



# UNWOMEN

## STUDY GUIDE

### ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL MEDICINE IN LOW-RESOURCE COUNTRIES

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to HASMUN 2025 — a journey that goes far beyond a typical Model United Nations conference.

This year, we invite you to become part of an experience built on diplomacy, dialogue, and the determination to create change. HASMUN has long stood as a platform for driven individuals to challenge perspectives, develop leadership, and speak for the world they envision. In every committee room, in every debate, we believe your voice has the power to shape not only resolutions, but real ideas for the future.

Whether this is your first MUN or one of many, we encourage you to approach each session with openness, curiosity, and commitment. The friendships you form, the ideas you exchange, and the challenges you overcome will stay with you long after the final gavel falls.

On behalf of the entire Secretariat, we are thrilled to have you with us. Prepare to question, to collaborate, and to grow.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Warm regards,  
Nazrin Sadigova  
Secretary-General  
HASMUN 2025

## 2. Letter from the Committee Board

Esteemed delegates,

It is our utmost honor to welcome you to the UNWOMEN Committee of HASTRAIN'25. We are delighted to have you join us for what promises to be a journey of meaningful debate, thoughtful diplomacy, and transformative ideas. Your decision to be part of this committee reflects your commitment to advancing gender equality and your *readiness* to engage with one of the most urgent challenges confronting the international community today.

This year's agenda, "Eliminating Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces and Conflict Zones," lies at the heart of UNWOMEN's mandate. Gender-based violence is a pervasive global issue that transcends borders, cultures, and socioeconomic divides. It affects millions—primarily women and girls—and its impacts extend far beyond the individual, undermining social cohesion, public safety, and peacebuilding efforts. In conflict zones, sexual violence is weaponized to terrorize communities and erode social fabric. In public spaces, everyday harassment persists as an often-overlooked barrier to equality, mobility, and personal freedom.

In this committee, we expect you delegates to not only understand the structural roots of these injustices but also to imagine innovative, intersectional, and survivor-centered solutions. We encourage you to think critically, act collaboratively, and approach this agenda with sensitivity, empathy, and intellectual rigor. Remember that effective policymaking demands both analytical depth and an unwavering commitment to human dignity.

To give you a head-start, you can find some videos attached below that might help you in understanding past initiatives, the agenda item overall, past actions and so on. We are excited to embark on this journey with you and look forward to seeing how you will transform challenges into opportunities for meaningful progress!

United Nations. (2019b, February 25). *Sexual and gender-based violence in Conflict - Press conference (25 Feb 2019)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0exDJvdoJpU>

The Oxford University Politics Blog. (2014, January 27). *Gendered violence in conflict* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBH8ce1\\_cno](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBH8ce1_cno)

KMOP Social Net. (2022, August 2). *GBV - Forms of Gender Based violence* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu8Zz3AWbiQ>

Should you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us through [saritasgulce@gmail.com](mailto:saritasgulce@gmail.com) about the committee, agenda item, or anything in particular.

Warm regards,

*UNWOMEN Committee Board*

### 3. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Programme for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UNWOMEN, is a United Nations agency charged with working for gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women is charged with advocating for the rights of women and girls, and focusing on a number of issues, including violence against women and violence against LGBT people.

UN Women was established by a merger of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, established in 1976) and other agencies and became operational in 2011. The organization operates under a governance structure and has an executive board representing different regions.

UN Women's mandate is built upon four core pillars:

Supporting intergovernmental bodies in the formulation of global standards and norms on gender equality.

Assisting Member States in implementing these standards through technical expertise, policy frameworks, and capacity-building.

Leading and coordinating the UN system's work on gender equality to ensure cohesive, effective, and inclusive action.

Empowering women and girls worldwide, especially those facing intersecting forms of discrimination such as conflict-related violence, poverty, displacement, and restrictive social norms.

Guided by landmark documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Women has played a vital role in facing a worldwide net of issues based on gender equality.

The UN-Women Executive Board is made up of representatives from 41 Member States elected to three-year terms by the UN Economic and Social Council, with the following regional allocation and number of members: Africa (10), Asia and the Pacific (10), Eastern Europe (4), Latin America and the Caribbean (6), Western Europe and other States (5), and contributing countries (6).

#### 4. Introduction to the Agenda Item

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive violations of human rights globally. It encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse directed at individuals based on their gender or perceived gender, and it disproportionately affects women and girls. However, men, boys, and gender-diverse individuals are also targeted, particularly in conflict, detention, or coercive settings.

This agenda item addresses two interlinked contexts in which GBV is widespread: public spaces and conflict zones. In public spaces; streets, transportation systems, schools, and workplaces... sexual harassment, assault, and intimidation restrict freedom of movement and civic participation, undermining equality and social cohesion. Meanwhile, in conflict zones, sexual violence is often used deliberately as a tool of war or oppression, aimed at destabilizing communities, humiliating individuals, and perpetuating long-term trauma. High-profile examples include the abuse of detainees in Abu Ghraib, the systemic exploitation of “comfort women” during World War II, and ongoing acts of repression and sexual violence against civilians in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other conflict-affected regions.

Efforts to combat GBV must therefore be multidimensional. They include strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, improving safety in public spaces, ensuring survivor-centered support, and holding perpetrators accountable under international law. Delegates will be challenged to propose solutions that are both practical and comprehensive, addressing immediate protection needs while promoting long-term prevention and cultural change.

#### 5. Key Terminology

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.

**Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV):** As defined by the UN Secretary-General, this refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons when committed in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual violence/exploitation.

**Survivor-Centered Approach:** This is a principle of engagement that places the rights, needs, and desires

of the survivor at the center of any intervention. It necessitates that services (medical, legal, psychosocial) are accessible, sensitive, and do not re-traumatize the individual. It shifts the narrative from "victimhood" to "agency."

**The Continuum of Violence:** A sociological concept suggesting that violence against women in war is not an isolated event but rather an escalation of the violence women face in "peacetime." Structural inequalities in public spaces during peace create the foundation for mass rape during war.

**Impunity:** In the context of human rights, impunity refers to the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice. It creates a cycle where crimes are repeated because perpetrators know they will face no consequences.

**Femicide:** The intentional killing of women or girls because they are female. It is often the ultimate act in a continuum of gender-based violence.

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA):** Often used in the context of UN Peacekeeping or humanitarian aid workers abusing their position of power to demand sexual acts in exchange for food, medicine, or protection.

## 6. Background and Historical Context

The weaponization of the human body is as old as warfare itself, yet the international recognition of this act as a crime is a relatively modern development. To understand the present crisis, one must analyze the historical trajectory of how female bodies have been viewed in conflict and public spheres.

**The Historical "Spoils of War"** For centuries, military doctrines tacitly accepted the rape of women and the looting of property as the "spoils of war." From the Roman "Rape of the Sabine Women" to the medieval conquests, sexual access to the women of a defeated nation was seen as a reward for soldiers and a method to humiliate the defeated men. It was viewed through a patriarchal lens: the crime was not against the woman's bodily autonomy, but against the "property" of her father or husband.

**The Public Sphere as a Male Domain** Historically, the "public" space (agora, streets, parliament, battlefields) was coded as male, while the "private" space (the home) was coded as female. Women entering public spaces were often viewed as "transgressors" who forfeited their right to protection.

today, whether for work, protest, or leisure, harassment often serves as a punitive mechanism to "put them back in their place."

The Turning Point: The 1990s The conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia and the Rwandan Genocide fundamentally shifted the narrative. In Bosnia, "rape camps" were established as a systematic policy of ethnic cleansing. In Rwanda, an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women were raped during the genocide.

These atrocities forced the UN Security Council to finally acknowledge that sexual violence was not an accidental byproduct of war, but a strategic tactic of warfare used to terrorize populations, break community bonds, and alter ethnic lineages.

## 7. Prevalence and Trends of Gender-Based Violence

The Shadow Pandemic While often invisible, the statistics present a harrowing reality. The World Health Organization estimates that nearly 1 in 3 women (30%) globally have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence. This figure does not merely represent domestic violence; a significant portion occurs in public transport, marketplaces, and educational institutions.

### Trends in Conflict Zones

Strategic Rape: Armed groups continue to use CRSV to displace populations. By terrorizing women, they force entire villages to flee, effectively clearing territory without engaging in traditional combat.

Targeting of Men and Boys: While disproportionately affecting women, sexual violence against men is increasingly documented (e.g., in Syria and the Central African Republic) as a method to emasculate the enemy and destroy social cohesion.

Extremist Ideologies: Groups like ISIS (Da'esh) and Boko Haram have institutionalized sexual slavery, justifying it through twisted theological interpretations to recruit fighters and fund operations through the slave trade.

Trends in Public Spaces Urbanization has brought new risks. "Safe Cities" initiatives reveal that women plan their transit routes not based on speed, but on safety, often avoiding essential economic opportunities due to the threat of harassment. Furthermore, the rise of Technology-Facilitated GBV (TFGBV), including doxxing, cyber-stalking, and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, has turned the digital public square into a hostile environment for women.

## 8. Past Cases

To formulate effective resolutions, the Committee must analyze historical precedents where systems failed to protect individuals.

### 8.1. Abu Ghraib Scandal (2003-2004)

Following the US invasion of Iraq, images leaked from the Abu Ghraib prison revealing the torture of Iraqi detainees by US military personnel. While much of the discourse focused on physical torture, the

abuse was inherently gendered and sexual. Detainees were stripped naked, forced to masturbate, piled into naked pyramids, and threatened with rape.

Significance: This case demonstrated that sexual violence is not limited to "undisciplined" militias in developing nations; it can be institutionalized within the world's most powerful militaries. It utilized sexual humiliation to "feminize" the enemy, exploiting Arab cultural taboos regarding nudity and masculinity to break the prisoners psychologically.

### 8.2. Comfort Women in Imperial Japan (1932-1945)

The "Comfort Women" system remains one of the most organized examples of state-sponsored sexual slavery in history. The Imperial Japanese Army coerced, abducted, or lured an estimated 200,000 women, primarily from Korea, China, and the Philippines, into "Comfort Stations."

Systemic Nature: This was not random soldier violence; it was bureaucratic. Doctors inspected women for STIs to protect the soldiers, not the women. Transportation of these women was logged in military manifests as "war supplies."

Post-War Failure: The Tokyo Tribunals (1946) largely ignored these crimes. It took decades of activism by survivors (the *Halmoni*) for the issue to gain global attention. The lack of a direct, official state apology and reparations from Japan remains a massive diplomatic point of contention in East Asia today.

### 8.3. Soviet "Field Brothels" and Mass Rape (WWII)

During the "Great Patriotic War," the Red Army's advance into Germany was marked by mass sexual violence. An estimated 2 million German women were raped in 1945 alone.

The "PPZh" Phenomenon: Within the Soviet ranks, there existed the phenomenon of "Campaign Wives"

or *Pohodno-Polevesaya Zhena* (PPZh). These were women (nurses, signalers) who were coerced into sexual relationships with officers in exchange for protection or better rations.

Significance: This case highlights the complexity of "consent" in conflict. Even within the "liberating" army, female soldiers were subjected to sexual exploitation by their own commanders, a history that was suppressed in the Soviet Union for decades.

### 8.4. "Lagerbordelle" - Nazi Concentration Camps (1942-1945)

Perhaps the most perverse intersection of misogyny and capitalism was the *Sonderbau* (Special Buildings) system. Heinrich Himmler ordered the establishment of brothels inside concentration camps (including Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald).

The Mechanism: Female prisoners (mostly defined as "asocials" or political prisoners from Ravensbrück) were promised better treatment or release (a lie) if they volunteered. They were then used to "incentivize" male forced laborers to work harder.

The Double Stigma: These women were raped by the Nazi regime, but after the war, they were often denied status as "political victims" because they were stigmatized as prostitutes. This case exemplifies how the state can commodify women's bodies as essentially "productivity bonuses."

## 8.5. Syrian Government Prisons (2011-Present) The UN Independent International Commission of

Inquiry on Syria has documented that the Syrian regime used sexual violence as a matter of policy.

Tactics: In detention centers run by intelligence branches, rape is used during interrogation. The threat of raping female relatives is frequently used to force male detainees to confess.

Social Death: In conservative societies, the stigma of rape can lead to "social death," divorce, or honor killings. The regime weaponized this stigma, knowing that raping women would destroy the social fabric of opposition communities.

## 8.6. "Morality Police" in Iran (The Case of Mahsa Amini) The death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini in September

2022 while in the custody of the *Gasht-e Ershad* (Guidance Patrol) sparked a global movement.

State-Sanctioned Public Violence: This case illustrates violence in public spaces sanctioned by law.

When the state mandates strict dress codes and empowers police to enforce them physically, the state itself becomes the perpetrator of GBV. The subsequent crackdown on protesters involved documented cases of sexual violence against female detainees to silence dissent.

## 9. Past Actions and International Legal Frameworks

The international community has established a robust, albeit imperfect, legal architecture to combat these crimes.

The Geneva Conventions (1949) and Additional Protocols (1977) As the bedrock of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the Geneva Conventions were among the first to legally codify the protection of civilians.

Article 27 of the Fourth Convention: Explicitly states that women "shall be at all times humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault."

Critical Analysis: While a landmark inclusion, the language of "honour" is now viewed by legal scholars as problematic. It implies that the crime of rape is an affront to a woman's reputation or her family's standing, rather than a violent violation of her bodily autonomy and physical integrity. Nevertheless, this article established the legal obligation of occupying powers to prevent sexual violence.

Additional Protocols: Protocols I and II (1977) further strengthened these protections, prohibiting "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault" in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

CEDAW (1979) - The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Often described as the "International Bill of Rights for Women," CEDAW is the most comprehensive treaty on women's human rights.

The Missing Link: Interestingly, the original 1979 text of CEDAW did not explicitly mention violence against women, focusing instead on political and economic rights. This gap was addressed later.

General Recommendation No. 19 (1992): This was a historic update where the CEDAW Committee formally interpreted the definition of "discrimination" to include gender-based violence. It clarified that violence against women is a mechanism that maintains women's subordination to men. It legally bound state parties to act with "due diligence" to prevent, investigate, and punish acts of violence, whether perpetrated by the state or by private individuals.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) The adoption of the Rome Statute was a revolutionary moment in international criminal law, marking the end of centuries of impunity for sexual violence in war.

Codification of Crimes: Prior to 1998, rape was often prosecuted merely as "torture" or "ill-treatment." The Rome Statute elevated sexual violence to a distinct category. It explicitly lists rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity as both War Crimes (Article 8) and Crimes Against Humanity (Article 7).

Jurisprudence: The Statute drew heavily from the precedents set by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), specifically the *Akayesu* case, which was the first to define rape as an act of genocide. The Rome Statute solidified the legal principle that sexual violence can be used to destroy a group of people, in whole or in part.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) This resolution is the foundation of the "Women, Peace, and Security" (WPS) agenda. It represented a paradigm shift in how the Security Council viewed women in conflict: not just as victims to be protected, but as active agents of peace.

The Four Pillars: The resolution is built on four pillars: Prevention (of conflict and GBV), Participation (of women in peace processes), Protection (of women's rights in war), and Relief/Recovery.

Operational Mandate: UNSCR 1325 mandates that gender perspectives be mainstreamed into all UN peacekeeping operations. It calls for more women to be deployed as peacekeepers and police, on the evidence that female presence in security forces often encourages local women to report crimes of sexual violence.

UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) While Resolution 1325 was a general framework, Resolution 1820 was a targeted response to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Security Imperative: This resolution explicitly linked sexual violence to the maintenance of international peace and security. This means the Security Council can impose sanctions against individuals or groups who commit rape during conflicts.

Ending Amnesty: Crucially, UNSCR 1820 calls for an end to the tradition of granting amnesty to sexual violence perpetrators during peace negotiations. It established that sexual violence crimes are excluded from amnesty provisions, ensuring that warlords cannot "trade" peace for immunity from prosecution for rape.

Command Responsibility: It emphasizes that military commanders can be held criminally liable for sexual violence committed by their subordinates if they failed to prevent it, reinforcing the chain of

## 10. Shortcomings and Failed Actions

Despite these frameworks, the reality on the ground remains grim. The Committee must address *why* these laws fail.

1. The "Peace vs. Justice" Dilemma In peace negotiations, amnesty is often granted to warlords to end the fighting. Crimes of sexual violence are frequently traded away as "collateral damage" to secure a ceasefire. This leaves survivors without justice and empowers perpetrators to enter post-war governments (e.g., in the DRC or South Sudan).
2. Lack of Funding for Reparations While tribunals may convict a criminal, survivors rarely receive reparations. The Global Survivors Fund exists, but it is voluntary and underfunded. Justice without material support (medical care, housing, economic aid) is incomplete for a survivor living in poverty.
3. The Definition of "Public Space" Laws protecting women in public spaces often lag behind reality. In many jurisdictions, "upskirting" or digital harassment remains in a legal grey area. Furthermore, urban planning is rarely gender-responsive; unlit streets and lack of separate sanitation facilities in refugee camps continue to facilitate violence.
4. Underreporting and Stigma The burden of proof often rests on the victim. In conflict zones where the judicial system has collapsed, reporting a crime to the police (who might be the perpetrators) is impossible. The culture of victim-blaming means that reporting violence often brings more danger to the survivor than silence.

## 11. Conclusion

The elimination of sexual harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) is frequently mischaracterized as a niche social concern or solely a "women's issue." This is a dangerous simplification. As the evidence throughout this guide illustrates, GBV is a fundamental **security imperative**. When the bodily autonomy of half the population is systematically violated, whether in the private sphere of the home, the public sphere of the city, or the chaotic sphere of the battlefield, the very foundations of stability, economic development, and peace are eroded. History has demonstrated, from the organized "comfort stations" of Imperial Japan to the darkened cells of Abu Ghraib and the streets of modern metropolises, that the tolerance of such violence is the canary in the coal mine for the moral and political collapse of a society.

Violence against women is not an accident of war; it is often its very architecture. It is used to humiliate enemies, dismantle community bonds, and sow terror that lasts for generations. In peacetime, harassment in public spaces acts as a barrier to women's full economic and political participation, effectively disenfranchising millions from shaping the future of their nations. Therefore, the fight against GBV is inextricable from the fight for democracy, economic prosperity, and sustainable peace. There can be no true security in a state where women live in fear of the very institutions designed to protect them.

Delegates of the UNWOMEN committee, you are tasked with a heavy and solemn responsibility. In this committee, you do not merely represent the interests of your respective nations; you hold the proxy for millions of silenced voices. You are confronting a crime that flourishes in the shadows of stigma and the silence of complicity. The "culture of impunity", where perpetrators fear no consequence and survivors fear no justice, has been the status quo for too long. It is a status quo that has been upheld by weak legal frameworks, lack of political will, and the prioritizing of "hard security" over human rights.

Consequently, your mandate in this conference must be to move beyond the rhetoric of condemnation. The international community does not need another resolution that simply states "rape is a heinous crime"; the world already knows this. What is required now is the political courage to **operationalize** justice. We need resolutions that create robust mechanisms to enforce existing international laws, that compel member states to prosecute non-state actors, and that establish sustainable funding models for survivor-centered support systems. You must debate how to dismantle the patriarchal structures that view women's bodies as collateral damage or public property.

As you enter committee sessions, remember that the victims of the past, from the survivors of the Holocaust brothels to the women of Rwanda and the protesters in Iran, are not merely historical footnotes. They are witnesses waiting for justice. Furthermore, the potential victims of the future depend entirely on the preventative frameworks you will design. Your resolutions have the potential to shift the paradigm from reactive outrage to proactive protection. Let your debate be guided not just by national policy, but by the urgent necessity of human dignity. The time for observation is over; the time for tangible, enforceable action is now.

## 12. Questions to be Addressed (QTBA)

**Legal Accountability:** How can the international community prosecute non-state actors (e.g., terrorist groups like Boko Haram) for GBV when they are not signatories to international treaties?

**Reparations:** What financial mechanisms can be established to provide reparations to survivors of historical sexual violence (e.g., WWII era) when the perpetrators are long dead or the state refuses to pay?

**Urban Safety:** What specific urban planning policies can be mandated in developing nations to reduce sexual harassment in public transport and public spaces?

**Digital Violence:** How should UNWOMEN address the rising threat of "cyber-GBV" and the lack of international laws governing social media platforms regarding the safety of women?

**Peacekeeping:** How can the UN ensure that its own Peacekeeping forces are held accountable for

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the regions they are sent to protect?

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