every woman who is married off before she reaches age 18 is a 'child bride'.
- **Forced marriage:** Compulsion to marriage by individuals, the society and the family by means of violence, insistence, intimidation, terrorisation, emotional pressure and threats.
- **UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund; an agency of the United Nations that specialises in supporting the implementation of child rights.

For a full list of terms relevant to Child Marriage, click [here](#)

2.7 Questions to Consider

1. What is your nation's stance on child marriage?
2. What are some solutions that your nation has implemented to remedy this issue?
3. How transferable are these solutions on an international level?
4. How have past resolutions set a precedent for the issue at hand?
5. What is the status of child marriage in your region? How can implementation differ based on region?

2.8 Regional Context Resources

For region specific information, UNICEF provides a great foundation for further research: [Latin America - Middle East/ North Africa - West and Central Africa - Asia -Europe - North America](#)(Note: You can download the full version of the report on each of these pages)

2.9 Suggested Resources

1. UNICEF Progress and Trend Animation
2. Interactive Map of where child marriages happen
3. Child Marriage in India (Vice Video 20 minutes)

2.10 Other Important Documents

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
4. Convention on the Rights of the Child
5. Convention on the Eliminations of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
6. Supplementary Convention the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery

3 Topic B: Increasing Access to Education for Women and Girls

3.1 Introduction

Education can have a ripple effect that benefits a child for the entirety of their lives. When it comes to educating girls, education can be one of the biggest weapons against gender inequality. Expanding access to education for girls benefits individuals and society as a whole. Girls who receive an education have higher incomes, are less likely to marry young, and tend to live longer healthier lives. When girls have access to secondary education, national growth rates rise, child marriages decrease, and child and maternal mortality rates decrease.¹³ Overall, providing girls with secondary education improves the economy, health, and gender equality of a nation. Today, more than 132 million girls are out of school. This includes 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age.¹⁴

While the number of girls in school has increased since 1995, there are still many challenges that have prevented millions of girls from getting educated. Girls who live in areas of conflict (war, civil unrest, etc), in rural/remote communities, and in impoverished areas are more likely to be out of school.¹ In order to protect the right to education for girls around the world, it is imperative that these factors are addressed and access to education for girls is expanded.

3.2 Previous UN Action

In 1995, the World Conference of Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which has since been used as the reference and framework for the goals of the Commission on the Status of Women. Listed in the strategic objective actions is a section labelled “Education and Training of Women.” This document not only recognizes education as a human right and a tool used in order to achieve equality, it also identifies regions in which access to education for women needs to be expanded. According to the Declaration, “On a regional level, girls and boys have achieved equal access to primary education, except in some parts of Africa, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, and Central Asia, where access to education facilities is still inadequate.”¹⁵ After the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, the UN has made multiple bodies and initiatives to help achieve the goals outlined in the document. One of these bodies is the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI).¹⁶ UNGEI is focused on policy advocacy and support for governments in order to help implement policies that improve education for girls. According to their mission statement,

The UNGEI partnership aims to support: Countries to achieve measurable change in girls’ education and gender equality; and Global and national development agendas to reflect emerging concerns on girls’ education and gender equality, especially for the most marginalized.⁴

UNICEF has also done valuable work to expand girls’ education. They work with communities, Government, and partners to create concrete solutions in order to promote gender equality in the field of education.. According to their website, UNICEF

Supports Governments to ensure that budgets are gender-responsive and that national education plans and policies prioritize gender equality.

Helps schools and Governments use assessment data to eliminate gender gaps in learning.

Promotes social protection measures, including cash transfers, to improve girls’ transition to and retention in secondary school.

Focuses teacher training and professional development on gender-responsive pedagogies.

Removes gender stereotypes from learning materials.¹

¹³ “Girls’ Education.” UNICEF. UNICEF, January 19, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>.

¹⁴ “Girls’ Education.” World Bank, September 30, 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>.

¹⁵ The Fourth World Conference on Women. “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.” un.org, September 15, 1995. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>.

¹⁶ “United Nation Girls Education Initiative.” UNGEI. Accessed October 31, 2020. <http://www.ungei.org/whatisungei/index.html>.

In addition to the creation of UNGEI and the actions of UNICEF, the UN has included “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” as one of their Sustainable Development Goals that the body hopes to achieve by 2030.¹⁷ In order to achieve this goal, there is a lot more work left to do.

3.3 Current Challenges

3.3.1 Gender-Based Violence

While the UN has reported gains in access to education for women and girls since the Beijing Declaration in 1995, there are some troubling trends that are undermining the progress that has been made. In March 2020, the CSW published a press release in which they outlined the concerning trend that although education for girls has been greatly expanded over the past 25 years, violence against women and girls is still prevalent and accepted. There are 79 million more girls in school in 2020 than there were in 1995, however 70% of sex trafficking victims were female and 1 in 20 girls between 15 and 19 have reported being raped in their lifetime. The director of UNICEF summed up this importance of addressing this trend in her statement in which she said “Access to education is not enough – we must also change people’s behaviours and attitudes towards girls. True equality will only come when all girls are safe from violence, free to exercise their rights, and are able to enjoy equal opportunities in life.”¹⁸

This problematic trend reveals an unfortunate truth that may eventually undermine the progress made in the past 25 years. It is estimated that approximately 60 million girls are sexually assaulted on their way to or at school every year.² As long as women are at risk of harm in their communities, their ability to learn is hindered. Access to education does not only mean access to a classroom, it means “feeling safe in classrooms and supported in the subjects and careers [girls] choose to pursue – including those in which they are often under-represented.”¹ The issue of safety in and around schools must be addressed in order to create an educational environment that allows girls to survive and thrive.

3.3.2 Poverty

The relationship between poverty and education is a complicated one. Education serves as a solution to poverty, while poverty serves as a roadblock to education. Girls who live in poverty normally do not have the resources to afford school supplies or other fees associated with attending classes. The cost of education is especially high because it includes the opportunity cost of attending class instead of working. In areas of the world where child labor laws are lax or in remote communities where agricultural and physical labor are expected of women and girls, the number of girls in school is lower than the rest of the world.¹⁹ The World Bank reports that

Studies consistently reinforce that girls who face multiple disadvantages — such as low family income, living in remote or underserved locations or who have a disability or belong to a minority ethno-linguistic group — are farthest behind in terms of access to and completion of education.²

When poor families have multiple children, they often choose to invest the money they have in their sons’ education.¹

On top of personal poverty, girls who live in impoverished communities also do not have adequate resources to complete their education. The infrastructure of the school itself plays a role in girls’ success. In poor areas, school buildings often do not have adequate sanitation facilities or are not safe to learn.¹ Sanitation facilities play an especially important role in whether or not girls continue with secondary education. Girls who do not

¹⁷ “Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education.” UN Women. Accessed October 25, 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-4-quality-education>.

¹⁸ “Press Release: 25 Years of Uneven Progress: Despite Gains in Education, World Still a Violent, Highly Discriminatory Place for Girls.” UN Women, March 3, 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/press-release-a-new-era-for-girls-report-released>.

¹⁹ “Girls’ Education.” Malala Fund, 2020. <https://malala.org/girls-education>.

have access to private bathrooms often do not feel comfortable going to school while menstruating, resulting in week long absences once a month. Eventually, they will drop out of school as a result of prolonged absences.

Lack of adequate resources and infrastructure is also very common in areas of conflict. Girls in countries affected by conflict are twice as likely to be out of school than their counterparts in countries without conflict.¹ In Syria, there are students forced to attend class in a tent with other students much younger, and less advanced, than them. Without the infrastructure to support higher levels of education, students in conflict zones and refugee camps often do not complete their education.⁷

3.4 Conclusion

Increasing access to education for girls around the world is one of the foremost ways to fight poverty, child and maternal mortality, gender inequality and more. It does, however, come with its share of challenges. Obstacles ranging from gender-based violence to lack of sanitary conditions and cost have prevented millions of girls from getting educated. It is vital that you build on the progress that has been made in the past 25 years by addressing these challenges to safeguard the right to an education for girls everywhere.

3.5 Key Vocabulary

- **Access to Education-** Typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure—or at least strive to ensure—that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education.
- **UNICEF-** The United Nations Children’s Fund, is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.
- **Primary Education-** Primary education is typically the first stage of formal education, coming after preschool and before secondary school.
- **Secondary Education-** Secondary education typically takes place after six years of primary education and is followed by higher education, vocational education or employment.

Questions to Consider

1. How might COVID-19 pose a challenge to increasing access to education in your country? In more developed countries? In less developed countries?
2. What are some effective solutions that address the obstacles to education while maintaining the sovereignty of each nation?
3. What has your nation done to increase access to education nationally? Are those practices applicable and transferable to an international level?
4. What is your nation’s stance on access to education? How will your nation’s views conflict with other member states?
5. What are some of the surrounding ramifications to lack of access to education?

3.6 Suggested Resources

1. Information by Country (includes data for African and Asian countries)
2. Period. End of Sentence. Documentary (25 minutes long; also available on Netflix)
3. How COVID-19 is impacting girls’ education
4. More positive effects of educating girls

4 Topic C: Improving Reproductive Healthcare

4.1 Introduction

Health care is the organized provision of medical care to individuals or a community. This can include efforts to maintain or restore physical, mental, or emotional well-being in a specific region. Without a solid health care system set in place in a certain area, many people can be affected physically and mentally. With the aim of the study in mind, the research is focused on a specific type of healthcare treatment: gynecological and obstetric care. Gynecology relates to the branch of anatomy and physiology who deals with functions, diseases, and extraneous factors concerning women's health, especially those affecting the reproductive center. Obstetrics concerns specifically the medicinal and surgical branch of health care detailing childbirth and the care of women giving birth. With these branches of medicine and health care in mind, this study further researches into the health care policies concerning gynecology and obstetrics in other nations after identifying apparent gender disparities present in the public policy.²⁰

Health policy can also work against certain groups. For example, women across the world are discriminated against when these policies are implemented, disabling them from having proper access to health care. This can cause a detrimental impact on a woman's life and can encourage the unequal treatment between genders in different areas of the world. For example, due to a lack of egalitarian health policies present in a country's system, women may not have specific rights to control what happens to their bodies - even in life-threatening situations - and to be protected from increased rates of domestic violence and femicide. It is apparent that women are discriminated against through health care policies concerning the gynecological and obstetric branches of medicine.²¹

Reproductive health is maintaining a state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing in matters relating to the reproductive system and its functions and processes. By promoting reproductive health, there is an understanding of ensuring that people are able to safely have the capacity to reproduce and the freedom to decide when and how often to exercise that right. This includes informing both men and women on reproductive health; allowing safe, effective, affordable, and acceptable methods of family planning; and the right to access healthcare services to enable women have a safe pregnancy. Reproductive healthcare not only includes the ability for both women and men worldwide to have access to these services but also care for sexual health, specifically with counseling related to the reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases.²²

4.2 Current United Nations Efforts

There is no single human rights instrument that controls reproductive rights internationally. Rather, the United Nations in conjunction with multiple regional human rights instruments attempt to advocate for reproductive rights around the world. The United Nations Treaty Bodies have recognized reproductive rights as legally binding, and they will monitor the implementation of reproductive rights from treaties. Topics that have been discussed in the past include the following:

- Sexual and reproductive health legislature into primary health care
- Integration of sexual and reproductive health services
- Sexual and reproductive health communication
- Budgeting of sexual and reproductive health activities

²⁰ "Health Policy." **World Health Organization**, World Health Organization, 10 May 2013, https://www.who.int/topics/health_policy/en/.

²¹ *ibid*

²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Population Fund, Danish Institute for Human Rights. "Reproductive rights are human rights: A handbook for national human rights institutions." Accessed October 19, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2014/1/reproductive-rights-are-human-rights>

- Mainstreaming gender in development programs
- Youth sexual and reproductive health
- Mid-life concerns of both men and women
- The fight against sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS
- Increasing resources to sexual and reproductive health and rights programs
- Reducing maternal, infant, and child mortality rates

In addition to the United Nations Treaty Bodies efforts, the United Nations Security Council has also taken action to support reproductive rights for females globally. By adopting resolution 2493, the Security Council has taken a pledge to take action against governments who do not support equal health rights for women. As of October 30, 2019, the Security Council plans to resume their agenda to encourage reproductive rights.²³

4.3 Conclusion

Pertaining to reproductive health care, reproductive rights share the notion of human rights that are already set in place by national and international law where these rights are recognized to protect basic freedoms of couples and individuals in their decisions to reproduce and maintain both reproductive health and sexual health. Reproductive rights also allow people to exercise their freedom to obtain the highest standard of care relating to reproductive health and make decisions regarding their health without discrimination, coercion, and violence.²⁴

By incorporating the law, the health policy of certain states can be further advanced into ensuring that people receive proper medical care as well as maintain a healthy community as a whole. By enforcing these policies, the government can take steps to help ascertain a level of health care available to their citizens. In addition, the government of nations have the ability to create and implement health policies that they feel fit for their areas of influence. This can differ based on the current healthcare situation in the country. Factors that may affect the health policies include changing societal norms, disease outbreaks, cultural differences, and a transfer of power within the ruling government.

4.4 Key Terms

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- **Health policy** - decisions, plans, and actions that are undertaken to achieve specific health care goals within a society
- **Reproductive health** - a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes
- **Reproductive rights** - legal rights and freedoms relating to reproduction and reproductive health that vary amongst countries around the world; include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence
- **Reproductive system** - the system of organs and parts which function in reproduction consisting in the male especially of the testes, penis, seminal vesicles, prostate, and urethra and in the female especially of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, vagina, and vulva

²³“Health Policy.” **World Health Organization**, World Health Organization, 10 May 2013, https://www.who.int/topics/health_policy/en/.

²⁴“The World’s Abortion Laws.” **Center for Reproductive Rights**, <https://reproductiverights.org/worldabortionlaws>

²⁵ibid

- **Sexual health** - a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence

4.5 Questions to Consider

- 1) What is the feasibility of obtaining a solution for international reproductive rights based on current actions of the United Nations?
- 2) How can reproductive rights be achieved in a manner that supports women and considers cultural differences around the world?
- 3) What health policies need to be implemented in order to ensure equal opportunities for people to obtain resources related to reproductive and sexual health?