



BALKH MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019

United Nations Women

Background Guide



Dear Delegates,

On behalf of Youth Empowered Society & Secretariat of BMUN 2019, it's my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Balkh Model United Nations 2019, to be held in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh on 25th, 26th & 27th April 2019.

Balkh Model United Nations provides delegate to express their opinions regarding a very large scale of issues and gives the unique opportunity to tackle those issues with innovative ideas. It's expected from you to do an attentive research in order to come up with innovative and applicable solutions to the issues you have been given. This is a tremendous event to hone your MUN skills, meet lifelong friends and have unforgettable experiences.

In this background guide, you are going to find some general information regarding your committee's topics. However, it's impossible to know everything, so please do not limit yourself with this background guide. Always remember, that there is so much to discover and so much to learn.

Lastly, I must say that I am very excited to be working with you and I am looking forward to seeing the passionate and resolution –driven debate, diplomatic cooperation and inventive solutions that will come out of this conference. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any question or concern you may have regarding this committee or Balkh MUN. Hope to see you all in near future.

Sayed Murtaza Hashimi
Founder & President
Balkh Model United Nations 2019

Table of Contents

Committee Overview	4
Status of women:	4
History:.....	5
Governance, Structure, and Membership:.....	5
Powers and Functions:	5
Topic A: Economic Empowerment and Education of females in post-conflict countries.	6
Introduction of Empowerment:	6
Women’s Economic Empowerment:	6
Why women's economic empowerment matters for pro-poor growth:	7
Female Education:.....	7
Women in post-conflict countries:	8
Further reading and resources:	9
Topic B: Protecting women rights in religious societies	10
Women and religion:	10
Further reading and resources:	12

Committee Overview

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:

- Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems
- Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy
- All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action

UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality, and in all deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a more inclusive world.

Status of women:

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

Over many decades, the United Nations has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Working for the empowerment and rights of women and girls globally, UN Women's main roles are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality, as well as promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

History:

For many years, the United Nations faced serious challenges in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to address such challenges. In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Governance, Structure, and Membership:

UN-Women is governed by an Executive Board, which is responsible for intergovernmental support and supervision of all operational activities. The Board consists of 41 members that are elected by ECOSOC for a term of three years and are allocated by regions as follows: ten from the group of African States, ten from the group of Asian States, four from the group of Eastern European States, six from the group of Latin American and Caribbean States, five from the group of Western European and Other States. The final six seats are allocated to contributing countries, from which four seats go to the countries that provide the highest voluntary contribution to UN-Women and two seats to developing countries.

UN-Women is headed by an Executive Director, who is considered a senior official at Under-Secretary-General (USG) level. The Directorate performs the administrative functions of UN-Women and is responsible for human resources including employment in operational activities. The Executive Director also reports to the Secretary-General and works to improve system-wide coordination by seeking exchange with other agencies and programs both inside and outside the UN system. The normative processes of UN-Women are funded by the regular budget of the UN. However, its operational activities depend on voluntary contributions of its members. In 2013, voluntary contributions added up to a total budget of US \$275.4 million.

Powers and Functions:

UN-Women's areas of activity include peace and security, political participation and government planning, the fight against HIV/AIDS, the economic empowerment of women, participating in and shaping the process of formulating sustainable development goals for the upcoming decades, and ending violence against women and girls. To this end UN-Women works closely with other UN bodies, programs, funds, civil society organizations, and Member States in designing adequate policies, laws, programs, and services. Within the UN system, UN-Women functions as a normative body that supports CSW in setting standards and norms by providing expert knowledge and information on gender mainstreaming. It supports the work of CSW by submitting an annual report to the Commission informing it about the implementation of the Commission's policy guidance. The chairperson of CSW can also be invited to address the Executive Board of UN-Women directly. A second annual report is submitted to the General Assembly through ECOSOC. This report delivers information on the Entity's operational activities and provides research, policy analysis, and recommendations for further action. The General Assembly and ECOSOC can also draw the Entity's attention to issues and request UN-Women to hold additional sessions when deemed necessary.

Topic A: Economic Empowerment and Education of females in post-conflict countries

Introduction of Empowerment:

Empowerment is a popular concept which has proliferated in the development literature over the last 15 years. But it has been used, and sometimes abused, in very different ways, for different purposes, under different meanings, and often in vague terms, making women's empowerment a complex concept to define and measure. For the purpose of this paper we use the following definition of empowerment proposed by Kabeer (2001) who defines empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them." An important feature of empowerment is the transformational power of choices. According to several authors, women's empowerment requires systemic transformation in most institutions, but fundamentally in those supporting patriarchal structures (Kabeer, 2001). This means that a meaningful process of empowerment requires a structural change of the social rules that govern gender relations to make them more egalitarian.

Conflict and post-conflict countries present unique characteristics regarding their socio-economic, political, governance and security environments. Such conditions need to be taken into account when addressing the issue of women's economic empowerment in these societies as they result in unique challenges, as well as opportunities for the application of a women's economic empowerment approach. Any framework to analyze women's economic empowerment therefore needs to be revisited in the light of many of the realities of conflict and post-conflict situations.

Women's Economic Empowerment:

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society.² It is about creating just and equitable societies. Women often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as ethnicity or caste.

"Women perform 66% of the world's work, and produce 50% of the food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation."

Former President Bill Clinton addressing the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (September 2009)

Why women's economic empowerment matters for pro-poor growth:

- Higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long-term. The share of women in waged and salaried work grew from 42% in 1997 to 46% in 2007.
- In India, GDP could rise by 8% if the female/male ratio of workers went up by 10%.
- Total agricultural outputs in Africa could increase by up to 20% if women's access to agricultural inputs was equal to men's.
- Women-owned businesses comprise up to 38% of all registered small businesses worldwide. The number of women-owned businesses in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America is growing rapidly and, with that growth, come direct impacts on job creation and poverty reduction.

Source: United Kingdom Department for International Development (2010), Agenda 2010 - The turning point on poverty: background paper on gender.

Some issues relating to women's economic empowerment are particularly challenging or sensitive. These challenges need to be acknowledged and discussed. It will take sound policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment from all development actors to achieve women's economic empowerment. It will never be a "quick fix".

Female Education:

Female education is a catch-all term of a complex set of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, and health education in particular) for girls and women. Also involved are the issues of single-sex education and religious education, in that the division of education along gender lines as well as religious teachings on education have been traditionally dominant and are still highly relevant in contemporary discussions of educating females as a global consideration. In the field of female education in STEM, it has been shown that girls' and women underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education is deep rooted.

That women might have the chance of a healthier and happier life should be reason enough for promoting **girls' education**. However, there are also **important** benefits for society as a whole. An **educated woman** has the skills, information and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen.

An educated woman is, for example, likely to marry at a later age and have fewer children. Cross-country studies show that an extra year of schooling for girls reduces fertility rates by 5 to 10 per cent. And the children of an educated mother are more likely to survive. In India, for example, the infant mortality rate of babies whose mothers have received primary education is half that of children whose mothers are illiterate.

An educated woman will also be more productive at work -- and better paid. Indeed, the dividend for educational investment is often higher for women than men. Studies from a number of countries suggest that an extra year of schooling will increase a woman's future earnings by about 15 per cent, compared with 11 per cent for a man.

Over recent decades there has certainly been significant progress in girls' education. Between 1970 and 1992, combined primary and secondary enrolment for girls in developing countries rose from 38 per cent to 68 per cent -- with particularly high rates in East Asia (83 per cent) and Latin America (87 per cent). But there is still some way to go. In the least developed countries enrolment rates are only 47 per cent at the primary level and 12 per cent at the secondary level.

What would it take to improve girls' access to education? Experience in scores of countries shows the importance, among other things, of:

- Parental and community involvement -- Families and communities must be important partners with schools in developing curriculum and managing children's education.
- Low-cost and flexible timetables -- Basic education should be free or cost very little. Where possible, there should be stipends and scholarships to compensate families for the loss of girls' household labor. Also, school hours should be flexible so children can help at home and still attend classes.
- Schools close to home, with women teachers -- Many parents worry about girls travelling long distances on their own. Many parents also prefer to have daughters taught by women.
- Preparation for school -- Girls do best when they receive early childhood care, which enhances their self-esteem and prepares them for school.
- Relevant curricula -- Learning materials should be relevant to the girl's background and be in the local language. They should also avoid reproducing gender stereotypes.

Women in post-conflict countries:

In the event of war and conflict, women and young girls suffer more compared to their male counterparts. According to UNHCR, women comprise 49% of refugees worldwide, mainly due to conflicts, and they often face more hardship than men in similar situations due to their gender.

The situation worsens for women and girls in the aftermath of wars and conflicts. Besides undergoing psychological distress, they have to bear the responsibilities of caring for their dependents including the children conceived out of sexual violence. These circumstances restrict girls and women from accessing primary needs such as healthcare, education and self-development opportunities. They are also vulnerable to discrimination and isolation by peers and the society as a whole.

Many students are left unable to cope with the formal system, lag behind and illiteracy rates increase. In response, a multi-sectoral approach supports and empowers this vulnerable group to be integrated back into society and further reclaim their place.

According to the study, empowerment of women as well as equipping them with new vocational skills brought both intrinsic and extrinsic values, increased capacity and self-worth for the beneficiaries. The once disadvantaged and despondent girls and women were found to

feel capable of serving society and contributing to their socio-economic emancipation as well as participating effectively in their countries' development.

“Across the globe there has been a growing interest to include women in conflict resolution and peace talks, with the number or representation growing from 1% in 1999 to 9% in 2011 as reflected in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security adopted on 31st October 2000.”

Further reading and resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UN_Women

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do>

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/womenseconomicempowerment.htm>

UN ECOSOC, Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2014/2), 2013, pp. 4-10.

UN ECOSOC, Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2014/2), 2013, p. 3.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). Annual Report 2013-2014. Retrieved 12 August 2014 from:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/58ED9AE6A3B544149C9DEFA302CC9884.ashx>

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/47561694.pdf>

Women's Economic Empowerment, April 2011, issues paper

This paper was prepared by the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) (www.oecd.org/dac/gender), as an input to the DAC Network on Poverty Reduction's Task Team on Empowerment. It has benefited from contributions from the members of the two Networks and from the OECD's Development Centre. In particular, the GENDERNET Secretariat wishes to thank both the Netherlands and Sweden for the many examples of innovative practices which they provided and Rosalind Eyben of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, for her advice.

<https://www.unicef.org/sowc96/ngirls.htm>

<https://thecircle.ngo/six-positive-impacts-educating-girls/>

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/role-education-women-and-girls-conflict-and-post-conflict-countries>

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper: <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/116536/>

http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/116536/1/The_role_of_basic_education_in_post_conflict_recovery.pdf

Barakat, Sultan orcid.org/0000-0003-3747-785X, Hardman, Frank Christopher orcid.org/0000-0002-4605-4288, Sundaram, Vanita orcid.org/0000-0002-7706-3056 et al. (1 more author) (2013) The role of basic education in post-conflict recovery. *Comparative Education*. 1. pp. 124-142. ISSN 0305-0068 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2012.686259>

Topic B: Protecting women rights in religious societies

Women's rights are the rights and entitlements claimed for women and girls worldwide, and formed the basis for the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century and feminist movement during the 20th century. In some countries, these rights are institutionalized or supported by law, local custom, and behavior, whereas in others they are ignored and suppressed. They differ from broader notions of human rights through claims of an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls, in favor of men and boys.

Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to be free from sexual violence; to vote; to hold public office; to enter into legal contracts; to have equal rights in family law; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to have reproductive rights; to own property; to education.

In 1946 the United Nations established a Commission on the Status of Women. Originally as the Section on the Status of Women, Human Rights Division, Department of Social Affairs, and now part of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since 1975 the UN has held a series of world conferences on women's issues, starting with the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City. These conferences created an international forum for women's rights, but also illustrated divisions between women of different cultures and the difficulties of attempting to apply principles universally. Four World Conferences have been held, the first in Mexico City (International Women's Year, 1975), the second in Copenhagen (1980) and the third in Nairobi (1985).

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), The Platform for Action was signed. This included a commitment to achieve "gender equality and the empowerment of women". The same commitment was reaffirmed by all U.N. member nations at the Millennium Summit in 2000 and was reflected in the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015.

Women and religion:

The study of **women and religion** typically examines the role of women within particular religious faiths, and religious doctrines relating to gender, gender roles, and particular women in religious history. Most religions elevate the status of men over women, have stricter sanctions against women, and require them to be submissive. While there has been progress towards equality, religions overall still lag the rest of society in addressing gender issues. There are fundamentalists within every religion who actively resist change. There is often a dualism within religion which exalts women on the one hand, while demanding more rigorous displays of devotion on the other. This leads some feminists to see religion as the last barrier for female emancipation.

We are seeing instances across the country where religion is being used to discriminate against women.

In health care, we are seeing hospitals, insurance companies, pharmacies, and other health care entities discriminate against women by denying basic care—such as birth control, emergency contraception, and abortion—in the name of religion. Many of these institutions receive taxpayer funding. The ACLU works to ensure that women are not denied information and the health care they need because of the religious views of their health care providers.

In employment, we have seen a recent spate of cases in which religiously affiliated schools have fired women for getting pregnant while single or for using IVF. These cases are suggestive of a past when women were routinely pushed out of the workplace because of pregnancy. Such discrimination is now illegal, even if religiously motivated.

“Women are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many faiths, creating an environment in which violations against women are justified,” former President Jimmy Carter noted in a speech last month to the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Australia.

“The belief that women are inferior human beings in the eyes of God,” Mr. Carter continued, “gives excuses to the brutal husband who beats his wife, the soldier who rapes a woman, the employer who has a lower pay scale for women employees, or parents who decide to abort a female embryo.”

The New Testament quotes St. Paul (I Timothy 2) as saying that women “must be silent.” Deuteronomy declares that if a woman does not bleed on her wedding night, “the men of her town shall stone her to death.” An Orthodox Jewish prayer thanks God, “who hast not made me a woman.” The Koran stipulates that a woman shall inherit less than a man, and that a woman’s testimony counts for half a man’s.

In fairness, many scholars believe that Paul did not in fact write the passages calling on women to be silent. And Islam started out as socially progressive for women — banning female infanticide and limiting polygamy — but did not continue to advance.

Today, when religious institutions exclude women from their hierarchies and rituals, the inevitable implication is that females are inferior. The Elders are right that religious groups should stand up for a simple ethical principle: any person’s human rights should be sacred, and not depend on something as earthly as their genitals.

Further reading and resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_rights
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_and_religion

Hosken, Fran P., 'Towards a Definition of Women's Rights' in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2. (May 1981), pp. 1–10.

Lockwood, Bert B. (ed.), *Women's Rights: A "Human Rights Quarterly" Reader* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), [ISBN 978-0-8018-8374-3](#).

Catagay, N., Grown, C. and Santiago, A. 1986. "The Nairobi Women's Conference: Toward a Global Feminism?" *Feminist Studies*, 12, 2:401–12.

Joshua J. Mark (4 November 2016). "[Women in Ancient Egypt](#)". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 26 July 2017.

The New York Times:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/opinion/10kristof.html>

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/religious-liberty/using-religion-discriminate/religion-based-discrimination-against-women>



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