

MUN

CSW BACKGROUND GUIDE

AUSMUN 2021



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH WELCOME LETTER



Dear Delegates and Faculty Advisors,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to the American University of Sharjah Model United Nations (AUSMUN) 2021. As an organization led by the students of AUS, AUSMUN has had the privilege of hosting some of the biggest and most diverse MUN conferences in this region. Our 2020 conference saw over 1000 delegate registrations from more than 45 national and international institutions!

Adapting to a New Normal, Promoting Resilience: given the turbulent year of 2020, there was no other theme which could have fit our present conditions better. A small outbreak in Wuhan exactly a year back has now trickled down into a global catastrophe which has two million dead, leaving a trail of broken lives in its wake. Looking at the severely distorted life that has become our 'new normal', some may question whether it could all have been avoided. Whether we could have been better prepared. And the broader goal of our conference is to do exactly that: teach the upcoming generation to question current policies in the hopes of preventing another similar global catastrophe.

This background guide has been formulated by your chairs along with the research team to provide you with a concise overview of the topics chosen.

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH WELCOME LETTER

The guide is initially divided into two sections based on the two topics and is further split into logical components. Firstly, the Summary and History section acts as an introduction to the issue. Secondly, the Discourse on the Issue section establishes a link between the issue, its implications, significance, and the United Nations Charter. Lastly, the Past International Organization (IO) Actions and Latest Developments section elaborates on the previous actions that have been taken, which can be used by delegates as a stepping stone to come up with their own solutions to the issues. At the end of each topic, delegates will find sections of questions and suggestions that aim to guide the process of research.

Delegates are greatly encouraged to expand beyond the guide and research about their country and topics in order to construct well founded arguments during debate. The delegate handbook contains a number of tips on how to research and addresses a vast array of common concerns. Finally, let me use this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all those who have helped create the document you are reading right now: Your wonderful moderators, the AUSMUN Research Team, and not to mention the AUSMUN Media team who have done an incredible job in designing and formatting the Background Guides.

I wish you the very best in preparing for the conference. If you have any queries at all, or need any specific help in researching for your topics, do not hesitate to contact research@ausmun.com

Sincerely,
Julia Jose
Director of Research
AUSMUN 2021

MODERATORS



Zahraa Jaber

Ghofrane Lahib

Irene Franco

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Moyikkal

WELCOME DELEGATES!

We are in unprecedented times, and AUSMUN is something that brings us a sense of normalcy.

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is with utmost pleasure and honor that we, the moderators of the CSW committee, welcome you all to AUSMUN 2021. We are enthusiastically waiting to see you all during the committee sessions, and to hear your heated discussions and debates in regards to the issues we will be tackling during this year's conference. We understand the challenges that come with being a delegate, but we assure you that we will be working alongside you every step of the way. While we will do our best to ensure that the committee is diplomatic and functioning efficiently, we also expect each delegate to come in with a complete understanding of his/her country's foreign policy and positions in order to maximize the efficiency of the debates that will take place.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the primary intergovernmental body that has been exclusively devoted and committed to the improvement and advocacy of gender equality and the empowerment of women around the globe. It was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1946 and has been addressing all types of matters related to the conditions in which women live throughout the world while promoting their rights and shaping worldwide values on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It holds authority to “prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women’s rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields” and to suggest proposals “on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women’s rights.” Hence, based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the correlations to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

the CSW committee takes into consideration one main theme to be prioritized at their yearly held session.

With all of that being said, we would like to reiterate how thrilled we are as we count down the days for AUSMUN'21. We absolutely cannot wait to meet you all and we look forward to convening in the committee with all of you.

Should you have any concerns or inquiries regarding the topics, committee or the conference in general, please do not hesitate to contact us at zajaberr@gmail.com. Best of luck!



Summary and History of issue

Historically, there have been various traditional and customary practices that infringe upon the health and safety of women and girls. Traditions and customary practices are quite commonly enforced on members of a community by institutions around the world. Most of these traditional practices are associated with strong values and beliefs held by the members. While some traditional practices promote a communal sentiment, others may cause serious and harmful impacts on women and girls. The United Nations Human Rights Council has identified certain traditional practices that cause serious health implications for girls. “Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a process whereby there is a partial or complete removal of external female genitalia or causing injury to female genital organs for non-medical reasons” (Cottingham & Kismodi, 2009, p. 1). FGM was one of the most common traditional and customary practices that infringed upon the health and safety of women and girls. However, the traditional practices that threatened the health of women and girls were not limited to FGM. Other traditional practices were forced feeding of women, early marriage, practices that prevent women from controlling their own fertility, traditional birth practices female infanticide, early pregnancy, and dowry practices (OHCHR, n. d.). These inhumane practices violated basic human rights of women belonging to various societies around the world.

The significance of these issues was questioned by the United Nations agencies starting early on in the 1950s. However, due to a lack of formal research and awareness these traditional practices continued among various communities. Fortunately, recent times have resulted in sufficient research to declare that traditional practices cause serious health implications. Female genital mutilation and other identified traditional practices are known to cause physical and emotional harm to women and girls.

These practices are a clear violation of their basic human rights. FGM practices can lead to hemorrhage, pain, and infection as short-term issues. The long-term issues are accidental cuts to organs, keloid formation, infertility, and obstructed labour. In certain rural areas, FGM is often performed by untrained elderly females who may use unsterilized instruments for the procedure. In many cases, this has led to the death of a child. Apart from the physical harm, it has also been proven that these practices can cause psychological harm such as nightmares (OHCHR, n. d.). Other customary and traditional practices can have similar and additional health implications in comparison to the FGM.

There are various factors that led to the emergence of traditional and customary practices and most of these factors are attributed to sociocultural factors among communities. FGM is often considered as a way to prepare a young girl for marriage and adulthood. It is considered acceptable because it is restricting females from extramarital sexual acts; to ensure the virginity and chastity of females. Additionally, FGM is associated with cultural ideals of femineity and modesty. Certain countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Central African Republic consider FGM to be a social norm and there is pressure to conform to these acceptable norms (“Female Genital Mutilation Key Facts”, 2020). Most traditional and customary practices are thought of as sensitive family matters that should not be publicized. Thereby, allowing the practices to freely happen within various communities.

Discourse on the issue

Traditional and customary practice forced upon young girls and women such as FGM, early marriage, forced feeding, nutritional taboos, female infanticide, controlling fertility and more are a violation of human rights laws. These practices represent deep-rooted issues with inequality between men and women. On a global level, the continuation of extreme practices such as FGM promotes gender equality. FGM is also an issue that impacts sectors such as health, education, finance, justice, and women’s affairs (“Female Genital Mutilation Key Facts”, 2020).

On an individual level, women and young girls have their lives put at risk due to traditional and customary practices. The General Assembly in 1979 the convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which explicitly states a national agenda against that discrimination of women through shaping gender roles and family-related based on traditions. It is also the first human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women (“United Nations Gender Equality”, 2020). The traditional practices forced on women and girls especially the prevention of female genital mutilation are one of the major targets of focus under Goal 5: Gender Equality for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (“Gender equality and women’s empowerment,” n.d.).

International response in the form of awareness, education and changes in public policy is one of the ways FGM and other harmful practices can be eliminated. Some of the progress at the international, national, and sub-national levels are revised legal framework which includes a law against FGM in 26 countries in Africa and the Middle East, as well as 33 other countries with migrant population are seen to practice FGM (“Female Genital Mutilation Key Facts”, 2020). On February 6th, 2012, the UN General Assembly declared the day to be “International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation” This was done to create awareness and gather the support youth from all around the world under the theme: “Unleashing Youth Power: One decade of accelerating actions for zero female genital mutilation.” The United Nations strives for the eradication of FGM by 2030 in line with Sustainable Development Goal Number 5. The youth have become an incremental part of creating change around the world. Therefore, they have been actively integrated into the fight against FGM (United Nations, n.d.).

Past Actions by UN, International Organizations (IO) and NGOs

Due to better recognition of traditional and customary practices as harmful, there have been improved responses to these issues in recent years. In 1993 at the world conference on Human Rights in Vienna 1993 the slogan “Women’s rights are Human Rights”, was adopted. The General Assembly in 1993 made a declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Moreover, international communities have started becoming aware that these practices violate causes extreme forms of inequality and violate the fundamental human rights of women and girls (OHCHR, n. d.)

Although it is a long to the complete eradication of FGM, many notable improvements on the issue have resulted through the efforts of the UN, IO, and NGOs. In 2007, UNFPA and UNICEF initiated a programme on Female Genital Mutilation or cutting to abandon the practice. This program focuses on seventeen countries in the African and Middle East region while supporting major global initiatives. Over the years more than 3.3 million girls and women are supported and have received proper care through this program (“United Nations”, n.d.). In 2008, WHO with nine United Nations partners issued a statement for the elimination of FGM. In December 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on eliminating FGM (“Female genital mutilation key facts”, 2020). The Spotlight Initiative by The European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) is focusing on eliminating all forms of violation against women and girls around the world, including traditional and customary practices (The Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls, 2020). According to reports published by the UN in 2017, the rates of girls between 15 – 19 years of age who are subjected to FGM have dropped from 1 in 2 in 2000 to 1 in 3 (“United Nations Gender Equality”, 2020). There are national and international NGOs and IO that work towards protecting girls and women around the world from the practice of FGM. Daughters of Eve, End FGM European campaign, FGM National Clinical Group, and Global Alliance against FGM are few examples of NGOs and IOs working for the fight against FGM (“12 NGOs fighting against female genital mutilation,” 2018).

Questions and suggestions for further research

- What are some measures to achieve complete eradication of FGM by the year 2030?
- What are some of the reasons why FGM prevails despite improving legal frame works that bans the practice?
- What are the roles men play in the eradication of FGM? How can they help in the process?
- What are the psychological impacts women and girls face with traditional and customary practices?
- How has better education led to the realization that FGM violates human rights and promotes gender inequality?
- Traditional and customary practices that infringe the health of girls and women beyond FGM.
- Very recent programmes and initiatives that are fighting the practice of FGM.
- Social media campaigns run by UN and NGOs to create awareness for FGM.
- Physical health impacts of FMG and other traditional practices.
- FGM practices among immigrant population in western and eastern countries

Summary and History of issue

As the world has constantly seen by past crises, its impacts are – unfortunately, never gender-neutral. With that being said, COVID-19 is no exception to this. Based on what we know from previous crises, the consequences of this pandemic will outlast the pandemic itself. In general, an increase in unemployment results in people going back to outdated and stereotypical gender roles. While unemployed women generally are favored to take care of the household and the children, unemployed men are instead favored more heavily in the hiring process, even though jobs are scarce. It has been seen during the American 2008 Economic Crisis, in which government funds toward relief efforts were taken from vast cuts to social services and benefits, with substantial impacts especially on women (UN Women, 2020).

According to the international World Values Survey, more than half the respondents that reside in countries in South Asia and the MENA region agreed that men are the ones with a greater right and priority to have a job than women when jobs are limited. When asked the same question, one in six respondents residing in developed countries - such as Switzerland and Germany - gave the same answer. These attitudes shape how negatively women are impacted economically due to crises. A UN policy brief published in April 2020 stated that the pandemic is “deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic”, emphasizing how “across the globe, women earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs, are more likely to be employed in the informal sector. They have less access to social protection and are the majority of single-parent households. Their capacity to absorb economic shocks is therefore less than that of men.” The reason women are mostly affected by economic crises – that follow health crises, is because they tend to earn less.

The gender wage gap is a term that refers to the variance and difference in earnings between men and women (Bleiweis, 2020). While there is an average wage gap of 18 cents between women and men of all races, there are also significant differences such as race and ethnicity that increase it as well.

In Europe and Central Asia, 25 percent of self-employed women have lost their jobs, compared to 21 percent of men since the start of this pandemic. Projections from the International Labour Organization suggest that almost 140 million full-time jobs are at great risk of being lost due to the pandemic, with women's employment being 19 percent more at risk than men. Antra Bhatt, a Statistics Specialist has said: "The resurgence of extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic has revealed women's precarious economic security." The COVID-19 pandemic has induced a surge in poverty which consequently widened the gender poverty gap. This means that now, even more women will be pushed into poverty instead of men.

Even though every single person is facing unparalleled challenges during this time, women are bearing the burden and impact of the economic and social fallout that COVID-19 has caused.

Discourse on the issue

Senior Research and Data Specialists have stated that "For the last 22 years, extreme poverty globally has been declining. Then came COVID-19, and with it, massive job losses, shrinking of economies and loss of livelihoods, particularly for women. Weakened social protection systems have left many of the poorest in society unprotected, with no safeguards to weather the storm," so, alongside the issues this pandemic has caused, come to the issues linked with how countries and governments are responding to the pandemic. It is estimated that around 243 million women have experienced sexual or physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner at some point over the past months following the beginning of the pandemic (UN Women, 2020). Within 1 week of France implementing its lockdown, reports of domestic violence had surged by 30%. It was a similar story in dozens of other countries.

These women have been trapped with their abuser for months in the end with no shelter from the cruelty and abuse inflicted upon them. Before the coronavirus pandemic, millions of women were already struggling to support themselves and their families on inadequate and insufficient wages. After the coronavirus pandemic, the lockdown has triggered unemployment rates to increase, thus leading to millions of jobs disappearing. Working mothers were already dealing with the majority of the weight a family holds. Their expected responsibilities include taking care of their children, keeping their house clean and tidy, cooking food, and pleasing their husband all while working a job. COVID-19 has caused various disruptions to daycare centers that mothers depend on, schools, and after-school extracurricular activities that keep their children busy as they're working, or at their jobs. These interferences have resulted in mothers taking on more childcare responsibilities, thus causing them to reduce their working or having to leave their jobs entirely. These women who are marginalized and underprivileged face an even greater risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19, and even though "70 percent of health workers and first responders are women, and yet, they are not at par with their male counterparts. At 28 percent, the gender pay gap in the health sector is higher than the overall gender pay gap." (UN Women, 2020).

Past Actions by UN, International Organizations (IO) and NGOs

The UN Women committee has rapidly generated a well thought out targeted response in order to alleviate the vast ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has created a crisis on women and girls, hoping that they are eventually able to ensure that this recovery and help will also benefit them in the long-term. The response to COVID-19 carried out by the UN Women also includes "policy advice and programmatic interventions and is part of the broader UN-wide response." (UN Women, 2020). According to the UN Women, their response is focused on five primary goals that include, "gender-based violence, including domestic violence, social protection and economic stimulus packages that serve women and girls, people's support and practicing equal sharing of care work, women and girls leading and participating in COVID-19 response planning and

decision-making, and data and coordination mechanisms to include gender perspectives.” In many countries, including ones such as Lebanon, Bosnia, Palestine, Fiji and Egypt, UN Women is undertaking a various swift assessment of violence against women since the Safe and Fair programme in the Asia Pacific reported a great increase in the risk of sexual exploitation and violence ever since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN Women is also working alongside many countries such as South Africa, Georgia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Arab States in order to focus on the economic sectors that employ women who have been affected by the pandemic. They are also offering virtual learning courses in order to support women-owned independent businesses that have been severely affected by the coronavirus. The UN Women is also working on the social stereotypes that hold women back and instead started a #HeForSheAtHome campaign in order to encourage men to step up to their duties and responsibilities in the house as well. All in all, the UN Women committee has been working hand in hand with various sources of help, such as other UN entities and many countries’ governments in order to ensure that women and girls are receiving the assistance that they need.

Questions and suggestions for further research

- How can governments and businesses mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 on women?
- What are the effects of women's unpaid work on the economy?
- How have countries supported gender equality?
- What realistic laws can we implement to better support gender equality?
- Equal pay between men and women in all job sectors.
- Child infrastructure and women's unpaid work.
- Correlation between women's rights and the economy.
- The already existing stereotypes of a woman's role in a society (family, work, etc.)
- Mental health of women affected by the pandemic.



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