

BBIMUN 2026

BLUE BELLS MODEL SCHOOL, GURUGRAM

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Agenda: Addressing Structural Barriers To Gender Equality Amidst Conflict And Displacement

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Letter From The Executive Board

Greetings delegates!

I am immensely pleased to welcome you to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which will be simulated at the BBI Model United Nations 2026. The agenda for this session of UNCSW has been decided as ‘Addressing Structural Barriers To Gender Equality Amidst Conflict and Displacement’.

This background guide will serve as a starting point for your material research. At no point should it be treated as the only source of information that is accessed during your preparation for this committee. The guide, however, does attempt to give direction and guidance to an otherwise vast point of discussion. The prerogative should be to understand the contents of this guide, and then build on your research externally.

Research is incomplete without two things: analysis and connections. In order to meaningfully contribute to this committee, you are expected to ponder over the underlying reasoning for why a fact/statistic/context/circumstance is the way it currently is. Simply regurgitating legal and numeric facts is a common mistake that delegates make. These facts should be presented as evidentiary support for logical arguments, and not as the whole argument itself.

I am certain that this will be an interesting exercise in the pursuit of knowledge, with lots to learn from each other. I look forward to enriching debate, which should be helped by the all-pervasive nature of the issue. In case of any queries, feel free to contact me, and I will try to answer the questions to the best of my abilities.

All the best!

Hiya Mongia

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Chairperson

Nature of Proof/Evidence In Committee

Evidence or proof is acceptable from the following sources:

→ **News Sources:**

State-operated News Agencies – These reports can be used in support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any Country as such, but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are –

1. IRNA (Iran) <http://www.irna.ir/ENIndex.htm> ,
2. BBC (United Kingdom) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>
3. Xinhua News Agency and CCTV (P.R. Of China) <http://cctvnews.cntv.cn/>

→ **Government Reports:**

These reports can be used in a similar way to the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information.

Examples are Government Websites like:

1. State Department of the United States of America: <http://www.state.gov/index.htm>,
2. Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation: <http://www.eng.mil.ru/en/index.htm>,
3. Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Reports: <http://www.un.org/en/members/> (Click on any country to get the website of the Office of its Permanent Representative.)
4. Multilateral Organizations like NATO (<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>), ASEAN (<http://www.aseansec.org/>), OPEC (http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/), etc.

→ **UN Reports:**

All UN Reports are considered credible information or evidence for the Executive Board of the General Assembly.

1. UN Bodies: Like the SC (<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>), GA (<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>), HRC (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>), etc.
2. UN-affiliated bodies like the International Atomic Energy Agency (<http://www.iaea.org/>), World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>), International Committee of the Red Cross (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp>), etc.
3. Treaty Bodies like the Antarctic Treaty System (<http://www.ats.aq/e/ats.htm>), and the International Criminal Court (<http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menus/ICC>).

Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia, Amnesty International, or newspapers like the Guardian, Times of India, etc. be accepted as credible.

Overview Of The Committee

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) acts as the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It works as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and came into being in June 1946. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Understanding the functioning of CSW would help the delegates understand the purpose of the committee while keeping the debate and other activities within certain definitive boundaries. Its current modus operandi or mandate is:

- Convenes a ministerial conference to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights, and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, including through ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and good practices.
- Engages in a general discussion on the status of gender equality, identifying goals attained, achievements made, and efforts underway to close gaps and meet challenges.
- Convenes interactive expert panel discussions and other interactive dialogues on steps and initiatives to accelerate implementation and measures to build capacities for mainstreaming gender equality across policies and programs.
- Considers one priority theme, based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly, and linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Discusses emerging issues, trends, focus areas, and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men, that require timely consideration.
- Agrees on further actions for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by adopting agreed conclusions and resolutions.
- Contributes gender perspectives to the work of other intergovernmental bodies and processes.
- Reports on the aspects relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women, of the agreed main theme of the Economic and Social Council, to contribute to its work.

Introduction To The Agenda

The intersection of armed conflict and forced displacement creates an environment where structural gender inequalities are not merely replicated, but amplified with devastating severity. As the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) recognizes that addressing structural barriers to gender equality amidst conflict and displacement requires comprehensive, legally binding, and financially resourced interventions. Established in 1946 as a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UNCSW has historically shaped global normative standards, from successfully advocating for gender-neutral language in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to drafting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In recent sessions, such as the upcoming CSW 70, the Commission has increasingly focused on the intersections of justice systems, technology, and crisis contexts, recognizing that ensuring and strengthening access to justice is fundamental for women traversing the continuum of conflict. Despite these normative achievements, the practical realization of gender equality in crisis settings remains profoundly obstructed by systemic failures, discriminatory legal architecture, and chronic resource deficits.

The scale of the current global displacement crisis is historically unprecedented. By the end of 2024, the global number of forcibly displaced persons reached an estimated 123.2 million, equating to one in every 67 people on Earth. Although preliminary estimates for the first half of 2025 indicate a marginal decrease to 117.3 million due to return movements in regions such as Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the overarching trajectory reflects a near doubling of global displacement over the past decade. Within these staggering demographic shifts, women and girls disproportionately bear the socio-economic, physical, and psychological burdens of conflict. They account for significant proportions of the internally displaced person (IDP) population which reached 68.3 million globally according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and are uniquely targeted by gender-based violence, systematically excluded from peace negotiations, and chronically underfunded by humanitarian response mechanisms.

Structural barriers to gender equality in these contexts manifest through both deliberate architectural exclusions and the gradual erosion of protective socio-legal systems. Displaced women frequently face statelessness, the revocation or loss of property rights, and exclusion from the formal labor economy. Furthermore, the climate-conflict nexus acts as a threat multiplier, accelerating displacement and exacerbating resource scarcity in highly vulnerable regions such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Women, who often serve as primary resource gatherers and agricultural laborers, find their livelihoods decimated by desertification and erratic rainfall, pushing them further into multidimensional poverty and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation, abduction, and forced marriage by extremist groups.

Addressing these structural barriers requires a radical departure from the traditional framework that views women solely as passive victims of armed conflict. Sustainable peace and recovery depend upon the integration of women as active agents in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. However, empirical data demonstrates a severe and persistent lack of progress in political participation: in 2023, women constituted a mere 9.6% of peace negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. This exclusion occurs despite evidence indicating that peace agreements integrating women as witnesses, signatories, or mediators demonstrate a 20% higher probability of lasting success. Simultaneously, the global political economy of conflict severely undermines women's security; global military expenditure surged to an unprecedented \$2.7 trillion in 2024, starkly contrasting with the chronic, debilitating underfunding of humanitarian appeals and local women's rights organizations.

The agenda before the committee requires delegates to synthesize international humanitarian law, climate adaptation strategies, and economic reform into a comprehensive framework capable of safeguarding women's rights in the most volatile environments on the globe.

Theoretical, Historical, and Legal Foundations

The legal architecture governing women's rights in conflict and displacement is anchored by a complex nexus of international human rights law, international humanitarian law (IHL), and international criminal law. The theoretical foundation of this agenda posits that violence and discrimination against women in conflict zones are not anomalous, spontaneous byproducts of war, but rather acute, magnified manifestations of pre-existing, structural peacetime inequalities.

Historically, the codification of protections against sexual violence in conflict traces back to early instruments of military law, notably the 1863 Lieber Code promulgated during the American Civil War. Articles 44 and 47 of the Lieber Code were remarkably ahead of their time, explicitly prohibiting rape by soldiers in hostile territories and classifying it as a crime punishable by death. However, this early recognition was largely lost in subsequent international tribunals; the post-World War II Nuremberg trials notably omitted any express reference to rape in their judgments. The modern era of protection was catalyzed by the UNCSW's persistent advocacy and the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). Resolution 1325 marked a paradigm shift, formally recognizing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and mandating their systemic inclusion in all phases of peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and conflict resolution.

The WPS agenda has since expanded into a robust normative framework of multiple resolutions, though its implementation remains highly uneven. Complementing the WPS agenda is the CEDAW framework, which functions as the definitive international bill of rights for women. The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations provides authoritative jurisprudence, affirming that state obligations to protect women's rights apply extraterritorially and across the entire conflict continuum, whether in international or non-international armed conflicts. General Recommendation 30 fundamentally obligates states to exercise due diligence in preventing gender-based violence committed by non-state actors and armed groups, and explicitly mandates the inclusion of women in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes, which historically cater almost exclusively to male combatants. Furthermore, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 32 explicitly addresses the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality, and

statelessness. It establishes that gender-based persecution, including systemic discrimination and threats of sexual violence, constitutes a valid ground for refugee status and asylum under international law, compelling states to recognize the unique drivers of female displacement.

At the regional level, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), adopted in 2003, stands as one of the most progressive and comprehensive legal instruments globally. Article 11 of the Protocol explicitly obliges states to protect women in armed conflicts and ensures that acts of sexual violence are classified as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Furthermore, the Maputo Protocol broke new ground globally by guaranteeing comprehensive reproductive rights under Article 14, including the explicit right to medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, or where the pregnancy endangers the life of the mother. The African Union reinforced these protections through the Kampala Convention (2009); specifically, Article 9 legally binds states to protect internally displaced women from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and mandates special measures for reproductive and sexual health. The domestication of the Maputo Protocol has yielded tangible results, such as the Kenyan Constitutional Court upholding the prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and ordering government compensation to survivors for failing to investigate post-election sexual violence, demonstrating the practical utility of regional frameworks.

International criminal jurisprudence has played a critical role in codifying these normative standards into actionable accountability mechanisms, transforming the legal definition of conflict-related sexual violence.

Milestone Case / Legal Instrument	Issuing Body	Year	Jurisprudential Significance / Mandate
Lieber Code (Articles 44 & 47)	United States	1863	Early codification of military law explicitly prohibiting rape and mandating severe punishment.
<i>Prosecutor v. Akayesu</i>	ICTR	1998	First international

Milestone Case / Legal Instrument	Issuing Body	Year	Jurisprudential Significance / Mandate
			conviction for genocide; legally recognized rape and sexual violence as constituent acts of genocide.
UNSCR 1325	UNSC	2000	Established the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, linking gender equality directly to international peace and security.
<i>Prosecutor v. Kunarac</i>	ICTY	2001	Expanded international criminal law by legally defining sexual slavery as a crime against humanity.
Maputo Protocol	African Union	2003	First international treaty to explicitly articulate a woman's right to abortion in cases of rape/incest and mandate protection in conflict.
<i>Bosnia v. Serbia / Croatia v. Serbia</i>	ICJ	2007/2015	Affirmed rape causes serious bodily/mental harm under the Genocide Convention but established extremely high evidentiary thresholds

Milestone Case / Legal Instrument	Issuing Body	Year	Jurisprudential Significance / Mandate
			for state genocidal intent.
CEDAW Gen. Rec. 30 & 32	CEDAW Committee	2013/2014	Extended state obligations to non-state actors and extraterritorial jurisdiction; codified gender-based persecution as a basis for asylum.
<i>Prosecutor v. Ntaganda</i>	ICC	2019	Ruled that IHL protects combatants from sexual violence committed by members of their own armed group, protecting child soldiers from intra-group abuses.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) established a watershed precedent in the *Akayesu* case (1998). Analyzing the conflict under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, the Tribunal marked the first time an international court convicted an individual for genocide, definitively ruling that rape and sexual violence, when committed with the intent to destroy a protected group, constitute acts of genocide. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) subsequently expanded this legal frontier in the *Kunarac* case, defining sexual slavery as a crime against humanity, and in the *Furundžija* case, which affirmed that rape can constitute torture.

More recently, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the *Ntaganda* case (2019) resolved critical jurisdictional ambiguities regarding the scope of victimhood in non-international armed conflicts. The defense argued that war crimes could not be committed by members of

an armed force against members of the same armed force. The ICC Appeals Chamber rejected this, confirming that under Articles 8(2)(b)(xxii) and (e)(vi) of the Rome Statute, members of the same armed group are not excluded as potential victims. Consequently, Bosco Ntaganda was convicted for the rape and sexual slavery of child soldiers within his own militia, firmly establishing that IHL protects combatants from sexual violence committed by their own commanders.

Conversely, jurisprudence from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has demonstrated the stringent, often insurmountable thresholds required to hold states, rather than individuals, accountable for genocidal sexual violence. In both the *Bosnia v. Serbia* (2007) and *Croatia v. Serbia* (2015) judgments, the ICJ recognized that rape and sexual violence inflict serious bodily and mental harm under Article II(b) of the Genocide Convention. However, the ICJ established a high evidentiary burden, ruling in *Croatia v. Serbia* that such acts only constitute the *actus reus* of genocide if they are calculated to contribute to the physical or biological destruction of the protected group, or if they successfully prevent births within the group under Article II(d). This stringent requirement underscores the ongoing legal complexities in translating widespread structural sexual violence into state responsibility for genocide.

Structural, Legal, and Socio-Economic Barriers in Displacement

Displacement fundamentally ruptures the socio-economic structures that support human development, yet this rupture is profoundly and disproportionately gendered. Structural barriers in displacement settings are characterized by institutionalized discrimination, legally enshrined inequalities, and the amplification of restrictive socio-cultural norms that predate the conflict. When populations flee, the loss of documentation, property, and communal support systems disproportionately marginalizes women, embedding them into intractable cycles of multidimensional poverty.

Empirical data highlights the acute economic disenfranchisement of displaced women. In an extensive World Bank and UNHCR analysis of forced displacement across Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan, female-headed households consistently exhibited significantly higher rates of multidimensional poverty compared to male-headed households. Displaced female-headed households face greater intensity of deprivations across health,

education, and living standards. For example, in South Sudan, nearly 24% of multidimensionally poor female-headed households are deprived of 70% or more of the standard welfare indicators.

The intersection of gender and displacement drastically reduces labor market participation and earning potential. In Ethiopia, adult refugees living in female-headed households are 7.5 percentage points less likely to participate in the labor market than their male-headed counterparts. Furthermore, female-headed refugee households demonstrate an overwhelming reliance on humanitarian assistance, with only 13 percent generating most of their income from non-aid sources, severely limiting their economic autonomy.

The Syrian displacement crisis further exemplifies the feminization of poverty in protracted conflicts. Demographic tracking of Syrian refugees in Jordan indicates a stark shift in household composition. Between 2013 and 2018, the proportion of Syrian refugee households headed by a female principal applicant rose from 26 percent to 38 percent. Female single caregivers in these settings face the highest risk of falling into poverty, with their representation in the bottom 40 percent of the economic distribution rising from 38 to 48 percent over the same five-year period. This economic marginalization is structurally compounded by the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic labor. Displaced Syrian women undertake significantly more domestic work than their male counterparts or host community peers. Consequently, adolescent girls in these households are frequently forced to drop out of the formal education system prematurely to support household survival, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty. Furthermore, research indicates that displacement directly escalates domestic violence; forced displacement increases a woman's risk of past-year intimate partner violence by 6 percent, independent of other risk factors.

Socio-Economic Indicator in Displacement	Statistical Impact on Female-Headed Households	Reference Context
Multidimensional Poverty Intensity	24% of female-headed households deprived in >70% of welfare indicators.	South Sudan (IDPs/Refugees)
Labor Market Participation	Adult refugees in female-headed households	Ethiopia (Refugees)

Socio-Economic Indicator in Displacement	Statistical Impact on Female-Headed Households	Reference Context
	7.5% less likely to participate.	
Economic Vulnerability	Female single caregivers in bottom 40% of wealth distribution rose from 38% to 48% (2013-2018).	Jordan (Syrian Refugees)
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	Displacement independently increases IPV risk by 6%.	Multi-country analysis
Educational Attainment	47.3% of girls out of school due to climate/conflict norms.	Sahel Region

Legal barriers related to nationality, identification, and statelessness serve as primary mechanisms of structural exclusion. Refugee and internally displaced women frequently lack foundational legal documentation such as national identity cards, marriage certificates, or property deeds which are strictly required by host nations to access healthcare, formal employment, and legal protection. In many national jurisdictions, highly discriminatory nationality laws prohibit women from passing their citizenship to their children, rendering the offspring of displaced women stateless. This crisis is particularly acute in post-conflict situations where the father is absent, deceased, or unknown. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 32 explicitly outlines how these statutory discriminations exacerbate the vulnerabilities of displaced women, stripping them of a recognized legal identity and the ability to assert their fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, the breakdown of customary and formal property laws during conflict strips women of land tenure and inheritance rights. In many fragile states, customary law dictates that land is owned exclusively by the male head of household. Upon displacement or the death of a husband, widows and female heads of household are frequently dispossessed of their land by surviving male relatives or opportunistic actors. Without legal title or the financial resources to navigate complex, often corrupt transitional justice mechanisms, these women are left destitute, unable to rebuild their agricultural livelihoods or secure housing in the post-conflict phase.

Targeted Vulnerabilities, Protection Gaps, and Essential Services

The vulnerabilities experienced by women and marginalized groups in conflict zones are not incidental collateral damage; they are systematically targeted methodologies of war. Protection gaps arise when high-level international mandates fail to translate into accessible, on-the-ground services, leaving survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) without immediate medical, psychological, or legal recourse. The denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) remains one of the most critical structural barriers to gender equality and physical survival in crisis settings.

The historical understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from a largely overlooked or tacitly accepted byproduct of warfare to a recognized weapon of war and an international crime. Historically, the rape of women by soldiers during wartime was often considered an unfortunate but inevitable accompaniment of war, frequently attributed to the prolonged sexual deprivation of troops or insufficient military discipline. This perspective normalized such atrocities, allowing them to largely remain outside the scope of international legal accountability. However, the 20th century, particularly its latter half, brought a gruesome re-evaluation of this perception. The use of GBV as a deliberate weapon of war was starkly demonstrated during World War II, where both Allied and Axis armies committed rape as a means of terrorizing enemy civilian populations and demoralizing enemy troops. Noteworthy examples include the sexual enslavement of women in territories conquered by the Japanese army and the mass rapes committed against German women by advancing Russian soldiers. The conflicts of the 1990s, particularly in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, were pivotal in exposing the systematic and strategic nature of wartime sexual violence. In the former Yugoslavia, rape was explicitly used as an instrument of ethnic cleansing, with women belonging to subjugated ethnic groups intentionally impregnated by enemy soldiers. In Rwanda, during the 1994 genocide, women of the Tutsi ethnic group were systematically raped by HIV-infected men, a deliberate tactic aimed at destroying communities. These conflicts compelled the international community to confront the reality that sexual violence was not merely a random act but a calculated strategy of warfare, designed to displace, terrorize, and destroy individuals, families, and entire communities.

Drivers of GBV in Conflict:

Conflict and instability profoundly amplify pre-existing gender inequalities, leading to a surge in various forms of violence, including domestic violence, forced marriages, and exploitation. A critical driver is the deliberate use of GBV, particularly sexual violence, as a weapon and tactic of war. This is employed to create fear, terrorize populations, destroy national pride, and assert dominance over the enemy. Such acts are not merely random occurrences but often constitute a deliberate and systematic tactic of warfare, reaching unthinkable levels of cruelty against women of all ages. The lack of access to essential services, including health services, education, and employment, significantly exacerbates vulnerability to GBV. Notions equating women to property or "spoils of war" further entrench the abuse of authority and militaristic dominance that fuel these atrocities. Economic insecurity and the scarcity of resources compel people to venture into potentially unsafe areas to find food, firewood, or water, where armed forces or groups exploit their vulnerability by demanding sexual services in exchange for necessities. Poverty, food insecurity, aid dependency, and trauma all heighten the risk of violence for refugees and forcibly displaced women and children. Moreover, the breakdown of social systems, including family, community, and state protection structures, during conflict further increases vulnerability to violence.

Forms of GBV in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings:

- **Sexual Violence:** This is a prevalent form, encompassing rape (including marital rape), sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and sexual slavery, often used to humiliate opponents, drive communities off land, or willfully spread HIV. It is frequently violent and intertwined with other human rights violations.
- **Forced Pregnancy and Forced Abortion:** Both are recognized forms of GBV and can be used as tactics of war, directly violating women's reproductive autonomy.
- **Forced Marriage and Child Marriage:** These practices increase significantly in conflict settings due to economic hardship or as a perceived means of "protecting" daughters. The rate of child marriage among Syrian refugee girls in Jordan, for instance, rose to 32% in 2014, compared to 13% before the war.
- **Physical Violence:** This includes beating, battering, hitting, kicking, and murder. Intimate partner violence is also known to increase during crises.
- **Psychological Violence:** Infliction of mental harm or suffering, threats, coercion, and arbitrary deprivation of liberty are common.
- **Economic Violence:** This involves the abuse of rights, often perpetrated by heads of

households, disproportionately impacting widows and single mothers.

- **Harmful Practices:** Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is another form of GBV that persists and may be exacerbated in conflict contexts.
- **Trafficking in Persons:** Especially women and children, for sexual slavery or forced prostitution, is a significant concern in conflict zones.
- **Abductions:** Mass abductions by terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria (e.g., the Chibok schoolgirls), are a stark example of this form of violence.

Specific groups are particularly vulnerable to GBV in conflict, including ethnic minorities, detainees, single women, internally displaced women, orphans, widows, psychiatric patients, and women who use drugs. It is also important to note that men and boys can be victims of sexual violence, particularly in detention contexts. GBV in conflict is not merely an unfortunate consequence but a deliberate, systemic strategy of warfare. This understanding shifts the focus from individual acts of violence to state accountability and the need for comprehensive legal and policy responses that treat GBV as a war crime and crime against humanity, challenging the historical normalization of such atrocities. This compels a shift from reactive aid to proactive prevention and prosecution.

This growing awareness led to crucial developments in international legal recognition:

- The **Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949)**, specifically Article 27, included language protecting women "against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault." Optional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions also prohibited outrages on dignity and humiliating treatment.
- In 1993, the **United Nations Commission on Human Rights** declared systematic rape and military sexual slavery to be crimes against humanity, punishable as violations of women's human rights.
- The **UN's Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)** specified that rape by armed groups during wartime is a war crime.
- The **International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)** and the **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)** were among the first international bodies to prosecute sexual violence as a war crime. A landmark 1998 ruling by the Rwandan tribunal famously held that "rape and sexual violence constitute genocide".

- The **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998/2002)** further solidified this legal framework, granting the ICC jurisdiction over rape and forced pregnancy as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or constitutive acts of genocide. The Statute also mandates the Prosecutor to consider sexual violence and appoint experts with legal expertise on these issues.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)** called upon all parties to an armed conflict to protect women and girls from GBV, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. This was the first time the Security Council specifically addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)** explicitly recognized sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war, stating that "rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act concerning genocide".
- **UN Security Council Resolution 2106 (2013)** centered on the protection of women from sexual violence, especially in armed conflict or post-conflict areas. It urged firm regulations around the prosecution of sexual violence crimes, addressed their origins, and emphasized the imperative of promoting women's empowerment, gender equality, and encouraging men and boys' cooperation to combat violence. Notably, it also specified that men and boys can be victims of sexual violence.

Despite this significant legal and normative evolution, wartime sexual violence often continues to go unpunished, perpetuating a pervasive culture of impunity. These crimes are also routinely ignored in peace negotiations, further marginalizing survivors and hindering comprehensive post-conflict recovery. The evolution of GBV in conflict from an "inevitable" byproduct to a recognized weapon of war and international crime represents a significant normative shift. However, the persistent impunity and under-reporting highlight a critical gap between legal recognition and effective enforcement. This indicates that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without robust accountability mechanisms and profound societal change. While the definition and classification of GBV in conflict have evolved positively, the implementation of justice and accountability remains severely lacking, demanding concrete enforcement efforts, political will, and societal transformation to truly deter and punish these crimes.

A **human rights perspective** is fundamental to this understanding. GBV is unequivocally a

human rights violation and a form of discrimination. It is not a random occurrence but stems from structural, deep-rooted discrimination and pervasive social and gendered stereotypes. From this perspective, states bear a legal obligation to address these underlying causes and ensure accountability for perpetrators, even when violence is committed by non-state actors. This approach shifts the focus from individual acts of violence to the systemic failures that enable them.

Intersectionality is a crucial theoretical framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of GBV. Popularized by Kimberly Crenshaw, intersectionality recognizes that individuals experience discrimination and oppression not in isolation, but through complex and interacting layers of identity. Factors such as race, Indigenous identity, ethnicity, religion, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, citizenship, immigration and refugee status, geographic location, social condition, age, and disability all influence women's and gender-diverse individuals' experiences of violence and discrimination. This framework highlights how intersecting oppressions create unique, complex impacts that are often more profound than a simple overlap might suggest. It compels a "bottom-up" understanding of individuals' full identities and lived experiences to create truly inclusive policy, legislation, and institutional systems. The application of intersectionality and gender-based analysis is not merely academic; it is foundational for effective policy and programming. By acknowledging the multi-layered nature of discrimination and power imbalances, these frameworks compel a move beyond generalized responses to tailored, context-specific interventions that address the root causes of GBV and ensure equitable access to justice and support for all survivors. This implies that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is insufficient, and effective policy must be built "from the ground up" to address systemic inequalities.

A **Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) approach** is an analytical tool that structurally integrates a gender perspective into the development of policies, programs, services, and legislation. It helps to assess differential impacts and identify the complex social barriers experienced by all genders. GBA is not a mechanism added to other analysis dimensions; rather, it is a perspective that considers the differences between the realities of women and men, and of groups of women and men, throughout an initiative. This approach enables research to be undertaken and services delivered with an appreciation of gender differences while promoting agency and self-determination.

The **Anti-Oppression Framework** is built on the premise that privilege and oppression exist

within society, resulting in unequal access to power, information, resources, and opportunities. It defines oppression as "the systematic mistreatment of a people or group based on a belief in the innate superiority of one group or idea over another." Anti-oppression work aims to recognize existing societal oppression, mitigate its effects, and eventually equalize power imbalances. This framework is crucial because oppression operates at different levels - individual, institutional, and cultural and its interconnected forms, such as sexism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, classism, and ageism, mean that sexist experiences will differ depending on women's experiences with other forms of oppression and privilege.

A **Trauma and Violence-informed Approach** is essential for effective intervention. This approach understands and considers the pervasive nature of trauma, centering healing and recovery. It recognizes and accommodates the vulnerabilities of people with experiences of trauma to avoid re-traumatization. Rather than simply 'treating' trauma, the focus is to minimize the potential for harm and re-traumatization, and to enhance safety, control, and resilience for all clients involved with systems or programs. Survivors of GBV deserve effective legal and social services that use these approaches to prevent further systemic harm.

Finally, understanding the impact of **Poverty & Socio-Economic Inequalities** is critical. These factors significantly affect survivors' ability to access the justice system. Access to justice must be affordable, physically accessible, and, crucially, survivor-centered, ensuring the dignity and safety of the person seeking justice. While access to justice is often assumed to be a criminal justice response to the perpetrator, survivors may define justice differently, including the ability to seek safety through effective protection orders, physical and mental recovery through good quality and accessible health services, and the opportunity to seek a divorce and a new life free from spousal violence. Often, these forms of justice must be in place before someone subjected to violence feels able to embark on the process of seeking justice through criminal law.

The UN Security Council attempted to address CRSV through the adoption of Resolution 2467 in 2019, which established a vital framework advocating for a "survivor-centered approach" to justice and accountability. The resolution was groundbreaking in several respects: it mandated non-discriminatory responses prioritizing the health, education, and social reintegration of survivors, and it explicitly acknowledged the unique vulnerabilities of boys and men in detention settings, as well as recognizing children born of war as distinct rights-holders who suffer related but distinct harms. However, the intense political

negotiations surrounding UNSCR 2467 exposed deep ideological fissures within the Security Council regarding women's bodily autonomy. Under the explicit threat of a veto from the United States, essential language guaranteeing access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare, specifically citing emergency contraception, safe termination of pregnancy, and HIV prevention, was entirely omitted from the final adopted text. This omission represents a severe, institutionalized protection gap, effectively denying survivors the medical interventions mandated by IHL for victims of wartime rape. Humanitarian actors note that it is a profound contradiction to claim a survivor-centered approach while simultaneously excising the right to essential reproductive healthcare. This highlights a structural deficit wherein multilateral political maneuvering in New York directly compromises the physiological and psychological survival of women on the ground.

Beyond CRSV, the intersection of the global climate crisis and armed conflict introduces a profound layer of targeted vulnerability, particularly in ecologically fragile regions. The climate-gender-conflict nexus operates as a self-reinforcing cycle: climate change depletes arable land and water, intensifying intercommunal conflict, which in turn causes forced displacement and collapses the local economy. In the Sahel, for example, changing rainfall patterns and creeping desertification have eroded the agricultural sector, which employs between 60 to 80 percent of the population. Women and girls, burdened with the traditional gender role of securing water and fuel, are forced to travel greater distances through contested, militarized territories, dramatically heightening their exposure to sexual violence, abduction, and trafficking by non-state armed groups.

This vulnerability is systematically exploited by extremist organizations. In the Lake Chad Basin and the wider Sahel, organizations such as Boko Haram have weaponized the socio-economic desperation caused by climate shocks to facilitate forced marriages, mass abductions, and the recruitment of women and girls. The breakdown of the educational infrastructure is equally stark; in regions afflicted by this nexus, nearly 47.3 percent of school-aged girls are removed from the education system due to poverty, displacement, and the threat of abduction, severely curtailing their future economic independence. Essential services ranging from maternal healthcare to trauma counseling are virtually non-existent in these decentralized conflict zones, as humanitarian access is severely restricted by pervasive insecurity, the targeting of aid workers, and the closure of over 900 health facilities across the region. Consequently, displaced women are trapped in a protection vacuum, deprived of both

state-sponsored security and international humanitarian relief.

Operational, Financial, and Institutional Governance Deficits

The international community's rhetorical commitment to gender equality in conflict, frequently reiterated in UN resolutions and donor conferences, is systematically undermined by profound financial deficits and institutional governance failures. A critical macro-analysis of global resource allocation reveals an institutionalized prioritization of militarization over human security and gender-responsive peacebuilding.

In 2024, global military expenditure reached an unprecedented \$2.7 trillion, with more than 100 countries intensifying their arms investments in response to geopolitical instability. By stark contrast, the humanitarian mechanisms designed to mitigate the fallout of these armed conflicts face unprecedented fiscal starvation. As of October 2025, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) required \$45.37 billion to assist 181 million people across 73 crisis-affected countries. However, only \$10.61 billion, a mere 23.4% of the total requirement had been funded. This represents a catastrophic 43% decrease in funding compared to the same period in the previous year.

Within this rapidly shrinking financial envelope, gender-specific programming is disproportionately deprioritized. Historically, less than 1% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) directed toward gender equality actually reaches local, grassroots women's rights organizations operating in fragile contexts. Furthermore, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) response mechanisms consistently receive less than 1% of total humanitarian funding. The UN Women 2024 WPS-HA Global Snapshot indicated that 58% of signatories to the WPS Humanitarian Action Compact have been negatively impacted by severe funding cuts, hamstringing their operational capacity.

Financial / Operational Metric	Data Point	Comparative Implication
Global Military Spending (2024)	\$2.7 Trillion	Illustrates massive over-capitalization of armed conflict globally.

Financial / Operational Metric	Data Point	Comparative Implication
Global Humanitarian Requirement (Oct 2025)	\$45.37 Billion	Represents less than 2% of global military spending.
Humanitarian Funding Received (Oct 2025)	\$10.61 Billion (23.4%)	A 43% year-over-year decrease in available crisis funding.
ODA to Local Women's Organizations	< 1%	Demonstrates structural failure to localize humanitarian financing.
WPS-HA Compact Signatories	58% impacted by cuts	Severe degradation of on-the-ground gender advocacy capacity.

This financial asymmetry creates severe operational barriers. The UN and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) have developed sophisticated accountability tools such as the Gender with Age Marker (GAM) to ensure humanitarian response plans are effectively targeting the distinct needs of women, girls, men, and boys. However, without adequate, multi-year funding, these methodological tools are rendered largely administrative exercises rather than transformative interventions. Essential, life-saving services including mobile health clinics, safe spaces for GBV survivors, and legal aid clinics required for documentation recovery cannot operate on unpredictable, short-term project grants.

Institutional governance deficits further exacerbate these barriers, most notably through the persistent exclusion of women from formal peace, mediation, and disarmament processes. Despite the binding mandate of UNSCR 1325, empirical data from UN Women illustrates the systemic, patriarchal gatekeeping that prevents female participation in high-level diplomacy. In 2023, women constituted only 9.6 percent of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories in formal peace processes. This exclusion has dire consequences for post-conflict governance; peace agreements that lack female signatories routinely fail to incorporate provisions for gender-responsive transitional justice, equitable land reform, or the rebuilding of maternal health infrastructure, effectively cementing wartime inequalities into the new state architecture.

Furthermore, structural silos between the WPS agenda and international arms control mechanisms perpetuate systemic governance failures. Research from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) indicates that women comprise only 32% of participants in arms control and non-proliferation forums, dropping to 20% in specialized Groups of Governmental Experts, with female heads of delegation being exceptionally rare. The failure to integrate a gendered perspective into the governance of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and conventional arms proliferation directly endangers women. The unchecked flow of small arms into post-conflict societies directly correlates with increased rates of domestic violence, sexual coercion, and the militarization of hyper-masculine social identities, undermining any transition to sustainable peace.

Case Studies

The Sahel (The Climate-Conflict-Gender Nexus)

The Sahel region, encompassing Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and surrounding states represents the contemporary epicenter of overlapping, poly-crises driven by extreme climate change, chronic food insecurity, and armed insurgency. The region is experiencing a staggering displacement crisis, with 5.5 million internally displaced persons and 2.1 million refugees reported as of mid-2024. In stark demographic terms, women and children constitute 80% of this displaced population. Environmental degradation, specifically rising temperatures and erratic rainfall, has decimated agricultural livelihoods, triggering a chronic hunger emergency that affects over 32 million people across the wider Sahel. This environmental resource scarcity acts as a volatile threat multiplier. It heightens intercommunal competition between pastoralist herders and sedentary agricultural communities over diminishing water and grazing land, providing fertile ground for extremist recruitment and violence. From a gender perspective, the crisis is catastrophic. Women in the Sahel, who make up approximately 40% of the agricultural labor force and bear primary responsibility for subsistence farming and household food security, face immense pressure as crop yields vanish. The forced migration triggered by this ecological collapse strips women of traditional community protections. Insecurity has forced the closure of over 14,800 schools across the region, and the severe economic desperation of families has led to a surge in child marriage as a negative, survivalist coping mechanism. Non-state armed groups exploit this climate-induced vulnerability, utilizing mass abductions and forced marriages as terror and recruitment tactics,

effectively erasing the rights of women and girls in the region.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Jurisprudence and Endemic CRSV)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has endured decades of protracted conflict, marked by the systemic, organized use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and ethnic cleansing. By the end of 2025, the DRC witnessed 3.9 million newly displaced persons due to the resurgence of non-state armed groups like M23 in the eastern provinces, contributing to massive waves of secondary displacement and returns under duress. The sheer scale of displacement has compounded severe protection risks, including sexual exploitation, forced recruitment, and extortion. However, the DRC context also provides a critical lens on the evolution of international accountability. The ICC's landmark conviction of Bosco Ntaganda, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the *Force Patriotique pour la Libération du Congo* (FPLC), fundamentally altered the legal landscape for prosecuting CRSV. Ntaganda's militia routinely abducted children, subjecting girls to sexual slavery, rape, and forced marriage within the ranks of the FPLC. The defense heavily contested the ICC's jurisdiction, arguing that under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, war crimes could not technically be committed by members of an armed force against members of the same armed force. The ICC Appeals Chamber's rejection of this argument legally recognized that child soldiers remain protected victims, establishing a vital precedent. This ruling demonstrated that dismantling structural barriers to justice requires interpreting IHL dynamically to protect the most vulnerable individuals from intra-group sexual violence, regardless of their coerced military affiliation. The case culminated in the ICC issuing its first-ever order on reparations specifically for survivors of CRSV, working in tandem with the Global Survivors Fund.

Syria (The Feminization of Poverty in Protracted Displacement)

The Syrian conflict demonstrates the profound socio-economic reordering that occurs during long-term, protracted displacement. By 2024, the conflict had produced 6.1 million refugees and 7.4 million IDPs, with many entering their second decade of displacement. The World Bank and UNHCR demographic analyses of Syrian refugees in Jordan indicate a stark shift in household composition, heavily skewing toward female leadership. Between 2013 and 2018, the percentage of households headed by a female principal applicant rose significantly to 38%. This demographic shift directly correlates with a surge in multidimensional poverty.

Without the traditional male breadwinner, often lost to combat, detention, or separate migration routes, and facing immense structural and legal barriers to formal employment in the host country, female-headed households slipped rapidly into the bottom 40% of the economic distribution. These women carry the crushing dual burden of income generation in the informal economy and intensive unpaid care work. The data reveals that the presence of children under five or elderly dependents increases the poverty risk significantly more for female-headed households than for male-headed ones. The Syrian case study unequivocally demonstrates that humanitarian responses must move beyond emergency relief and integrate gender-responsive economic policies such as targeted cash transfers, legal right-to-work frameworks, and childcare support to prevent the permanent economic disenfranchisement of displaced women.

Examples of Past International Action

The UN Inter-Agency Architecture and Operational Standards

The United Nations relies on inter-agency mechanisms to standardize the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda across all humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

1. ***The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC):*** The IASC, which coordinates UN and non-UN humanitarian partners, enforces the Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action. This policy mandates that all humanitarian sectors must actively identify and dismantle discriminatory barriers during crisis response. Rather than treating women solely as passive recipients of aid, the IASC guidelines legally compel mission planners to inform displaced women of their entitlements and guarantee their leadership roles in camp management and resource distribution.
2. ***The WPS-HA Compact:*** Launched at the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact is a multi-stakeholder platform designed to redesign peace processes. It holds UN agencies, Member States, and financial institutions accountable for systematically dismantling the barriers that prevent women from participating in peacebuilding. The Compact specifically mandates the inclusion of women, including refugees and stateless women, in post-conflict macroeconomic planning and security sector reform.

3. ***UN Women's Strategic Plan:*** Moving away from isolated capacity-building, UN Women now targets the structural root causes of inequality in crisis zones. Their operational focus includes mitigating the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work placed on displaced women and ensuring that post-conflict state budgets are gender-responsive, allocating specific funding for women's economic recovery.

Financial and Economic Policy Interventions

Economic exclusion is a primary structural barrier during displacement. When traditional household structures are disrupted, the number of female-headed households rises drastically, yet these women face legal restrictions on entering formal labor markets.

1. ***The World Bank and UNHCR:*** Joint initiatives by the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict, and Violence division and the UNHCR focus on the economic dimensions of forced displacement. Their research indicates that while displacement can sometimes relax patriarchal attitudes toward domestic roles, it often rigidifies economic barriers. Consequently, these institutions condition structural adjustment and recovery funding on host countries reforming discriminatory personal status laws such as those preventing displaced women from opening independent bank accounts, acquiring property, or obtaining individual civil documentation without a male guardian.
2. ***United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):*** The UNDP integrates structural reform directly into early peacebuilding. In agricultural conflict zones where women historically own only a fraction of the land despite ensuring food security, UNDP programs negotiate directly with local authorities to reduce registration fees and issue independent land titles to women. By securing legal property rights, the UNDP directly dismantles a structural barrier that prevents women from accessing credit and participating in post-conflict economic recovery.

National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS

To domesticate international mandates like UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Member States are required to draft National Action Plans (NAPs). These are practical, budgeted policy documents that translate international commitments into concrete national laws.

1. ***Localization and Civil Society Integration:*** Effective NAPs transfer decision-making power to grassroots organizations. For example, UN Women facilitated community

consultations in Bangladesh to ensure that over 120 women-led civil society organizations directly shaped the localization of the national WPS agenda.

2. ***Institutional Frameworks:*** Indonesia's RAN P3AKS (National Action Plan for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflicts) exemplifies structural integration. It establishes a joint secretariat that forces synergy between national policymakers and local civil society, ensuring that structural protections for women and girls are legally enforced at subnational levels during social conflicts.

National Best Practices: The 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement

The 2016 peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC remains the international standard for dismantling structural gender barriers through a formal peace settlement. It fundamentally altered the traditional elite bargaining process, which historically excluded women. Despite UN statistics showing that in 2023 women constituted only 9.6% of negotiators and 13.7% of mediators globally, the Colombian process forced a structural shift. Driven by intense mobilization from women's civil society groups, the negotiating parties established a dedicated Gender Sub-Commission at the peace table. As a result, 130 of the 578 stipulations in the final agreement contained a specific gender perspective. Crucially, these provisions went far beyond addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The agreement tackled the root structural inequalities of the conflict by mandating:

1. ***Equal Land Redistribution:*** Legal mechanisms to grant rural women joint and independent land titles, dismantling historical patriarchal land ownership.
2. ***Political Affirmative Action:*** Binding quotas to ensure women's participation in transitional government bodies and post-conflict political processes.
3. ***Transitional Gender Justice:*** Specialized tribunals equipped to handle gender-based crimes, with a focus on restorative justice and financial reparations for female victims.

Guiding Directives

The following directives should preemptively (and not exhaustively) guide committee discussions:

1. **Transformative Legal Reform and Accountability Mechanisms:** Delegates must

compel Member States to ratify, without reservation, CEDAW and its Optional Protocols. Resolutions should heavily leverage the jurisprudence of General Recommendations 30 and 32 to align domestic legislation with international standards. National laws regarding nationality, property ownership, and inheritance must be overhauled immediately to grant displaced women autonomous legal identities and tenure security, thereby preventing statelessness. The committee should demand the integration of the Rome Statute into domestic penal codes to ensure national courts possess the jurisdiction to prosecute sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, drawing on the international precedents set by *Akayesu*, *Kunarac*, and *Ntaganda*.

2. Institutionalizing a Holistic, Survivor-Centered Approach: Addressing the political and moral shortfalls of UNSCR 2467, delegates must champion an uncompromising survivor-centered approach that explicitly guarantees immediate, unhindered access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Humanitarian mandates must classify SRHR services (including emergency contraception, safe abortion services in line with the Maputo Protocol, psychosocial counseling, and maternal care) as life-saving, non-negotiable medical interventions. Policies must also explicitly recognize and provide specialized, stigma-free trauma services for boy and men survivors of sexual violence, as well as children born of war, ensuring these programs receive dedicated funding without detracting resources from women and girls.

3. Restructuring Humanitarian Financing and the WPS Agenda: Delegates must confront the extreme fiscal disparity between global military expenditure and humanitarian financing. Resolutions should mandate the creation of autonomous, flexible, and multi-year funding mechanisms specifically earmarked for local, grassroots women's rights organizations operating in conflict settings, guaranteeing them a minimum percentage of global ODA (e.g., aiming to exceed the current <1% benchmark). Humanitarian planning processes must mandate the stringent application of the IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) to ensure all funded projects actively dismantle gender inequalities. Furthermore, delegates should push for binding quotas ensuring a minimum threshold of women's representation as negotiators, mediators, and signatories in all UN-brokered peace and disarmament agreements.

4. Mitigating the Climate-Gender-Conflict Nexus: Recognizing climate change as a core

driver of displacement and violence against women, UNCSW directives must integrate environmental peacebuilding with gender advocacy. Delegates should mandate gender-differentiated climate risk assessments in highly volatile regions such as the Sahel and Horn of Africa. Interventions must secure women's legal rights to land and natural resources, ensuring that climate adaptation financing directly supports female-headed agricultural households. This resilience-building is critical to prevent the socio-economic desperation that is routinely exploited by extremist factions for recruitment and human trafficking.

Questions To Consider

1. How can the international community overcome ideological gridlock in the UN Security Council to ensure that comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) are explicitly guaranteed for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence?
2. What binding mechanisms can be introduced within the UN system to mandate and enforce the proportional inclusion of women in all phases of formal peace negotiations, mediation, and post-conflict governance?
3. How can national property and inheritance laws be reformed rapidly in post-conflict transitional justice settings to ensure that displaced widows and female-headed households are not customarily dispossessed of their assets?
4. In what ways can global humanitarian financing structures be overhauled to bypass bureaucratic bottlenecks and directly channel Official Development Assistance (ODA) to local grassroots women's rights organizations in conflict zones?
5. How should international legal bodies lower the evidentiary hurdles required to establish state genocidal intent regarding widespread, systematic sexual violence, given the ICJ's highly restrictive approach in the Balkan cases?
6. What specific gender-responsive climate adaptation strategies can be deployed in ecologically fragile regions like the Sahel to prevent the weaponization of resource scarcity by non-state armed groups?
7. How can the UN system ensure that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) processes are re-engineered to explicitly address the unique traumas and socio-economic needs of female combatants and child soldiers?

8. How can host countries be compelled to reform discriminatory nationality and identification laws that prevent displaced women from passing citizenship to their children, thereby perpetuating intergenerational statelessness?
9. In implementing a holistic survivor-centered approach, how can humanitarian actors effectively address the cultural stigmatization and specific mental health needs of men and boys subjected to CRSV without diverting critical focus from women and girls?
10. What punitive or incentivizing metrics beyond the IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) can be developed to strictly enforce accountability among humanitarian agencies and donor states for failing to deliver gender-equitable aid?

Relevant Resolutions/Treaties/Conventions/Case Laws

Document/Case Law	Type/Body	Year	Core Takeaway & Rationale
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	International Treaty	1979	The foundational international framework for women's rights. While it does not explicitly mention armed conflict in its original text, its mandates on equality and state obligation form the legal basis for addressing gender discrimination in all contexts.
CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30	Treaty Body Guideline	2013	Explicitly links CEDAW to women in conflict and post-conflict situations. It mandates that states parties must protect women's rights before, during, and after conflict, and ensures that the Women, Peace, and Security

			(WPS) agenda is legally binding.
CEDAW General Recommendation No. 32	Treaty Body Guideline	2014	Addresses the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, and statelessness. It requires states to interpret the 1951 Refugee Convention in a gender-sensitive manner, recognizing gender-based violence (GBV) as a legitimate ground for asylum.
Geneva Conventions (I-IV) & Additional Protocols (I-II)	International Humanitarian Law (IHL)	1949, 1977	The bedrock of IHL. Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 76 of Additional Protocol I explicitly prohibit rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault. They establish that women must be protected from gender-specific violence during international and non-international armed conflicts.
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)	International Treaty	1998	Revolutionized international criminal law by explicitly defining rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization as both war crimes and crimes against

			humanity. It also introduced "persecution on gender grounds" as a crime against humanity.
1951 Refugee Convention & 1967 Protocol	International Treaty	1951, 1967	The core legal document defining refugee status. While "gender" is not explicitly listed as one of the five grounds for persecution, subsequent UNHCR jurisprudence has established that women facing systemic discrimination or GBV can claim asylum under "membership of a particular social group."
UN Security Council Resolution 1325	UNSC Resolution (WPS)	2000	The landmark resolution that established the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. It formally acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and mandates their equal participation in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction.
UN Security Council Resolution 1820	UNSC Resolution (WPS)	2008	The first UN resolution to explicitly recognize conflict-related sexual

			violence (CRSV) as a tactic of war and a direct threat to international peace and security. It explicitly states that rape can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or an act of genocide.
UN Security Council Resolution 2467	UNSC Resolution (WPS)	2019	Focuses on a survivor-centered approach to conflict-related sexual violence. It emphasizes access to justice, reparations, and holding perpetrators accountable, while directly linking structural gender inequality to the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict.
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Area E)	UN General Assembly	1995	Area E focuses specifically on "Women and Armed Conflict." It outlines strategic objectives for governments to reduce the impact of conflict on women, promote non-violent dispute resolution, and integrate gender perspectives into humanitarian responses.
CSW 57 Agreed Conclusions	UNCSW	2013	Focuses on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and

			girls. It applies to situations of armed conflict and peace. It urges states to address structural causes of violence, criminalize gender-based violence, and provide essential services like trauma care and shelters for displaced women.
UNGA Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict	UN General Assembly (Res 3318)	1974	An early but historically relevant declaration that calls on member states to observe international humanitarian law and explicitly condemns attacks, bombings, and the use of chemical weapons on civilian populations, highlighting the specific vulnerability of women and children.
Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu	Case Law (ICTR)	1998	The first international tribunal judgment to secure a conviction for genocide, and critically, the first to rule that rape and sexual violence constitute acts of genocide when committed with the intent to destroy a particular group.

Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovač and Vuković	Case Law (ICTY)	2001	The first international trial to focus almost exclusively on gender-related crimes. It resulted in the first convictions for rape and sexual enslavement as crimes against humanity, establishing that these acts do not need to be tied to a broader military objective to be prosecuted.
Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda	Case Law (ICC)	2019	Expanded the legal framework by confirming that rape and sexual slavery committed against child soldiers within the same armed group constitute war crimes. It dismissed the previous notion that war crimes could only be committed against opposing forces or civilians.
Prosecutor v. Al Hassan	Case Law (ICC)	2024	The first ICC case to include charges for persecution on gender grounds. While the ultimate acquittal on the sexual and gender-based crimes sparked widespread legal criticism, the initial charging framework remains a primary reference point for prosecuting systemic

			gender-based persecution under international criminal law.
UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection No. 1	UN Agency Policy	2002	Provides the official legal interpretation for handling gender-related persecution within the context of the 1951 Refugee Convention. It instructs states on how to assess asylum claims based on sexual violence, forced marriage, and severe structural discrimination.
Maputo Protocol	African Union	2003	A progressive regional treaty whose Articles 11 and 14 explicitly protect women in armed conflict and guarantee comprehensive reproductive rights, including medical abortion for victims of sexual assault.
Kampala Convention	African Union	2009	Article 9 mandates state parties to protect IDPs from SGBV and guarantees special measures for the reproductive and sexual health of internally displaced women.