



UN Women

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TSMUN MMXXII BACKGROUND GUIDE 2022

Topic I: Ensuring the right to education to women and girls
Topic II: Aiding women affected by the Afghanistan crisis



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to The 2022 Tallahassee Southern Regional Model United Nations Conference (TSMUN)! My name is Hannah Watkins and I am one of your directors for the UN Women Committee. I graduated from Valdosta State University in 2020 with a degree in political science. While at Valdosta State, I participated for three years in collegiate Model United Nations (UN) and had the opportunity to go to national conferences such as NMUN-New York, NMUN-DC, and NMUN-Germany.

My name is Kiya Ezell and I am also one of your directors for the UN Women Committee. I am a current student at Valdosta State University, I will be graduating December 2021 with a Dual degree in Political Science and Spanish. While at Valdosta State, I participated in a year of collegiate Model UN and had the opportunity to go attend a Regional conference in Gainesville and will be attending NMUN-DC.

The topics under discussion for this year's UN Women committee are as follows:

1. Ensuring the right to education to women and girls
2. Aiding women affected by the Afghanistan crisis

We hope you find the background guide useful as you prepare for this conference. The background guide is meant to introduce delegates to the history of their committee, it's mandates, and a brief background about the topics at hand. We strongly encourage delegates to do research outside the background guide about their countries and topics.

Each delegation will submit a position paper for their committee. Delegates must turn in their papers before the start of the conference. Papers may be emailed to UNWomen@tsmun.org or may be submitted through a hard copy or USB drive. For a guide on how to write a position paper with an example, please visit <http://www.tsmun.org/position-papers.html>. Papers not in the correct format will not be eligible for awards. For conference information, resources to help prepare, scholarships, and other useful information, please visit <http://www.tsmun.org>. If you have any questions regarding the conference, feel free to email us at UNWomen@tsmun.org. We look forward to seeing you all in committee.

Sincerely,

Hannah Watkins and Kiya Ezell, UN Women Directors.



Introduction

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created the UN Women committee to promote gender equality globally. In creating this committee, UN member states took a historic step by accelerating the needs of women and girl's globally as gender inequality is still a major issue worldwide. The goals for the UN Women committee were to accelerate the progress of women and girl's needs as put forth in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SG5) that by 2030, women and men will have equal rights.

The four goals of the UN Women committee are as follows: ¹

- Women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems
- Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy
- All women and girls live 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, conflicts, and humanitarian action.

Committee Mandate

As set forth in General Assembly (GA) resolution 64/289² The UN Women committee is to lead, coordinate, and promote accountability of the UN system to deliver gender equality and the empowerment of women with the primary objective to enhance country-level coherence.

Governance, Structure, and Membership

³The UN Women's Committee is composed of 45 Member States who are elected by the Economic and Social Council based on geographical distribution. There are 13 Members from Africa, 11 Members from Asia, 9 Members from Latin America and the Caribbean, 8 Members from Western Europe and other states, and 4 Members from Eastern Europe. Each Member State serves four years on the committee.

The UN Women's committee reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and suggests programs to be in place to help women and girls globally. The committee is a section of a larger committee known as the Commission on the Status of Women. It often works closely

¹ UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2019

² UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 11

³ UN Women, *Member States*, 2021



with the General Assembly committees to ensure Member States are on track for the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030.⁴

The UN Women's committee also often works with Civil Society Organizations or CSOs and Member States in an effort to design policies, programs, and other services. All programs are implemented at the country, multi-country, and regional levels through the utilization of partners which include government entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, non-UN intergovernmental organizations, and UN Women itself.

Conclusion

The UN Women's committee was created in 2010 by the General Assembly to hold Member States accountable for women's rights to keep on track with the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Since its creation, it has made significant movement towards gender equality, and continues to accomplish the goals set forth by the SDG 2030 agenda and has increasingly focused on work related SDGs, such as SDG 8, alongside its ongoing commitment to SDG 5 within its Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

⁴ United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals*, 2015



Ensuring the Right to Education to Women and Girls

Introduction

As stated in Article 1 of the UN charter, “*To achieve international cooperation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, and religion,*” it is imperative that all individuals have equal rights and access to basic necessities. Unfortunately when it comes to the education of women and girls equal rights are not always afforded to them.

Per the The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and other treaties like it, it is clear that education is a human right⁵ and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. If more women are to become agents of change, improve in health and family education, and become empowered to participate in societal decision making, women’s literacy and equal access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary⁶.

This can only be realized when women and girls have access to the same education as their male counterparts. Allowing women’s education ultimately enhances their ability to have access to better health, to escape poverty, and participate in the workforce.

Current Situation

As of now, on a global scale, women have less opportunity for education as their male counterparts in many countries, especially those considered to be a part of the global south. There are many circumstances that make it challenging for women and girls to attend school; the location of the school; if the school has supplies such as textbooks; and/or if the girl is needed at home to help support the family. As of now, it is not surprising that girls are more likely than boys to never set foot in a classroom, with

nearly 16 million girls likely to never set foot in a classroom⁷. This has become an even larger issue due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in which according to UNESCO, school

⁵ UNESCO, *Inclusion in Education*, 2017

⁶ UN Women, *Education and Training of Women*, 2021.

⁷ UNESCO, *Education and Gender Equality*, 2013



closures have sent about 90% of all students out of school, among them more than 800 million girls.⁸

Aside from difficulties in arriving to schools, girls often have to contend with gender stereotypes that result in them being expected to juggle domestic responsibilities, such as cleaning, cooking and fetching water, on top of their school work⁹. This, alongside the lack of inclusive and quality learning environments, adequate and safe education infrastructure, and sanitation create a situation in which women make up two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate individuals¹⁰. Additionally, it allows for approximately 39% of girls from rural areas to be able to attend secondary school and 59% of girls in urban areas.¹¹

UN Actions to Date

In 1995, the Beijing Platform was set into motion as a blueprint of key issues of gender inequality that women were facing. Among those most highly advocated for was the promotion of women's education in all fields and the facilitation of that through educational programs and teacher training¹². Progress on fixing these issues are reviewed every five years. In conjunction with the Beijing Platform, A/HRC/30/23 was put forward in 2016. This resolution urged Member States to eliminate discrimination against girls in education and reinforced the necessity to remove all obstacles to it as well.¹³ Additionally, in 2016 the General Assembly passed A/Res/70/219 which reinstates the need for easier access to education in developing nations in order to have progress in women's development globally. Most recently, the Education 2030 Framework for Action was put forward to emphasize inclusion and equity as laying the foundations for quality education, especially among women and girls, and also reinforced the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDGs) which is associated with the betterment of education for all with special emphasis on women and girls.

In terms of setbacks created by the Covid-19 pandemic, A/HRC/47/L.3 was created to remind Member States to ensure girls are able to complete at least 12 years of quality education regardless of the status of the pandemic through the use of literacy education and well financed initiatives for maintaining girl's presence in schools.¹⁴ Alongside individual member state funding, the World Bank Group, has continued its commitment of contributing US\$2 billion

⁸ Burzynska and Contreras, *Gendered Effects of School Closures during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020

⁹ Right to Education Initiative, *Women and Girls*, 2016

¹⁰ UN Women, *Facts & Figures*, 2021

¹¹ Ibid

¹² UN Women, *The Beijing 12 Critical Areas of Concern Deconstructed*, 2021.

¹³ Right to Education Initiative, *HRC Resolution: Realising the Equal Enjoyment of the Right to Education by Every Girl*, 2017

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl (A/HRC/47/L.3)*, 2021



in 5 years starting from 2018; this funding is specifically for assisting in women and girls ability to obtain education and even allow for entrepreneurial training, and as of January 2021, the Bank funded just over their original funding goal at US\$2.3 billion.¹⁵

Regional and International Framework

The Inter American Development Bank (IADB)¹⁶ strives to provide a better life for individuals living in Latin America and the Caribbean. Through Vision 2025, IADB addresses that due to the lack of human capital in the region, the most important component to obtain their future is to provide equal access to education for all. By improving the education infrastructure, the IADB hopes to increase the human capital in the region.

In collaboration with UNESCO, the African Union is working on case studies to construct their own legislature to help with retention of women and girls who attend school¹⁷. Through the African Union's Agenda 2060, the goal is to ensure the equal right to primary and secondary education to the entire African continent.

The European Union sets out a framework through the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027¹⁸ to encourage all school age individuals to participate in social and civic engagement in hopes of providing young people to take part in society through education.

Conclusion

Although strides have been made to provide women and girls equal access to education as compared to their male counterparts, more must be done to ensure that women and girls have equal access to education for generations to come. By providing women and girls with an education, these individuals are less likely to suffer from domestic violence, able to provide for herself and not rely on male relatives, and escape poverty. How can nations work together to ensure women and girls have access to education? What UN programs are in place to promote education? How can women and girls in rural areas receive the same education as their urban counterparts?

¹⁵ World Bank, *Girls' Education*, 2017

¹⁶ IADB, *VISION 2025 REINVEST IN THE AMERICAS: A DECADE OF OPPORTUNITY*, 2021

¹⁷ African Union, *Education*, 2021

¹⁸ Youth for Europe, *European Youth Goals 2019-2027*, 2019



Aiding Women Affected By the Afghanistan Crisis

Introduction

When a crisis arises, women are often among the most vulnerable victims within a country. This vulnerability is demonstrated through their consistent lack of access to proper healthcare during a crisis, their higher risk of being victim to violence, and their large presence within refugee, internally displaced and stateless populations. In order to keep with the ¹⁹2030 Sustainable Development Goals principle of “Leave No One Behind” and to continue to effectively implement the Women, Peace, Security (WPS) agenda, which mandates the protection of women during a crisis and the insurance of their prioritization during conflict resolution efforts. It is imperative that Afghan women are aided as the Afghanistan crisis unfolds.

²⁰Before the Mujahideen took control of Afghanistan in 1992, Afghani women gained equal rights as men in 1957 as a part of the Daoud Reforms. Afghani women during this period were able to get an education, run for office, and own property. However, when the Mujahideen, an Islamic Jihadist group, took over women were stripped of their rights as the goal of the Mujahideen was for women to follow the teachings in the Quran and to have men be the breadwinners of the family. After the Mujahideen took over, the Taliban gained power in 1996. Due to the Taliban taking over, women were essentially forced on house arrest and were unable to leave their homes to support themselves, leaving them at the mercy of their husbands and male relatives. Women who did not have male family members or a husband suffered the most as they had no way of supporting themselves. The UN refused to acknowledge the new government under the Taliban leading to economic hardship for Afghanistan as Member States began to apply sanctions to them in hopes of pressuring the Taliban to allow Afghani’s equal rights.

In response, during the early 2000’s, women in urban areas of Afghanistan slowly began receiving basic human rights such as the ability to hold government office, hold jobs, and the opportunity for education. However, they still heavily relied on their husbands and male relatives for basic survival as their rights were still severely limited.

Current Situation

Between January 1st and June 30th 2021, Afghan women comprised 14 percent of all civilian casualties with 219 women being killed and 508 being among the injured. Likewise as of 2019, women and girls also made up a total of 2,071,295 of the forcibly displaced persons (people

¹⁹ United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals*, 2015

²⁰PBS NewsHour, *A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan*, 2011.



forced to move because of conflict and crisis) due to the ongoing Afghanistan crisis which is only increasing in severity presently²¹.

²²Since the UN Member States' removal of troops from Afghanistan in early 2021, the Taliban slowly took over rural areas of Afghanistan again. However, in August 2021, the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country as the Taliban took control of Kabul in a coup. When the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, they tried to explain that women would still have rights in Afghanistan under the Quran. However, this was not the case as women ended up leaving their jobs in media, universities, medicine, etc. and began wearing a burqa, an article of clothing that covers one from head to toe with only mesh over the eyes.

²³Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, over 550,000 Afghanis have been displaced, with about 80% being women and girls as they try to flee Afghanistan due to the lack of rights under the regime. Even before the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Afghanistan is considered on a world stage as one of the most dangerous nations to be a woman as 87% of women and girls experience domestic violence in their lifetimes.²⁴

UN Actions to Date

²⁵Article 1 Section 3 of the United Nations charter states that to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of the economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting human rights, all individuals should have equal rights regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or religion. Through the meaning of this charter, the United Nations is dedicated to solving human rights violations across the globe and as seen recently in the current Afghanistan crisis.

The first resolution the United Nations adopted for human right's violations in Afghanistan was A/Res/148/52²⁶. In this resolution, the United Nations called into question the state of human rights under the Mujahideen in 1994 and urged Member States to provide adequate humanitarian assistance, especially to women and children.

²¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR - Refugee Statistics*, 2021.

²² Bloch, Hannah, *A Look at Afghanistan's 40 Years of Crisis — from the Soviet War to Taliban Recapture*, 2021

²³ Westfall, Sammy, *Internal Displacement Crisis Looms in Afghanistan in Wake of Taliban Takeover*, 2021

²⁴ Gliniski, Stefanie, *Violence Starts at Home': The Afghan Women Tackling Domestic Abuse at Its Source*, 2021.

²⁵ United Nations, *Chapter I: Purposes and Principles (Articles 1-2)*, 2020

²⁶ UN General Assembly, *Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan (A/Res/148/52)*, 1994



To help aid Afghanistan during its economic hardship and under the rule of the Taliban, the United Nations set up a ²⁷United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The purpose of this mission is to set up fair elections, strengthen the capacity in the protection and promotion of human rights including the protection of children affected by armed conflict, and support for women and girl's empowerment to further empower the peace process. The UNAMA has been active in Afghanistan since 2006. However, the Security Council ratified the mandate of the UNAMA with ²⁸S/Res/2596 that allows the UNAMA to continue their work and condemns the violence occurring in the nation. Alongside these efforts, the World Health Organization (WHO) in partnership with UN Women provided technical support to Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health to create Afghanistan's first protocol for gender based violence.²⁹

³⁰In response to the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, the Security Council Report S/PV.8834 addressed the fears and the steps Member States must take in order to not only help Afghan citizens, but to keep the region from falling under extremism that limits women's rights among other rights. The representative from Afghanistan expressed their concerns of the rising violence and the need to preserve the progress the nation has worked towards for equal rights among women and girls.

Regional and International Framework

In May of 2021, the newest addition of the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan was brought forth by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and it detailed that 18.4 million Afghans, the vast majority being women and children, are in need of humanitarian assistance³¹. This in combination with the millions of refugees has prompted OCHA to push for humanitarian aid funding to the tune of more than 15 million USD. Similarly, it has caused the World Health Organization (WHO) to request US\$ 38.45 million to further meet the health needs of Afghanistan³². These have been brought forth as solutions, so that the most vulnerable Afghans are able to have access to life-saving aid. Women have been cut off from medical assistance because of both conflict and status.

Regionally, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a permanent intergovernmental international organisation composed of predominantly Member States neighboring Afghanistan,

²⁷UNAMA, *Mandate*, 2015

²⁸ UN Security Council, *Resolution 2596 (2021)(S/Res/2596)*, 2021

²⁹World Health Organization, *Addressing Violence against Women in Afghanistan: The Health System Response*, 2015

³⁰ UN Security Council, *The Situation in Afghanistan (2021)(S/PV.8834)*, 2021

³¹OCHA Services-ReliefWeb, *Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan Summary 2021*, 2021.

³²WHO, *Afghanistan Crisis*, 2021



has recognized the need for a peaceful and speedy resolution of the Afghan conflict. The organisation reiterated the need for stability in the region, and for international assistance for this goal.³³ It also has called for efficient steps to further expand the rights and opportunities of women in developing business activities and to playing an active role in the SCO economies through its forum on women's education and poverty alleviation³⁴. Global support of this region is imperative to facilitate refugee assistance for all Afghan displaced people, especially women and children who are often the most vulnerable throughout the migration process.

Conclusion

The women of Afghanistan are currently in need of global assistance as their rights remain unguaranteed and their access to basic necessities and/or safe passages outside of the country are also largely hampered. UN Women must come up with solutions to facilitate the protection of Afghan women's rights and access to aid, so that they are better able to further assist in the resolution of the Afghanistan conflict and maintain influence as citizens within their country. How can Afghan women get better access to aid? How can these women's safe passage to other countries be facilitated? How can Afghan women's perspective be included into this process?

³³SCOS, *JOINT STATEMENT of Foreign Ministers of SCO Member States on the results of the meeting in the format of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group*, 2021

³⁴SCOS, *SCO Secretary-General takes part in the SCO forum on women's education and poverty alleviation*, 2021

