



VMUN 2024

# United Nations Human Rights Council

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Kazakhstan

UNHRC



# VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Twenty-Third Annual Session | January 26–28, 2024

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Kellie Ho, and it is my honour to extend a warm welcome to you as the Director of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Whether it is the captivating moments of thunderous table-knocking cheers or the exhilarating sensation experienced while delivering your inaugural speech, I am confident that you will create indelible memories during the weekend of enriching debate.

Together with my Chair Oliver Sjöholm and Assistant Director Gisele Fu, we are certain that you have the aptitude to lead the committee. The first-ever speech I made as the delegate of Malaysia led me to a journey filled with cherished memories, friendships, and personal growth in my ability to public speak, debate, and engage in diplomacy. Regardless if it is your sixth time delegating or your first, taking the first steps to make a speech will allow you to prosper in your career. As you strive to prevail against setbacks that the committee faces, your dais team and I will be cheering each and every one of you on.

The UNHRC will require collective efforts of discussion and diplomacy to address the issues at hand, taking into account various perspectives, cultures, ideologies, and political situations of your fellow member states. Topic A, *Human Rights in Production Factories*, highlights the neglected conditions of worker exploitation and human rights abuses within factories that produce goods that we use every day. Topic B, *Gender-Based Violence*, focuses on the maltreatment of individuals on the basis of their gender identity with roots in gender and power inequality in countries around the globe.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [unhrc@vmun.com](mailto:unhrc@vmun.com) if you have any questions about your research and preparation.

Sincerely,

Kellie Ho  
UNHRC Director

# Position Paper Policy

## What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the United Nations Human Rights Council, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

## Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, their country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

## Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **11:59 PM PT on January 22, 2024**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Researched award.

The email address for this committee is *unhrc@vmun.com*.

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# Human Rights in Production Factories

## Overview

Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, industrial manufacturing—the act of transforming raw goods into consumable items in supply chain factories—has become an increasingly widespread method of production. As standardized products have evolved into playing a pivotal role in economies, businesses are increasingly inclined to seek cost-effective manufacturing solutions from their suppliers, emphasizing the importance of efficient production cycles.<sup>1</sup> However, it also underlines the urgent need for companies to uphold adequate human rights standards within supplier factories.

High output rates and low unit costs allow for optimized productivity in businesses—but at a dire cost. Instances of human rights infringements affecting factory laborers have increased within manufacturing facilities, accompanied by the absence of accountability and limited visibility into such unethical practices. People, including children, women, and migrant workers, are prone to becoming trapped in internal operations ranging from exploitative practices to poor working conditions in a perpetual labour cycle, characterized by a continuous pattern of labour-related violations of workers' rights.<sup>2</sup> The proliferation of such acts stem from factors such as the lack of transparency in supply chains and a lack of opportunity that prevents people from escaping these working conditions.

However, the key to tackling human rights abuses in the mass production industry is not a one-step process. Despite the enactment of numerous standards and regulations under the United Nations, the United Nations Guiding Principle on Business, there remain notable discrepancies that require further attention and rectification.<sup>3</sup> As the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has a fundamental responsibility to address violations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a clear call-to-action must be made to protect individuals from becoming prey to exploitative production schemes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Levitt, "The Globalization of Markets," *Harvard Business Review*, May 5 1983, <https://hbr.org/1983/05/the-globalization-of-markets>

<sup>2</sup> "Labor Rights in the Garment Industry," *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights/labor-rights-garment-industry>

<sup>3</sup> "The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights," *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, December 2 2012, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/publications/hr.puB.12.2\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/publications/hr.puB.12.2_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Timeline

**1760s–1840s** — The Industrial Revolution period in Europe and North America marks the first examples of widespread human rights violations in factories.<sup>5</sup> The protective measures for machinery and workplace environments were inadequately enforced by managers and owners, leading to a concerning absence of safer precautions.<sup>6</sup> The era of dangerous working conditions, child labour, long working hours, and low wages heightens as populations take on more urban industrial work.<sup>7</sup>

**June 7, 1833** — The United Kingdom Factory Act (1833) is enacted in the British parliament to set restrictions on child labour in the textiles industry. It is the first legal effort to improve working conditions. Emerging from decade-long efforts in the 18th century, this legislation introduces prohibitions on children under the age of nine from engaging in labour, as well as restrictions on the amount of hours they could work each week.<sup>8</sup>

**March 25, 1911** — Titled the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, a fatal fire broke out in a New York City sweatshop due to insufficient fire safety measures. Killing 146 workers of mainly young European immigrants, this event sparked a movement in the United States for safer working conditions.<sup>9</sup>

**December 10, 1948** — The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a milestone document outlining the rights and freedoms of people.<sup>10</sup> This universal document, spotlighted in each member state, is imperative for outlining adequate, fair, and favourable conditions of work.<sup>11</sup>

**December 16, 1966** — The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly with ratification from 35 states. The treaty recognizes and builds on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, outlining that workers have the right to form trade unions and work in safe conditions.<sup>12</sup>

**June 17, 1973** — Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) is enacted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to establish an international labour standard. The convention recognizes that countries must have a general minimum age of fifteen for employment, excluding specific developing countries.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “1833 Factory Act,” *The National Archives*, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/1833-factory-act/>.

<sup>7</sup> “America at Work,” *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/america-at-work-and-leisure-1894-to-1915/articles-and-essays/america-at-work/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Factory Act | 1833, Significance, & Facts,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 7 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Factory-Act-United-Kingdom-1833>.

<sup>9</sup> “Triangle shirtwaist factory fire | Deaths & Facts,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire>.

<sup>10</sup> “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *The United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Background to the Covenant,” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cescr/background-covenant>,

<sup>13</sup> “Convention C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138),” *ILO*, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C138](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C138).

**June 18, 1998** — The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is adopted by the ILO to reaffirm the commitments from governments, organizations, and employers to uphold basic human rights within workplace settings.<sup>14</sup> The document “affirm[s] freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment, and a safe and healthy working environment.”<sup>15</sup>

**June 16, 2011** — United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights is enacted by the UNHRC in Resolution 17/4. It requires companies to exercise due diligence in the source and use of goods or services. The thirty-one set principles serve as a common platform for accountability in which governments and businesses can be assessed.<sup>16</sup>

**August 16, 2012** — The Marikana Massacre kills 34 miners and leaves 78 severely injured. The open fire assault is a result of accumulating striking mine workers demanding a living wage.<sup>17</sup> This leads to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights convening a press briefing to address the issue of the disproportionate use of force and safety risks faced by miners in South Africa later this same year.<sup>18</sup>

**April 24, 2013** — The Rana Plaza Collapse, a devastating collapse at a garment factory in Dhaka Bangladesh, kills more than 1000 workers. The factory was built disregarding construction safety codes, with approval wrongly granted by the city mayor.<sup>19</sup> The International Labour Organization has since commenced work to inspect structural, electrical, and fire safety of garment factories in Bangladesh.<sup>20</sup>

**June 10, 2016** — In the 105th Session of the International Labour Conference, a global summit of employers, trade unions, and governments gathers to discuss adequate working standards in supply chains for the first time.<sup>21</sup> With the absence of legally binding business standards, the conference discusses ways to uphold human rights and amend existing conventions.<sup>22</sup>

**December 18, 2019** — The Human Rights Watch publishes a follow-up report titled “Accelerating Supply Chain Transparency in the Apparel and Footwear Industry” to their previous article, “The Need for Supply Chain Transparency in the Garment and Footwear Industry.” It highlights a notable increase in company disclosure of names, addresses, and further details of their tier-1 supplier factories.<sup>23</sup> As of the report’s release, 39 companies have committed to the Transparency Pledge standard while 31 companies fell short and 21 would not publicly disclose such supplier information.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-,” *ILO*, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_467653.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_467653.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> “Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,” *United Nations Development Programme*, September 13, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/laopdr/publications/guiding-principles-business-and-human-rights>.

<sup>17</sup> “Marikana Massacre,” *South African History Online*, August 12 2012, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/marikana-massacre-16-august-2012>.

<sup>18</sup> Pillay Navi, “Press Conference by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,” *OHCHR*, October, 2012, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2012/10/press-conference-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-navi-pillay>.

<sup>19</sup> “Collapse at Rana Plaza,” *Ethics Unwrapped*, <https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/collapse-at-rana-plaza>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> “105th Session of the International Labour Conference, 30 May - 10 June 2016 (International Labour Conference (ILC).” *ILO*, <https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/previous-sessions/105/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> “More Brands Should Reveal Where Their Clothes are Made,” *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/20/more-brands-should-reveal-where-their-clothes-are-made>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



**August 31, 2022** — The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights releases a report on its assessments of human rights concerns in Xinjiang, China.<sup>25</sup> This followed serious allegations of violations against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim communities, including forced labour.<sup>26</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Office states that it is prepared to offer assistance to China in assisting with matters and suggestions outlined in the assessment report.<sup>27</sup>

## Historical Analysis

The 18th century Industrial Revolution had a transformative impact on technology and manufacturing in Great Britain and around the world. Rapid shifts in socio-economic landscapes were caused by various technical innovations; new tools and machines allowed for practical improvement in labour, production, and resource use.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the uprise of mechanization replaced the necessity of human labour.<sup>29</sup> For instance, the invention of the steam engine revolutionized manufacturing processes and laid the foundation for industry mechanization, enabling production factories to operate at a larger scale and more efficiently.<sup>30</sup> In the textile industry, on the other hand, the introduction of the spinning jenny and power loom—machines for spinning and threading wool and fabric—replaced traditional handlooms which required several labourers to operate.<sup>31</sup>

As industries continued to enhance their efficiency through the Industrial Revolution, factory wages surpassed the income of traditional farming. A surge in job opportunities and wage levels emerged, overshadowing the necessity for conventional agricultural jobs.<sup>32</sup> With the growing number of employment opportunities within cities and industrial towns in need of factory-based assemblies, business operators often prioritized profit and production over all else. On top of the laissez-faire capitalism, where governments played little roles in the standards of business practices, the exploitation of workers—including women and children—became extremely common.<sup>33</sup> Working hours ranged from 10 to 14 hours a day with minimal breaks. Moreover, workers were often forced into deplorable conditions, including unsanitary workspaces, exposure to hazardous substances, and possible death-threatening accidents and injuries.<sup>34</sup> Machines in factories frequently operated with moving parts, leading to injuries for operators and posing a risk of potential fatalities among factory workers, often due to the machines' susceptibility to breakdowns.<sup>35</sup> As a result, numerous labour unions emerged to demand better working conditions, adequate wages, and reasonable hours, sparking a labour movement that spread from Europe to North America in the following centuries. Amidst increasing globalization and the shift towards industrialization, countries worldwide started to adopt factory-based employment practices. Workers executed and formed trade unions in order to protest a variety of key issues, including shorter working hours, access to

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<sup>25</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1125932>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cooper, Ashley, and Freddie Wilkinson. "Industrial Revolution and Technology," *National Geographic Education*, June 2, 2022, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/industrial-revolution-and-technology/>.

<sup>29</sup> "Effects of Agriculture on the Industrial Revolution – Foundations of Western Culture," Foundations of Western Culture, <http://foundations.uwgb.org/agriculture/>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Chen, James. "Industrial Revolution Definition: History, Pros, and Cons," *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/industrial-revolution.asp>.

<sup>33</sup> Beck Elias, "Working Conditions in the Industrial Revolution," *HISTORY CRUNCH*, Nov 26 2016. <https://www.historycrunch.com/working-conditions-in-the-industrial-revolution.html#/>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

basic education, workplace safety, and improved wages.<sup>36</sup> For example, the Knights of Labour was the first major union in the United States with over 700,000 North American members who campaigned for an eight-hour work day and the abolition of child labour.<sup>37</sup> Labour unions communicated between workers and employers as a response to unethical production practices and environments.

When the Industrial Revolution first spread across regions of Northern France, Belgium, Germany, Japan, and the United States in the late nineteenth century, this period witnessed an increasing urgency for human rights.<sup>38</sup> Economic integration on a global scale assisted in the growth of manufacturers in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America.<sup>39</sup> However, unethical abuses of workers in factories continued to spread in most underdeveloped countries due to the inadequacy of unionization and the absence of robust labour regulations.<sup>40</sup> Stemming from economic hardships, conflict situations, and the lack of access to education, international human rights standards in manufacturing facilities were often overlooked.<sup>41</sup>

At the height of the Industrial Revolution, child labour peaked as it was considered favourable to employ children due to their acceptance of lower wages. Alongside their limited possibility of organizing unions to advocate for better standards, children were often assigned tasks in confined spaces because of their small stature.<sup>42</sup> Companies and factories worldwide operated without any regulations in regards to human rights. These workplaces often paid low worker wages, leaving individuals unable to support themselves.<sup>43</sup> Individuals and families found themselves perpetually trapped in oppressive cycles, struggling to make ends meet with low wages that barely sustained their basic needs.

The first legislation aimed at addressing human rights violations was established in the United Kingdom through the Factory Act of 1833 in response to growing child exploitation practices. The act introduced prohibitive measures such as banning employment of children below the age of nine, imposing limitations on weekly working hours, and mandating daily schooling for children.<sup>44</sup> However, it was not until December 1948 when the world finally outlined a universal system that set out to resolve human right issues such as child labour and worker abuse with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>45</sup> Despite these efforts, however, the issue of child labour was not solved instantaneously. Addressing the problem requires an approach beyond legislation and policy changes; it necessitates socioeconomic intervention and further access to education, support, and empowerment.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/knights-of-labor>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/spread-modern-manufacturing-poor-periphery>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> "Child Labor," *Child Labor: Laws & Definition - HISTORY*, Oct 27 2009, <https://www.history.com/topics/industrial-revolution/child-labor>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations," *the United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

## Past UN/International Involvement

### ILO Forced Labour Convention

The 1930 Forced Labour Convention, also known as Convention No. 29, is one of the eight International Labour Organization Fundamental Conventions.<sup>46</sup> Adopted in Geneva on June 28, 1930 and formally implemented in May of 1932, this act aimed to suppress all forms of compulsory labour and forced work. The protocol defines the term “forced labour” as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (Article 2).<sup>47</sup> Five exclusive situations are exempted from the convention, including compulsory military service, civil obligations such as jury service, prison labour under exceptions, labour in emergency situations such as floods, war, and extending calamities, and minor communal service.<sup>48</sup> This act was the first international effort from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to prohibit forced labour in all participating 181 countries—excluding the United States, Afghanistan, Marshall Islands, Palau, Tonga, and Tuvalu.<sup>49</sup> The ILO faces limitations in its capacity to thoroughly enforce country-wide obligations and keep governments accountable for reporting openly.<sup>50</sup> However, the adoption relies on voluntary compliance from member states with the set standards, potentially leading to disparities in implementation and enforcement across different countries.<sup>51</sup> Due to emerging forms of forced labour not outlined by the 1930 Convention, it has since been enhanced with the 2014 Protocol to better deal with contemporary forms of involuntary labour.<sup>52</sup>

### ILO Minimum Age Convention

In 1973, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Minimum Age Convention, No. 138.<sup>53</sup> With the goal of eliminating child labour through government regulations, this convention requires all ratified states to enforce a minimum age of fifteen years for admission to employment.<sup>54</sup> However, one of the convention’s distinctive features is the recognition of diverse development levels of countries, allowing for flexibility in its implementation in, for example, lower economically stable countries.<sup>55</sup> The enactment has allowed children to receive adequate and compulsory education before working in all economic sectors, thereby halting the cycle of child labour.<sup>56</sup> Convention No. 138 has since been ratified in 176 countries, indicating global support for its

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<sup>46</sup> “Conventions and Recommendations - Labour standards,” *ILO*, <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang-en/index.html>.

<sup>47</sup> “Convention - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) (and its 2014 Protocol),” *GSP Hub*, [https://gsphub.eu/conventions/Forced%20Labour%20Convention,%201930%20\(No.%2029\)%20%20\(and%20its%202014%20Protocol\)](https://gsphub.eu/conventions/Forced%20Labour%20Convention,%201930%20(No.%2029)%20%20(and%20its%202014%20Protocol)).

<sup>48</sup> Sen Amartya, “The International Diffusion of Fundamental Labour Standards: Contemporary Content, Scope, Supervision and Proliferation of Core,” *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, <https://hr1581r.law.columbia.edu/files/2019/06/HRLR-50.3-Rombouts-International-Diffusion-of-Fundamental-Labour-Standards.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> “Convention C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138),” *ILO*, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=normlexpub:12100:0::no::P12100\\_ilo\\_code:C138](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=normlexpub:12100:0::no::P12100_ilo_code:C138).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> “Minimum Age Convention,” *Canada's Human Rights Commitments*, <https://humanrightscommitments.ca/minimum-age-convention-2/>.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

standards and principles. However, several nations including the United States, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, New Zealand, and Somalia have not done so.<sup>57</sup> Such instances highlight the varied approaches taken by countries when addressing child labour and adopting international labour guidelines. Control mechanisms have been established by the ILO to examine the progress reports countries are obligated to submit.<sup>58</sup> Despite the laudable objective of the convention, the standards face significant challenges in ensuring comprehensive compliance. Moreover, in a letter released by the United Nations Human Rights Watch, critics of Convention No. 138 argue that “if children are not allowed to work, they and their families will end up worse off.”<sup>59</sup> Impoverished families often rely upon the labour of children to meet basic needs for survival; thus, countries are not only obligated to prohibit child labour, but to “ensure children’s rights to free primary education, accessible general and vocational secondary education, and an adequate standard of living.”<sup>60</sup>

### **ILO Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention**

In 2014, the ILO enforced the “Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930.” This protocol was adopted with the aim to address contemporary manifestations of forced labour that were not explicitly covered by Convention (No. 29), such as forced labor resulting from debt bondage.<sup>61</sup> The article is a supplementary measure, requiring member states to ratify the Forced Labour Convention (No.29) before they would ratify this protocol.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the treaty reaffirmed the importance of prosecuting perpetrators of forced labour to end impunity and required governments to take actionable measures to address the issue within their countries.<sup>63</sup> The protocol provides insight into new elements: from addressing root causes of slavery to requiring employers to exercise “due diligence” in business practices and supply chains.<sup>64</sup> For instance, in Article 1(2), governments must implement and consult the “development of a national policy and plan of action in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations.”<sup>65</sup> States must not only criminalize and prosecute such violations of forced labour, but also take measures to support victims with protection and access to remedies, including compensation.<sup>66</sup> Prior to becoming legally binding, a nation has to ratify the protocol, which entails the formal acceptance of outlined obligations and the commitment to function as a legally binding instrument.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, it entails an agreement to abide by the supervisory system established by the ILO, requiring a report every three years from member states on measures taken to implement the protocol.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “When is it okay for children to work?” *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/04/when-it-okay-children-work>.

<sup>61</sup> Wendy, Zeldin. “International Labour Organization: Forced Labor Protocol Enters into Effect,” *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2016-11-17/international-labour-organization-forced-labor-protocol-enters-into-effect/>.

<sup>62</sup> “The Protocol Forced Labour,” *ILO*, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_321414.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_321414.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

## United Nations Human Rights Council Involvement

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights was adopted in June of 2011 by the United Nations Human Rights Council on Resolution 17/4, representing a pillar instrument in the safety and security of workers in factories.<sup>69</sup> The principles set out 31 expectations directed at governments, corporations, and state officials in maintaining adequate standards of business conduct.<sup>70</sup> With specific reference to modern human rights violations in corporations, including the safety of factory workers, the United Nations Guiding Principles provide a comprehensive framework for governments to follow.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the United Nations introduced a United Nations Guiding Principles Reporting Framework in 2015 to effectively assist and integrate companies in their duties by “provid[ing] a concise set of questions to which any company should strive to have answers in order to know and show that it is meeting its responsibility to respect human rights in practice.”<sup>72</sup> However, similar to past examples of international involvement, adoptions set out by the United Nations Human Rights Council and International Labour Organization are non-binding. As a result, member states are not legally required to comply with the principles, although they are expected to show efforts in implementing them with legal consequence.<sup>73</sup>

## Current Situation

Entering the 21st century, modern forms of human rights abuse in factories have emerged as a result of exploitation within global supply chains of leading corporations.<sup>74</sup> In a report published by the Verisk Maplecroft, a risk intelligence company, statistics reveal a significant deterioration of the condition of child labour, exploitation of migrant workers, depletion of health and safety, and forced labour from 2017 to 2021 in the midst of globalization.<sup>75</sup> For instance, outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Bangladesh garment industry had been due to exemptions from lockdown restrictions.<sup>76</sup> With similar situations in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, labour rights to safety are raising concerns for responsible sourcing departments.<sup>77</sup> Key sourcing countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Cambodia have entered into the ‘extreme’ risk for modern slavery, aligned with China, Dominican Republic of Congo, and Pakistan.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> “About Us,” *UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework*, <https://www.ungpreporting.org/about-us/>.

<sup>73</sup> Nikolaos Sitaropoulos, “States are Bound to Consider the UN Human Rights Committee’s Views in Good Faith | OHRH,” *Oxford Human Rights Hub*, March 11, 2015, <https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/states-are-bound-to-consider-the-un-human-rights-committees-views-in-good-faith/>.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Sofia Nazalya, “Worldwide Decline in Labour Rights Strikes at Heart of Global Supply Chains,” *Maplecroft*, Oct 6, 2021, <https://www.maplecroft.com/insights/analysis/worldwide-decline-in-labour-rights-strikes-at-heart-of-global-supply-chains/>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

## Modern Industry Production Practices

In an attempt to streamline operations in many of the world's leading companies, industries such as global garment chains use outsourced recruitment to find a supplier to organize production.<sup>79</sup> Business owners often choose to outsource manufacturing for cheaper labour, along with lower fixed and asset costs. Currently, the most common regions for outsourced production facilities include Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>80</sup> Internal operations of industries often choose such manufacturing sites to allocate operations because it allows for reduced expenses.<sup>81</sup> 'Tier 1' suppliers, the external source that businesses rely on as a production partner, sub-contract lower tier suppliers to handle work such as production and assembly.<sup>82</sup> Major labels face difficulties in precisely tracking the origins and intermediate channels through which their goods are sourced and traversed.<sup>83</sup>

Consequently, a significant segment of multinational corporations' supply chains remains hidden. To illustrate, nearly two-thirds of forced labour takes place in private sectors, parts of the economy that are not state controlled.<sup>84</sup> Companies face substantial scrutiny due to the lack of transparency regarding the ethical sourcing of their products; this directly links to human rights violations, such as forced labour and low wages.<sup>85</sup> Both businesses and governments have a shared responsibility to prioritize transparency in factory-related operations.

## Government and Labour Union Relations

Government policies play a key role in regulating working conditions, keeping businesses accountable, and organizing work within their state.<sup>86</sup> Most notably, governments have the ability to keep corporations accountable for offences that occur beyond their borders—within outsourced manufacturing sites.<sup>87</sup> A vital advocate for adequate policies and proper accountability comes from the organization and work of labour unions to address concerns. As a result, effective policies have been implemented from these efforts.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the right to freedom of association (UDHR, Article 20; ICCPR, Article 22; ICESCR, Article 8) is a vital human right to be exercised in all sectors of economic industries.<sup>89</sup> With the collective bargaining power of a unified group that experiences unfair treatment and exploitation first-hand, workers' unions play an important role in keeping facilities safe and secure.

Governments are under scrutiny to ensure that businesses and manufacturing sites operate with ethical standards. Various governments have implemented national employment and labour regulations as part of their compliance to adopted international standards. The United States enforced the Uyghur Forced Labour

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<sup>79</sup> Serena Dibra, "The increasing global supply chain risks in retail manufacturing," *Thomson Reuters*, May 18, 2022, <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/international-trade-and-supply-chain/preventing-supply-chain-risk/>.

<sup>80</sup> "What You Need To Know About Outsource Manufacturing," United Global Sourcing, <https://www.unitedgs.com/blog/outsourcing-manufacturing/what-you-need-to-know-about-outsource-manufacturing/>.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Didier, Bergeret, "Forced labour lurking in supply chains," *Corporate Knights*, February 2, 2023, <https://www.corporateknights.com/leadership/ceos-take-on-forced-labour-supply-chains/>.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> "Freedom of Association • Business & Human Rights Navigator," *Business & Human Rights Navigator*, <https://bhr-navigator.unglobalcompact.org/issues/freedom-of-association/>.

Prevention Act (UFLPA) to develop a strategy to prohibit production and the import of goods from Xinjiang, China in response to the forced labour in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. This act was a notable advancement to directly combat unethical practices.<sup>90</sup> In 2017, France implemented the Corporate Duty of Vigilance law to place emphasis on supply chain management and governance, improving corporate social responsibilities.<sup>91</sup> Following the enactment, the United Kingdom Modern Slavery Act was enacted in 2015, along with the Australia Modern Slavery Act in 2018.<sup>92</sup> The European Union then introduced the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive in 2022, requiring companies to report on their impact on society and the environment.<sup>93</sup>

### Case Study: Rana Plaza Collapse

On April 24, 2013, the Rana Plaza—an eight story building located in Dhaka, Bangladesh—collapsed. Located within the garment factory building that was knowingly built under faulty conditions, the preventable incident killed over one-thousand workers and injured thousands more.<sup>94</sup> However, state officials chose to keep factory operations ongoing until the incident, marking the deadliest accidental structural failure and deadliest garment-factory disaster in history.<sup>95</sup>

The cause of the collapse traces back to the unsafe conditions of the building; whenever large diesel power generators were turned on, the building would shake violently.<sup>96</sup> Over time, the hazard worsened in safety as it housed over several thousand workers. Prior to the construction of the building, it was found that the mayor of the city wrongly granted approval for the building to be built, allowing the owner of the garment factory to disregard the construction code and indicated hazards.<sup>97</sup> When cracks were discovered in the building, stores located underneath the garment factory—including a bank, apartment, and several shops—immediately closed, except for the factory.<sup>98</sup> Garment workers were ordered by the owner to continue working the next morning despite the danger, even after an engineer was called to inspect the cracks and deemed it unsafe.<sup>99</sup> As a result, once the generators were switched on, the plaza collapsed. Sohel Rana, the owner of the garment factory, was charged with murder—along with 37 others who were responsible for the disaster.<sup>100</sup> The size of the collapse brought international attention to the unsafe working conditions for garment workers in the country.<sup>101</sup>

With Bangladeshi workers being among the lowest paid workers in the world, companies often turn to Bangladesh, operating more than 5,000 garment factories to manufacture clothing for large labels.<sup>102</sup> The Bangladeshi government and private sectors led an assessment of over 3,780 garment factories in 2013,

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<sup>90</sup> “Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act,” *U.S. Customs and Border Protection*, 2021, <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/forced-labor/UFLPA>.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

inspecting fire, structural, and electrical safety of export-focused sites.<sup>103</sup> Notable advancements were made a decade later, including the enactment of the National Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Policy and a Bangladesh National Plan of Action.<sup>104</sup> It targets regulators, industry, trade unions, and governments, influencing workplaces across Bangladesh.<sup>105</sup> The action plan works to cover the legal frameworks, information management, and promotional activities for awareness and advocacy towards safety.<sup>106</sup> However, actions are still needed in other industrial sectors concerning workplace safety, with the recent Seema Oxygen Plant Explosion in 2023 that occurred due to inadequate fire and chemical safety standards.<sup>107</sup>

### Case Study: Forced Labour in Xinjiang

Ongoing tensions between the United States and the People's Republic of China persists in relation to documented instances of coerced labour involving ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region. United Nations Special Rapporteur, Tomoya Obokata, described that it was “reasonable to conclude” that forced labour of minority groups have taken part in China’s Western Xinjiang region, stating that the findings were “based on an independent assessment of available information.”<sup>108</sup> It was noted that “the Special Rapporteur regards it as reasonable to conclude that forced labour among Uyghur, Kazakh, and other ethnic minorities in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing has been occurring in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China.”<sup>109</sup>

With more than one-million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities predicted to be detained, estimates range that one-hundred-thousand of them may be working in forced labour within re-education camps.<sup>110</sup> The country has implemented two state-mandated systems to subject locals to labour as rated in the ‘extreme’ risk in the Verisk Modern Slavery Index.<sup>111</sup> To transfer a surplus of locals to secondary or tertiary sector work, “minorities are detained and subject to work placement” under the appearance of “poverty alleviation.”<sup>112</sup> Beijing responded to the accusations by describing the programs as a way to increase job opportunities for minorities.<sup>113</sup>

In a report by the Sheffield Hallam University’s Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice and NomoGaia, a nongovernmental organization, it was found that suppliers of major car manufacturers produced goods through Xinjiang’s government forced labour programs.<sup>114</sup> With increasing production of tires, batteries, aluminium, steel, copper, and other car parts, many car manufacturers remain at a high risk of having materials sourced from companies practising human rights abuses in the Uyghur region<sup>115</sup>. Additionally, the largest steel

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<sup>103</sup> “The Rana Plaza disaster ten years on: What has changed?,” *ILO*, <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Country-Focus/rana-plaza#national-priority>.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Martin Q. Pollard, “U.N. expert concludes ‘forced labour’ has taken place in Xinjiang,” *Reuters*, Aug 17, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/un-expert-concludes-forced-labour-has-taken-place-xinjiang-2022-08-18/>.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> “Against Their Will: The Situation in Xinjiang,” *U.S. Department of Labor*, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/against-their-will-the-situation-in-xinjiang>.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> “UN Rapporteur Finds Evidence of Forced Labor in Xinjiang, Tibet,” *VOA*, Aug 17, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-rapporteur-finds-evidence-of-forced-labor-in-xinjiang-tibet-/6705968.html>.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> “Car Industry Linked to Forced Labor in Xinjiang,” *Human Rights Watch*, December 6, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/06/car-industry-linked-forced-labor-xinjiang>.

<sup>115</sup> “Automotive Supply Chains and Forced Labor in the Uyghur Region,” *Driving Force*, <https://www.shuforcedlabour.org/drivingforce>.



and aluminium producers have shifted into the Xinjiang region under incentives from the Chinese government. In 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that “abuses in Xinjiang may amount to crimes against humanity.”<sup>116</sup> As the importance of supply chain transparency grows, businesses are encouraged to exercise due diligence in evaluating the origins of their products.

## Possible Solutions and Controversies

### Improving Supply Chain Transparency

Proliferating cycles of worker abuses in manufacturing facilities stem from a lack of transparency in businesses regarding the sourcing of goods and services. Often, when multinational corporations outsource production, the complicated process of sourcing materials becomes hard to track and assess.<sup>117</sup> Large companies may inadvertently support the utilization of forced labour as approximately two-thirds of forced labour takes place within the private sector.<sup>118</sup>

Currently, there is significant scrutiny focused on numerous global corporations as their supplier lists are revealed. A paper published in 2011 titled “The Transparent Supply Chain: from Resistance to Implementation at Nike and Levi-Strauss” displayed a series of analyses on the contributions of factory disclosure of harmful behaviour in forced labour.<sup>119</sup> The article states that “companies should be urged to move toward supply chain transparency,” with information disclosure being a common tool for business behaviour, disregarding corporate responsibility.<sup>120</sup> In the 1990s, protests emerged against overseas suppliers of Nike which produced athletic apparel.<sup>121</sup> As a result, the company became globally known for its unethical sourcing and became highly scrutinized.<sup>122</sup>

### Promoting Inspections and Reportings on Abuses

Member states have the capacity to perform inspections at manufacturing sites situated within their respective regions. Additionally, businesses and state governments can disclose their supplier lists. This allows in depth examinations by international entities, such as the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, where states undergo a peer review concerning human rights abuses. The United Nations Human Rights Council possesses the authority to pass country-specific resolutions, initiating investigations and addressing human rights violations. It is important for the committee to thoroughly examine and adopt rigorous measures to scrutinize states that have actively facilitated labour practices infringing upon human rights. While certain countries may enact policies claiming to uphold specific guidelines, they may inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of human rights abuses in manufacturing sites. For instance, a nation’s ambiguous enforcement mechanisms or lax

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> David J. Doorey, “The Transparent Supply Chain: from Resistance to Implementation at Nike and Levi-Strauss,” *Springer Link*, May 19, 2011, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-011-0882-1>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

regulatory oversight could create loopholes that overlook hidden practices, despite the appearance of compliance with international standards. Such neglect allows businesses to continue exploiting labourers and engaging in unethical practices. Enhancing the committee's capability to directly address instances of human rights violations offers the United Nations Human Rights Council the advantage of crafting resolutions tailored to tackling the unique aspects and intricacies of abuse cases.

### **Encouraging Continuous Compliance to UNGPs**

The United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) outlines a vital framework for companies to uphold their due-diligence in the maintenance and sourcing of their supply chains. With a focus on human rights, the principles include six steps to implementing principles, such as assessing risks of human rights impact and tracking human rights implementation.<sup>123</sup> Although the principles outline vital aspects for businesses to focus on, it requires voluntary compliance from businesses. Mandatory compliance and binding measures of international efforts—such as the UNGPs—in businesses are possible, but require strong control over businesses which are outside of the UNHRC's jurisdiction. Alternatively, requesting mandates for companies to uphold their own initiatives in improving supply chain transparency may reduce backlash over controlling efforts from international law. Though many corporations choose to adhere to these guidelines through corporate social responsibility initiatives, there is a significant likelihood that numerous companies may opt not to fully engage due to concerns about international scrutiny. Moreover, despite many member states having enforced National Action Plans (NAPs), many continue to lack in identifying what further steps need to be taken to enforce human rights in businesses in their country and supply chains.<sup>124</sup>

### **Consumer Education and Awareness**

Consumers unknowingly drive the exploitation of modern slavery because they spend money on goods and services that are manufactured in such processes.<sup>125</sup> It is important to note that civilians and consumers do not 'demand' products of unethical productions; rather, they prioritize factors such as convenience, price, and brand identity projection.<sup>126</sup> As a result, these consumption choices largely contribute to the demand for products through labour exploitation.<sup>127</sup> Mobilizing consumer perspectives, motivations, and actions through awareness and education can combat contemporary forms of forced labour.<sup>128</sup> For instance, the 'End Uyghur Forced Labour' campaign has been supported by a coalition of organizations to ask consumers to purchase from companies that have made a commitment to end any links to Uyghur forced labour.<sup>129</sup> This consumer-focused effort to trafficking and worker exploitation has made considerable efforts in gaining media attention and persuading companies to participate in the campaign.<sup>130</sup> As such, delegates must explore which strategies,

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Rachel Davis, "Beyond Voluntary: What it Means for States to Play an Active Role in Fostering Business Respect for Human Rights - Shift," *Shift Project*, <https://shiftproject.org/beyond-voluntary-what-it-means-for-states-to-play-an-active-role-in-fostering-business-respect-for-human-rights/>.

<sup>125</sup> "Addressing consumer awareness and (in)action towards modern slavery." n.d. Modern Slavery PEC. Accessed October 2, 2023. <https://modernslaverypec.org/assets/downloads/Consumers-full-report.pdf>.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

through avenues of education and awareness, can effectively drive consumer engagement to intervene in existing modern slavery.

## Bloc Positions

### Western Liberal Democracies

North America, particularly the United States, generates the renowned 'Fortune 500' roster of leading companies and boasts a dominant capitalist economy, hosting a significant share of the world's most successful enterprises. The world's largest data platform for supply chain assessments indicated that 64% of audits found at least one indicator of forced labour in the world's leading companies.<sup>131</sup> Recently, to address these issues, Canada introduced the "Forced Labour in Canadian Supply Chains" bill which is scheduled to be in effect starting on January 1, 2024.<sup>132</sup> As part of the country's obligation to uphold human rights in supply chains, the act creates a legal obligation to report on forced labour and child labour on Canadian soil. However, on the other hand, limited action has been done to combat overseas recruitment of modern slavery. In recent years, the United States has enacted various efforts in combatting child labour, forced labour, and other extreme cases of human rights violations in manufacturing settings. For example, not only has it become the first nation to take action against forced labour in Xinjiang, but it has also implemented import restrictions on goods "mined or produced wholly or in part in any foreign country convict labour and/or forced labour and/or indentured labour under penal sanctions."<sup>133</sup> Despite the efforts from these countries, workers' rights continue to be violated around the world, often due to a lack of transparency in company supply chains. These countries attract attention due to the presence of their companies that tend to unethically outsource their production to foreign states, often without detection. As such, Western liberal democracies must work towards full transparency in supply chains of industry-dominating corporations, and laws must be implemented to condemn unethical corporate practices such as modern slavery.

### Low Cost Country Sourcing (LCCS) Markets

Low cost Country Sourcing (LCCS) is a procurement process to minimize capital investment and maximize profits through outsourced manufacturing. In this way, a country sources materials from other countries with low labour and production costs to keep costs at a bare minimum.<sup>134</sup> Countries of low-wage markets generally include Asian and African countries, such as China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Niger, and the Central African Republic. These regions have attracted global brands, including Amazon,

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<sup>131</sup> "Recognising Forced Labour Risks in Global Supply Chains," *Sedex*, October, 2021, <http://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1683/sedex-recognising-forced-labour-risks-in-global-supply-chains-october-2021.pdf>

<sup>132</sup> "Canada's forced labour and child labour reporting legislation: What you need to know," *Dentons*, <https://www.dentons.com/en/insights/articles/2023/may/26/canadas-force-labour-and-child-labour-reporting-legislation>.

<sup>133</sup> Gisela Grieger, "US approach to preventing imports of goods made using forced labour," *European Parliament*, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/698895/EPRS\\_ATA\(2022\)698895\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/698895/EPRS_ATA(2022)698895_EN.pdf).

<sup>134</sup> "Low Cost Country Sourcing Services | LCCS Consulting," *Supply Chain Optimization | MRO Solutions | OptimizeMRO*, <https://www.optimize-mro.com/procurement-services/strategic-sourcing/low-cost-country-sourcing/>.

Apple, Zara, and Victoria's Secret, seeking cost advantages associated with outsourcing production processes.<sup>135</sup> Often, workers, such as those in garment factories, are unable to earn enough for a decent living—earning around one percent of the price at which an item is retailed by brands.<sup>136</sup> Many individuals find themselves caught in exploitative production systems due to their reliance on welfare and the necessity of earning income, while suppliers show resistance towards implementing higher wages.<sup>137</sup> Countries of LCCS markets must work towards prioritizing labour rights in their thriving mass-production economies. Actions including legal reforms can be taken to address the exploitation of low wages used by employer companies.

### Countries with Restrictive Laws

Several nations, including Russia, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Ethiopia, Hungary, and India have enacted legislation that curb the activities and financing of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights due to the threat of such voices.<sup>138</sup> This creates significant challenges and risks for citizens who wish to advocate for their rights, including the formation and participation in workers' unions.<sup>139</sup> For example, similar to other non-governmental organizations in Russia, labour unions face challenges with state interference in union activities.<sup>140</sup> This is seen in the restrictions on the right to strike, barriers to collective bargaining, and limited opportunities to register new non-governmental organizations.<sup>141</sup> Such governments perceive these union voices as threats, thereby making it highly difficult and unsafe for individuals to assert their human rights.<sup>142</sup> Oppressive laws also often limit the United Nations' ability to interfere and suppress labour unions that advocate for workers' rights.<sup>143</sup> Such countries must look towards constructive compliance with non-governmental organizations to address unethical labour production without sacrificing the integrity of the state.

### Discussion Questions

1. What human rights abuses have been reported within your country? What has been done to address these issues?
2. If forced labour has been permitted by your government, why did your country enact these policies? What aims does your government hope to achieve?
3. What programs and initiatives exist to support the rights of workers, ensure proper working conditions, and the adequate treatment of workers in your country?

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<sup>135</sup>“83 Global Brands Still Using Chinese Slave Labour,” *Best Practice Biz*, <https://bestpractice.biz/83-global-brands-still-using-chinese-slave-labour/>.

<sup>136</sup> “Purchasing practices and low wages in global supply chains: Empirical cases from the garment industry.” *ILO*, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_561141.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_561141.pdf).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> “The global backlash against human rights,” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2018/06/global-backlash-against-human-rights>.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> “Freedom of association of trade unions in modern Russia: practice and challenges. – European Lawyers for Workers Network,” *European Lawyers for Workers Network*, <https://elw-network.eu/freedom-of-association-of-trade-unions-in-modern-russia-practice-and-challenges/>.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

4. Is there a minimum wage in your country? What is it and why has it been set to this amount?
5. Why did your country choose to ratify or not to ratify specific conventions under the International Labour Organization?
6. How does your government engage with human rights advocates and non-governmental organizations? Why?
7. What demographic do a majority of workers who have been a victim to production schemes come from? How can you address this?
8. How has your government made efforts to promote transparency and accountability in business practices and/or factory operations?
9. How can international organizations that manufacturing factories within their jurisdiction comply with human rights standards?
10. How can transparency initiatives be implemented and used to monitor human rights violations and conditions in factories?
11. What are the possible economic impacts of strict human rights standards in production factories, and how can this be balanced with the need for cost-effective production?

## Additional Resources

The Apparel and Footwear Supply Chain Transparency Pledge:

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting\\_resources/transparency\\_pledge\\_1\\_pager.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/transparency_pledge_1_pager.pdf)

List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor (TVPRAList):

[https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2021/2022-TVPRAList-of-Goods-v3.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2021/2022-TVPRAList-of-Goods-v3.pdf)

Forced Labour Convention (No. 29):

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C029](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029)

Minimum Age Convention (No. 138):

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=normlexpub:12100:0::no::P12100\\_ilo\\_code:C138](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=normlexpub:12100:0::no::P12100_ilo_code:C138)

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182):

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C182](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182)

UNGPs:

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf)

UNGPs Reporting Framework:

<https://www.ungpreporting.org/>

Worldwide Decline in Labour Rights:

<https://www.maplecroft.com/insights/analysis/worldwide-decline-in-labour-rights-strikes-at-heart-of-global-supply-chains?>

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# Gender-Based Violence

## Overview

The United Nations defines gender-based violence (GBV) as “acts that inflict physical, mental, sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.”<sup>144</sup> Gender-based violence—when harm is inflicted on an individual on the basis of their gender classification—is a growing issue derived from power inequalities within societies around the globe, specifically affecting LGBTQ+ people and their right to life, liberty, and freedom in recent years.

With the rising number of incidents of gender-based violence against not only women and girls but also to other individuals with different gender expressions and identities, it is important to address the issue from various perspectives. With the social expectations, identities, and behaviours associated with gender roles, these ideas have been alarmingly embedded in our world. UN Women defines GBV as “[the] traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men and stereotyped roles which perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse.”<sup>145</sup> Worldwide, such violence can be categorized into forms including physical aggression, economic manipulation, verbal abuse, and psychological spousal harm.

The emergence and proliferation of the issue can be traced back to ingrained structures of powers and privileges that continue to manifest in modern-day examples of gender-based violence. These instances are observed within traditions, cultures, and accepted standards of behaviour depending on the state and its economic and political condition; often, there is a significant correlation with rates of such violence. For instance, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), “higher levels of violence against women and girls are associated with lower economic activity, driven mainly by a significant drop in female employment.”<sup>146</sup> In sub-Saharan African countries alone, surveys reveal that 30 percent of women experience domestic violence.<sup>147</sup>

In order to counter, address, and devise contingency plans to mitigate the spread of such violence, delegates must formulate resolutions aimed at addressing the causal relationships of GBV with factors such as state societal norms, cultural customs, and economic inequalities.

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<sup>144</sup> “Violence Against Women Key Terminology,” UNFPA, 2016, <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/violence-against-women-key-terminology-knowvawdata>.

<sup>145</sup> “All You Need to Know about Gender Based Violence. | Gender,” *World Vision International*, August 27, 2022, <https://www.wvi.org/stories/facts-faqs-history-what-you-need-know-about-gender-based-violence>.

<sup>146</sup> Rasmane Ouedraogo, and David Stenzel, “How Domestic Violence is a Threat to Economic Development,” IMF Blog, November 24, 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2021/11/24/how-domestic-violence-is-a-threat-to-economic-development>.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

## Timeline

**1878** — Notable feminists Marie Deraismes and Leon Richer, along with representatives from 16 other nations, gather in a committee to start the *First International Congress on Women's Rights*; it seeks to advance women's rights in areas of historical, educational, economic, moral and legislative regard to women and establish a permanent organization for change.

**December 1937** — The Nanjing Massacre is a horrific event characterized by the victimization and sexual violence of Nanjing residents. Japanese soldiers target women and girls, resulting in an estimated 20,000 violent assaults. These acts of violence are carried out through door-to-door searches, with victims often subject to gang rape, torture, and mutilation, resulting in their tragic deaths.<sup>148</sup>

**December 10, 1948** — After World War II, the United Nations is formed and in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is drafted with over 50 member states participating. Article 2 states that everyone, regardless of sex, is guaranteed equal rights and freedoms.<sup>149</sup>

**November 25, 1960** — The three Mirabal sisters, women's rights activists in the Dominican Republic, are assassinated by Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo in the wake of their leadership in resistance movements. Today, they stand as a symbol of martyrdom in the country and freedom for all women in the world.<sup>150</sup>

**March 4, 1994** — In resolution 1994/45, the United Nations Human Rights Council appoints a Special Rapporteur dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls. The adopted resolution aims to address the root causes and consequences of this violence.<sup>151</sup> It not only recognizes violence against women as a human rights violation but also contributes to its integration into the overarching concept of human rights.

**April 19, 2015** — In Hanoi, Vietnam, the Ho Tay Water Park implements a policy of open admission for the first two hours. During this time, 70–80 men engage in acts of sexual assault against more than 20 women and girls within the water park premises. The female vice-general director of Hanoi Entertainment Services dismisses the incidents, attributing them to the quality of the victims' bikinis. Additionally, park officials refuse to provide assistance to the victims of these assaults.<sup>152</sup>

**October 2017** — The #MeToo movement gains significant attention on social media after Alyssa Milano encourages women to share their experiences of sexual abuse, providing a platform for survivors of sexual assault to speak out. In Canada, this movement brings forward a higher demand for victim support services and reveals that much change is needed.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> "CRSV: The Nanjing Massacre," *The Gender Security Project*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.gendersecurityproject.com/post/crsv-the-nanjing-massacre>.

<sup>149</sup> "History of the Declaration | United Nations," *the United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/udhr/history-of-the-declaration>.

<sup>150</sup> Yukio Mishima, "Mirabal Sisters Assassinated by Trujillo Regime," *History*, March 28, 2022, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/mirabal-sisters-assassinated-dominican-republic>.

<sup>151</sup> "About the Mandate | OHCHR," *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-mandate>.

<sup>152</sup> Alissa Miller, "Vietnam: 20 women allegedly sexually assaulted at Ho Tay water park; Hanoi Entertainment denies claims," *Elite Daily*, July 28, 2015, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/vietnam-20-women-allegedly-sexually-assaulted-at-ho-tay-water-park-hanoi-entertainment-denies-claims/>

<sup>153</sup> "The Facts About the #MeToo Movement and its Impact in Canada," *Canadian Women's Foundation*, November 22, 2021 <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/the-metoo-movement-in-canada/>.

**May 11, 2023** — The U.S. Department of Homeland Security releases information to the American government and law enforcement agencies regarding statistics of rising hate crime rates toward the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>154</sup> In one statistic, DHS says “[h]igh-profile attacks against schools and faith-based institutions [...] historically [serve] as inspiration for individuals to conduct copycat attacks.” Moreover, the DHS indicates that this could lead to an increase of larger-scale attacks on infrastructures such as healthcare and public communities.<sup>155</sup>

## Historical Analysis

Gender-based violence is rooted in historic cultures and traditions but has been embedded into the fundamental structures of modern society. Such forms of violence stem from societal pressure to conform to normative expectations of masculinity and femininity—the cultural definitions of “what it means to be a certain gender.”<sup>156</sup> This root cause extends into legal societies, and such violence against select groups is often differentiated by economic and political factors.

The atrocities of gender-based violence have prompted researchers to suggest that culture is one of the most significant factors for gender-based violence; significant evidence from research shows that similar cultures show similar degrees of gender-based violence.<sup>157</sup> In 2021, approximately 18% of the population of women in the world lived in China; yet, this issue is hardly ever brought to matter in the country.<sup>158</sup> Aside from the persisting conservative attitudes on gender roles in China’s history, recent data has shown that gender-based violence rates in China are independent of economic status.<sup>159</sup> Chinese researchers found that social and cultural ideologies throughout China’s history, along with tight structures of hegemonic masculinity, perpetuate gender-based violence against women, rather than economic factors.<sup>160</sup>

In a case of political causes for violence, during World War II, victors would exploit sexual violence—particularly against women—as means to assert dominance and control over the conquered.<sup>161</sup> When Germany was defeated by the Allies in 1945, many American soldiers leveraged this opportunity to copulate with the German women. Few instances were ever consensual, leaving hundreds of thousands of women as victims of rape and sexual violence.<sup>162</sup> This act of exploiting the enemy in World War II occurred not only in Germany, but also in similar situations across the world such as the Nanjing Massacre. Although these were private affairs of violence, these acts unveiled a darker side of war; poorly structured government systems allowed for such atrocities to happen.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Josh Margolin, Teddy Grant. “Threats against the LGBTQ+ community intensifying: Department of Homeland Security,” *ABC News*, May 15, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/threats-lgbtqia-community-intensifying-department-homeland-security/story?id=99338137>

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Dandapat S. Rimjhim, “Is Gender-Based Violence a Confluence of Culture? Empirical Evidence from Social Media,” *National Library of Medicine*, July 29, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9454862/>

<sup>158</sup> Takashi Sekiyama, and Zixuan Wang, “Domestic violence victimization among Chinese women and its relevance to their economic power,” *Frontiers*, April 17, 2023, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1178673/full>

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Gang Fang, Hongtao Li, and Xiangxian Wang, “Gender-based violence and hegemonic masculinity in China: an analysis based on the quantitative research,” *SPRINGER LINK*, August 5, 2019, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42379-019-00030-9>

<sup>161</sup> “Silenced Voices: Sexual Violence During and After World War II,” *The Aquila Digital Community*, [https://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1336&context=honors\\_theses](https://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1336&context=honors_theses).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

Gender and sexuality is another growing movement in society today. Since the inception of women's rights in the United Nations in 1993, numerous governments and political bodies have moved toward equal rights for people of all genders; however, many legal structures in the world discriminate against people of non-heterosexual relationships.<sup>164</sup> In 2023, the United States of America alone passed 70 anti-LGBTQ+ laws, inspiring violence toward marginalized groups of people.<sup>165</sup> Judicial systems with prejudice towards people of different gender and sexual identity continue to promote gender-based violence.<sup>166</sup> As a result, addressing gender-based violence requires effective solutions, whether through education, new legislation, or other means.<sup>167</sup>

## Past UN/International Involvement

### The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

On December 18, 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>168</sup> Out of 193 member states, seven countries have yet to ratify the convention, including the United States, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Nauru, Paulau, and Tonga.<sup>169</sup> Using legally binding frameworks and standards, CEDAW was created to advance women's rights and draw attention to areas where women face inequality compared to men within member states. Additionally, the convention acknowledges that discrimination against women "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity."<sup>170</sup> The article standardized women's rights in countries by targeting and outlining areas affected by such discrimination such as employment, health care, family planning, family life, and marriage.<sup>171</sup> For example, as part of Article 14, nations that become parties to the CEDAW are compelled to recognize challenges and the essential roles of rural women and girls in the survival of their families.<sup>172</sup> Marked as a tool to bring rightful change to women around the globe, the convention has widely contributed to efforts targeting discrimination.<sup>173</sup> The treaty has fostered the adoption of laws such as those prohibiting sex-based discrimination in access to land in Rwanda, gender equality in Mongolia, and domestic violence laws in Turkey, Nepal, South Africa, and the Republic of Korea.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, it indirectly promoted national investigations into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada, led to the enactment of legislation criminalizing femicide in Panama, and contributed to the creation of anti-trafficking laws in Ukraine and Moldova. With CEDAW relying on international cooperation and adequate universal standards, states are encouraged to adopt all measures and

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Cullen Peele, "Roundup of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation Advancing In States Across the Country," *Human Rights Campaign*, May 23, 2023, <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/roundup-of-anti-lgbtq-legislation-advancing-in-states-across-the-country>

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Azza Karam, "Education as the Pathway Towards Gender Equality," *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/education-pathway-towards-gender-equality>.

<sup>168</sup> "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women," *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw>.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979," *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> "What is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)?" *United Nations*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/cedaw-your-daily-life>

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

submit periodic reports on efforts to implement the convention; however, the reporting system is regarded as weak due to its reliance on moral persuasion for states to comply.<sup>175</sup>

### **The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women**

The United Nations General Assembly enacted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993, establishing violence against women as an international threat to human rights rather than culturally acceptable.<sup>176</sup> The document defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”<sup>177</sup> The declaration asserts that such violence is rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women, leading to the idea that places women in a position inferior to men.<sup>178</sup> The definition of the document encompasses a wide range of cases, such as rape, domestic battering, torture, and sexual slavery, all of which are indisputably unacceptable under international law.<sup>179</sup>

Furthermore, the declaration outlines three main categories which categorizes the violence against women: physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Within families and domestic relationships, this includes battery, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, and other traditional practices harmful to women.<sup>180</sup> Outside of that and within the general community, this includes rape, sexual abuse, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, sexual harassment and intimidation at work.<sup>181</sup> Additionally, such categories account for all forms of violence condoned and perpetrated by the state.<sup>182</sup> Such practices, sources, categories, and roots listed in Articles 2 and 4 were instrumental in its implementation into international law. For instance, Article 4 places individual rights to personal safety above state claims of cultural rights condoning such violence.<sup>183</sup>

### **UNFPA Involvement**

The United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services, launched by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women in 2013, is a program dedicated to achieving globally accepted guidelines for adequate quality, delivery, and coordination of identified essential services.<sup>184</sup> Guidelines listed by the programme include several modules for essential services in relation to health services, justice and policing sectors, and social services.<sup>185</sup> Aimed at women and girls in mainly low and middle-income countries, the program aims to improve victims’ access to services through comprehensive implementation guides while

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<sup>175</sup> “Instruments and Measures Adopted by the United Nations - Gender Matters,” *The Council of Europe*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/united-nations>.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions: Types of Violence Against Women and Girls,” UN WOMEN, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence>

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> “Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence,” *United Nations Population Fund*, <https://www.unfpa.org/joint-global-programme-essential-services-women-and-girls-subject-violence>.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

pushing countries to implement the priority theme of “[the] Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls” from the 57th Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>186</sup> Held in 2013 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, this commission ended with 45 Member States committing to taking action on its priority theme, which sought to end violence against women and girls (VAWG).<sup>187</sup> Entering the second implementation phase in 2016, the program is taking steps to ensure that countries have viable plans in achieving accountability measures and international standards of safety and security for women and girls. In particular, the program conducts periodic reviews of essential services in countries such as Peru, Egypt, Mozambique, Cambodia, Guatemala, Pakistan, and Vietnam, which often have higher risks of gender-based violence due to issues such as poverty, lack of governance, war, and refugee displacement.<sup>188</sup>

## Current Situation

While gender-based violence in the present era has evolved, harmful acts such as honour killings and female mutilations continue to persist. Gender-based violence is a heightening pandemic that affects an estimated one in three women in their lifetime.<sup>189</sup> Specifically, research findings from UN Women in 2018 showed that one in seven women had experienced violence, either physically or sexually, from an intimate partner or husband.<sup>190</sup> In the same year, 92 percent of victims for sexual exploitation were found to be females.<sup>191</sup> Although studies on male survivors are limited, men and boys are also subjected to gender-based violence.<sup>192</sup> Intimate partner violence (IPV) and non-partner sexual violence (NPSV) are the two most common types of violence experienced by women.<sup>193</sup> Though there are no delineated boundaries to gender-based violence, it is critical to note that it is rooted in social settings where women are placed with less social and economic power than men through laws, cultural practices, and societal norms.

## LGBTQ+ Community

Globally, one of the most at-risk groups for gender-based violence include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQ+) people.<sup>194</sup> Statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people often experience sexual violence at higher rates than heterosexual people.<sup>195</sup> Further, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects (NCAVP) suggests that half the population of bisexual women and transgender people will experience sexual violence at some point in their

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> “The 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women,” *Council of Europe*, <https://rm.coe.int/168063bc34>.

<sup>188</sup> “What is Gender-Based Violence – and How Do We Prevent It?” *International Rescue Committee*, November 22, 2022, <https://www.rescue.org/uk/article/what-gender-based-violence-and-how-do-we-prevent-it>.

<sup>189</sup> “Gender-based Violence,” *United Nations Population Fund*, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence>.

<sup>190</sup> “Facts and figures: Ending violence against women,” *UN Women*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> “Thailand: Gender-based Violence Among Displaced People” *JRS APR*, <https://apr.jrs.net/en/story/thailand-gender-based-violence-among-displaced-people/>.

<sup>193</sup> “Violence against women and girls – what the data tell us,” *World Bank Gender Data Portal*, September 30, 2022, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/data-stories/overview-of-gender-based-violence/>.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> “NISVS: An Overview of 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation,” *NISVS*, [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc\\_nisvs\\_victimization\\_final-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc_nisvs_victimization_final-a.pdf).

lifetime.<sup>196</sup> New laws and regulations in predominantly conservative nations such as Qatar or Saudi Arabia that criminalize homosexuality further stigmatize the LGBTQ+ community, and thus, increase the risk of gender-based violence. Currently, 64 countries have legal frameworks that criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts, ranging from up to eight years of imprisonment to the death penalty.<sup>197</sup> For instance, in July 2023, Iraq introduced a bill with the aim of establishing life imprisonment as a penalty for “acts of sexual deviance,” referring to “homosexual relations.”<sup>198</sup> However, in other countries, efforts are being made to move towards a more liberal standpoint. For instance, some countries in Africa such as Gabon are decriminalizing same-sex unions to improve rights for LGBTQ+ people.<sup>199</sup>

## Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence, characterized by controlling behaviour and emotional abuse, is primarily found in heterosexual relationships regardless of the socioeconomic, religious, and cultural setting.<sup>200</sup> Oftentimes, these cultural norms lean towards the ideology that males typically dominate over female partners, as seen in Asian cultures where women are socialized to be subservient and tolerant of mistreatment from men.<sup>201</sup> According to the United Nations and World Health Organization, intimate partner violence refers to “behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.”<sup>202</sup> Research suggests that there are various reasons why women may stay in violent relationships, including a fear of retaliation, concern for their children's well-being, insufficient support from family and friends, limited access to economic resources, and apprehension about losing custody of their children in the case of divorce.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, a statistic from 2020 reveals that 58% of the 81,000 women and girls who lost their lives due to gender-based violence were victims of intimate partner or familial violence.<sup>204</sup> Surveys based on survivor reports indicate that more than a quarter of women ranging from ages 15-49 years have been subject to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.<sup>205</sup> This figure ranges from 20% of women in the Western Pacific Region, 22% of women in high-income countries, 25% of women in the Americas Region, 33% of women in the African Region, 31% of women in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and 33% of women in the Southeast Asia Region.<sup>206</sup> Additionally, a study published in 2020 found that in most cases of intimate partner violence, younger, poorer, and less empowered women tend to be more vulnerable to such violence due to the reliance on their roles as caregivers for families and the lack of economic resources and opportunities.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> “Criminalisation of Consensual Same Sex Acts,” *Ilga Database*, 2023, <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> “Intimate partner violence,” *World Health Organization (WHO)*, [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf).

<sup>201</sup> Madeline E. White, and Lata Satyen, “Cross-Cultural Differences in Intimate Partner Violence and Depression: A Systematic Review,” *ScienceDirect*, October 2015, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1359178915000671>

<sup>202</sup> “Violence Against Women,” *World Health Organization (WHO)*, March 9, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Aluisio J D Barros, Carolina V N Coll, Claudia Garcia-Moreno, Fernanda Ewerling, and Franciele Hellwig, “Intimate Partner Violence in 46 Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries: An Appraisal of the Most Vulnerable Groups of Women Using



## Non-Partner Sexual Violence

According to the WHO, sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act aimed against a person’s sexuality using coercion... in any setting.”<sup>208</sup> The definition includes rape, defined as the physically forced or coerced penetration attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching, and other non-contact forms of sexual violence.<sup>209</sup> Sexual violence is often perpetuated by the acceptability of violence, rooted in factors such as family honour beliefs and sexual purity, ideological male sexual entitlement, and inadequate measures towards sexual violence.<sup>210</sup> Statistics and reported occurrences of NPSV widely vary from those of IPV, which is most common in high-income countries; it affects 19% of women in Australia and New Zealand, and 15% of women in North America.<sup>211</sup> Such acts stem from male attitudes which can include resentment when women are viewed as economic competitors. As a result, the World Bank estimates that 6% of women and girls worldwide of ages 15–49 have been subject to non-partner sexual violence.<sup>212</sup>

For over a decade, UN Women’s Global Flagship Programme Initiative, *Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces*, has taken efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and further forms of violence conducted in public spaces against women and girls.<sup>213</sup> With participating countries in Africa, Arab States, the Asia Pacific, North America, Europe, and Latin America, data collection and analysis have been conducted to identify, develop, and implement response strategies throughout municipalities. An essential factor of carrying out such initiatives is for victims, particularly women, to come forward and report instances of gender-based violence. For instance, after its partnership with the City of Montreal in Canada, the initiative focused on the development of concrete awareness-raising tools for government staff as a key element to its success.<sup>214</sup> Additionally, it includes region-specific coordination processes in over 12 cities, allowing the program to devise adequate countermeasures. Sharing experiences sheds light on how victims are targeted and the tactics employed by offenders to exploit individuals.

## Case Study: Afghanistan

Located in the most dangerous country for women due to ongoing state instability and conflict, Afghan citizens often report feeling suffocated, isolated, and invisible in prison-like conditions.<sup>215</sup> In March 2023, UN experts reported that 20 years of progress for women and girls’ rights were eradicated following the political takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>216</sup> The statement explains that women are denied their fundamental rights and freedoms—from the rights to education and work to movement and much more.<sup>217</sup>

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National Health Surveys,” *BMJ Glob Health*, January 26, 2020, 10.1136/bmjgh-2019-002208. PMID: 32133178; PMCID: PMC7042580.

<sup>208</sup> “Sexual Violence,” *Violence Info*, 2022, <https://apps.who.int/violence-info/sexual-violence/>

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> “What we do: Ending violence against women,” *UN Women*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> “Afghanistan: UN Experts Say 20 Years of Progress for Women and Girls’ Rights Erased Since Taliban Takeover,” *OHCHR*, March 8, 2023 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-un-experts-say-20-years-progress-women-and-girls-rights-erased>.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

Alongside strict bans on women in secondary school, post-secondary education, and NGOs, women are denied access to basic needs, including support for victims of sexual violence.<sup>218</sup> According to a publication on abuses against Afghan women, Taliban enforcers have been reported to be physically assaulting women wearing Western-style pants under mandated outer robes.<sup>219</sup> These attacks have been intensifying in response to women's rights campaigns demanding basic rights in Afghanistan.<sup>220</sup> Since taking control, officials have engaged in routine tortures and killings of women. One incident involved a woman who was sentenced to execution by being buried in a pit and stoned to death on charges of alleged adultery.<sup>221</sup> However, reports from two Afghan news sources confirm that she had taken her own life two days before the execution.<sup>222</sup> The international community condemns these extreme cases of violence against women that have stemmed from rooted patriarchal structures and religious fundamentalist guidelines. Members of the UN stress the urgent need for the reversal of Taliban decrees. Specifically, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ordered de facto authorities to reverse course to alleviate the treatment of women and girls, to stop arbitrary detention, and to reopen schools at all levels and universities for girls and women for their right to education.<sup>223</sup>

### Case Study: Thailand

While 30,000 annual cases of gender-based violence are reported to Thailand's Ministry of Public Health's One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC), only 5,000 cases are recorded by the police and 1,500 cases result in an arrest.<sup>224</sup> Thailand, in recent years, has established numerous services, such as health and social service facilities that respond to violence nationwide, but much of the assistance offered is hardly accessible and taken seriously by authorities.<sup>225</sup> Apart from having structural issues with aid for victims, Thailand has one of the highest violence against women rate, and it has become a worsening problem.<sup>226</sup> UNODC reports that "87% of sexual and gender-based violence attacks go unreported in Thailand."<sup>227</sup> Thailand's crisis has been instigated by the country's judicial systems, lack of education, and culture. At the forefront, the government is unable to make much change when such a huge void in the data exists; moreover, the judicial systems in place make it difficult for people to report crimes as there is significant distrust in the police and law. Included within those systems is the shortfall of the education department where inadequate sex education is provided to youth.<sup>228</sup> Additionally, GBV can be attributed to Thai culture, where in soap operas and news, sexual violence is normalized and rape culture is fortified.<sup>229</sup> The crisis in Thailand is ultimately backed by the acceptance of cultural norms and a failed support system for victims of gender-based violence.

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Belquis Ahmadi, "Taliban Escalate New Abuses Against Afghan Women, Girls," *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/10/taliban-escalate-new-abuses-against-afghan-women-girls>.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> "UN Women – Asia-Pacific," *UN Women Asia and the Pacific*, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/thailand/ending-violence-against-women>.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> "Spinning in the Void: The Data Black Hole of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Thailand," *Heinrich Böll Stiftung Southeast Asia*, October 20, 2022, <https://th.boell.org/en/2022/10/20/sexual-and-gender-violence-thailand>.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

## Possible Solutions and Controversies

### Improving and Implementing Essential Services

Essential services for those subject to violence, such as shelters and legal support, are critical to providing secure environments and the necessary resources for individuals to break out of harmful cycles of abuse. It is an umbrella term that refers to “services that respond to violence against women and girls, specifically focused on victims of violence.”<sup>230</sup> Imperative for assisting women’s recovery from violence, essential services prevent the recurrence of violence and work with particular parts of society to change the attitudes and perceptions of violence. The United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls highlights four critical essential services—social, health, police, and justice services.<sup>231</sup> The Essential Services Package under the program identifies necessary guidelines for the coordination of these services, including coordination with governments, legal frameworks, resource and financing, accountability, oversight, and monitoring.<sup>232</sup> These frameworks and initiatives include “psycho-social counselling, financial support, crisis information and counselling, safe accommodation, legal and advocacy services, and housing and employment support to women and girls who experience violence.”<sup>233</sup> For legal systems to comprehensively address the issue, country policies and practices must recognize the historical inequity of men and women to integrate sufficient policies towards offender accountability.<sup>234</sup> However, it is important to note that the implementation of such essential services for victims must be addressed on a subjective scope to productively address demographic and region-specific needs. While an implementation, improvement, or change of an essential service may be considered adequate for one community or victim, it may not necessarily be suitable for another. Delegates must understand unique political, historical, cultural, economic, and societal circumstances of countries to provide a comprehensive, effective, and relevant approach.

### Data Systems

At the heart of identifying gender-based violence in states, data systems are vital to understanding and monitoring how violence is perpetuated in different communities. For example, in the case study of Thailand’s national data system, a lack of consistent records causes data to be grossly underestimated.<sup>235</sup> With a more extensive monitoring of gender-based violence in urban areas and regions, additional research can achieve greater consistency, accessibility, and effective communication with the public. Such initiatives can involve sub-task forces or bodies that focus on collecting information relative to an area or community. Furthermore, evidence-based approaches using data can be tailored to address country and community-specific initiatives, but this raises controversy as it may potentially jeopardize the sovereignty of nations. Additionally, determining the body responsible for regulating and implementing efforts to monitor such surveillance and data systems may

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> “Implementation Guide,” *UN Women*,

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Essential-Services-Package-Module-6-en.pdf>.

<sup>233</sup> “Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence,” *UN Women*, December, 2015,

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/12/essential-services-package-for-women-and-girls-subject-to-violence>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

result in contention. As a result, various conventions and agreements often call on countries to develop and implement national action plans to address issues within their own jurisdiction. For instance, the government of Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence has implemented an Indigenous-led approach for victims, survivors, and their families to end violence against Indigenous women. National action plans can be essential for tailoring solutions to local contexts and engaging with relevant stakeholders; however, relying on national action plans may disregard the potential benefits of transnational assistance that international cooperation can bring, such as better-informed solutions and expertise sharing.

## Education Tools

Women and girls around the globe must be empowered to make autonomous decisions through available and accessible education settings. Yet, addressing the issue through this sense requires a thorough evaluation of why women and girls may be subject to such violence relative to specific regions and States. Gender-based violence is intricately tied to the perpetuation of norms, stereotypes, practices, and beliefs that reinforce unequal power dynamics between genders in societies and families. Education can be implemented through international assistance to local cities and communities, which can provide adequate resources and specificity to address stereotypes. On the other hand, the potential of education in advancing gender equality is often overlooked in lesser-developed countries due to economic struggles and societal expectations of cultures. In South Africa, for example, gender-based violence has become a pervasive issue because of widespread poverty and the lack of legal action, forcing women to act as caretakers for generally large families.<sup>236</sup> As a result of the demand for more child workers, fertility rates continue to rise.<sup>237</sup> Data from Girls Not Brides, a global partnership to end child marriages, estimates that over 60% of women in South Africa aged 20–24 with limited or no formal education were married before the age of 18.<sup>238</sup> Additionally, women and girls with minimal or no formal education face a threefold higher likelihood of getting married before the age of 18, compared to those with higher education.<sup>239</sup>

## Bloc Positions

### Africa

According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, 37% of women between the ages of 15–49 in “least developed” countries have been subject to physical or sexual partner violence.<sup>240</sup> As many lesser economically developed countries are located in Africa, this region has a higher intensity of gender-based violence due to the consequences of colonization, poverty, weak law enforcement institutions, homophobia, and ethnic oppression.<sup>241</sup> For example, in Article 444 of the Democratic Republic of Congo's Family Code, it states, “the

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<sup>236</sup> Lacey George, “Gender-Based Violence Against Women in South Africa,” *Ballard Brief*, 2020, <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/gender-based-violence-against-women-in-south-africa>

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> “Addressing Gender-Based Violence Through Education,” *Zonta International*, [https://www.zonta.org/Web/News\\_Events/Articles/Addressing\\_gender-based\\_violence\\_through\\_education.aspx](https://www.zonta.org/Web/News_Events/Articles/Addressing_gender-based_violence_through_education.aspx).

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> “Gender-based Violence in the Developing World,” *King Center on Global Development*, <https://kingcenter.stanford.edu/our-work/research-initiatives/gender-based-violence-developing-world>.

husband is the head of the household. He owes protection to his wife; his wife owes obedience to her husband.”<sup>242</sup> Thus, this situation leaves women in marriages highly vulnerable to spousal and gender-based violence.

In this region, gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence, has reinforced the notion of male superiority as an accepted cultural standard.<sup>243</sup> More than 300 million women and girls in 30 African countries have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM)—a procedure performed on a female to alter or injure genitalia for non-medical reasons.<sup>244</sup> Seen as a passage into womanhood and a way to suppress sexuality, various communities undertake such practices to ensure a woman’s marriage or family honour.<sup>245</sup> Female genital mutilation persists due to the interplay of various factors including but not limited to: the lack of women’s empowerment and cultural norms. Furthermore, patriarchal social structures perpetuate this practice to ensure conformity to societal expectations.<sup>246</sup>

Moreover, it is common for people in these regions to marry at an early age due to cultural and societal pressure.<sup>247</sup> In West Africa, for example, 44% of women ages 20–24 are married before reaching 15 years of age.<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, domestic and intimate partner violence remains an unresolved and significant issue in Africa; more than half of all women murdered in South Africa were killed by an intimate male partner.<sup>249</sup> The large presence of lesser developed nations in Africa leads to a substantial dependence on fertility and family labour as essential means of maintaining financial stability.<sup>250</sup> As such, African nations must tackle gender-based violence by empowering women and adopting shifts in cultural and societal expectations. Specifically, countries can take steps to empower women economically and encourage education directed towards gender equality. Currently, countries in Africa have shown low progress and must look towards addressing the situation with social, economic, and political factors in mind.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

Despite having a lower rate of gender-based violence compared to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean continues to have one of the highest occurrences of gender-based violence—in this region, an estimated 1.1 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have experienced sexual or varying forms of violence.<sup>251</sup> Moreover, violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ have become embedded into many legal systems throughout the region. For example, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the criminalization of homosexuality has created a system of homophobia in not only the state but also in society.<sup>252</sup> This has caused a surge in bias-motivated

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<sup>242</sup>“DR Congo - Law 87-010 on the Family Code,” *Equality Now*, November 5, 2021, [https://www.equalitynow.org/discriminatory\\_law/dr\\_congo\\_law\\_87\\_010\\_on\\_the\\_family\\_code/](https://www.equalitynow.org/discriminatory_law/dr_congo_law_87_010_on_the_family_code/).

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> “What is Female Genital Mutilation? Eight Important Questions Answered,” *UNICEF*, February 4, 2021, [https://www.unicef.ca/en/blog/female-genital-mutilation-eight-important-questions?ea.tracking.id=20DIAQ01OTE&19DIAQ02OTE=&gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwjOunBhB4EiwA94JWslxvRLdQwIySkuNMALEKNI0aO4MiHrB1REQeyJout0oOyBV9octdshoCqc8QAvD\\_BwE](https://www.unicef.ca/en/blog/female-genital-mutilation-eight-important-questions?ea.tracking.id=20DIAQ01OTE&19DIAQ02OTE=&gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwjOunBhB4EiwA94JWslxvRLdQwIySkuNMALEKNI0aO4MiHrB1REQeyJout0oOyBV9octdshoCqc8QAvD_BwE).

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> Timi Kakandar, “Discrimination and Gender Inequalities in Africa: What About Equality Between Women and Men?” *Institut du Genre en Géopolitique*, May 31, 2021, <https://igg-geo.org/?p=3863&lang=en>.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> “Gender Equality,” *UNICEF*, <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/gender-equality>.

<sup>252</sup> Judith Rudd, “They Can Harass Us Because of the Laws,” *Human Rights Watch*, July 20, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/07/20/they-can-harass-us-because-laws/violence-and-discrimination-against-lgbt->

violence and homelessness in the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>253</sup> As a result, there is a strong need to fill the gap in essential services, research, policies and health care tools to alleviate people in violent situations. Yet, there has been little evidence of progress in vital issues such as child marriage, as rates continue to be as high as they were 25 years ago.<sup>254</sup> Child marriage is an internationally recognized form gender-based violence that continues to persist due to the lack of action taken to empower disadvantaged populations.<sup>255</sup> Therefore, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean must focus on addressing issues of poverty, access to education, and machismo cultures that exacerbate gender-based violence. Without concrete action to overcome such obstacles, progress towards gender equality will not advance.

## **Middle East and North Africa**

While gender parity is difficult to obtain, gender dynamics in Middle Eastern and African (MENA) countries remain among the worst in the world due to religious practices that motivate socio-political and cultural factors; such factors are often rooted in social conventions to laws surrounding critical gender inequality. Around 40% of women in this region experience some form of physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>256</sup> The dominant religion in Middle Eastern and African countries is Islam, which has embedded itself into the foundation of their society today. Women are strictly limited to traditional gender roles, and their perception when it comes to gender-based violence has been minimized by the society to be labelled as “normal behaviour.” Recently, these countries have strived to create a balance between traditional female roles in the household and developing women’s rights to please both the conservative parts of society and the advocates for gender parity.<sup>257</sup> Middle Eastern and African countries are willing to take a middle ground that does not sacrifice their country’s internal views and allows them to seek new laws with the rapid change in their attitude toward gender parity. For example, they would support legal reforms to protect women from violence while taking into account cultural values to create gradual shifts towards gender equality.

## **Europe**

Although the gender inequality index of Europe ranks among the lowest in the world, gender-based violence has surfaced in the form of online violence and harassment—especially since the beginning of the pandemic.<sup>258</sup> According to UN Women, “about one in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15.”<sup>259</sup> The increase in the use of social media has heightened the spread of dissemination of information online, negatively impacting women and perpetuating accepted gender violence stereotypes. Moreover, the European Commission has performed studies on how to prevent gender-based violence and has required all member states to take a stance against sex-based violence in employment while offering services to those in need.<sup>260</sup> Specifically, the implementation of the European Union Gender Equality

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people?gclid=CjwKCAjwo9unBhBTEiwAipC115zyuYvVENw3rS-uD0euvMOG\_3gL7SaYCXeDBaP9L0g2YXzf5hRxbBoCMEoQAvD\_BwE.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

Strategy outlines Europe's objectives for significant gender-equal progress by 2025.<sup>261</sup> Key objectives in this strategy include challenging gender stereotypes in modern society, closing gender gaps in the labour markets, and achieving gender balance in decision-making politics.<sup>262</sup>

## North America

The United States has worked to implement a strategy in combating gender-based violence with three objectives in mind: focusing on at-risk populations, such as LGBTQ+ individuals; integrating gender-based violence prevention and response across sectors; and strengthening the government's actions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Developed countries such as the U.S. have also been faced with increasing violence and harassment circulating online; as a result, it has moved towards helping prevent and respond to such crimes.<sup>263</sup> Specifically, the Biden-Harris Administration launched the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse with Australia, Denmark, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the United Kingdom to promote international cooperation. Additionally, in the United States, two out of every ten young women aged 18–29 have been sexually harassed; one in two of those were sent unwarranted explicit images, according to UN Women.<sup>264</sup> As such, the United States of America recognizes the importance of integrating policies against gender-based violence with foreign affairs; research has shown reducing gender-based violence can affect the economy, education, and overall political participation.<sup>265</sup> North American countries, as a collective, have made their stance clear in their belief in a world free from gender-based violence. Thus, they greatly support the movements to change cultural and socio-economic discrimination in society.<sup>266</sup> This includes women's grassroots movements, anti-violence activism, and LGBTQ+ activism.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does your country address legal frameworks and policies concerning gender and gender-based violence? Do these frameworks include sufficient measures to ensure the accountability of perpetrators?
2. Reflect on the culture(s) in your state. Are there socially-accepted practices that contribute to power inequalities and stereotypes between genders in your country? How much should countries value their international influences when making laws in their own country?
3. What challenges have LGBTQ+ people in your country faced regarding gender-based violence? How has your country taken action to address and alleviate these concerns?
4. Should nations prioritize legal reforms and punitive measures or education and awareness campaigns as their primary strategy? How should the international community support such efforts?

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<sup>261</sup>“Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025,” *European Commission*, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en).

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> “United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally 2022,” *US Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/united-states-strategy-to-prevent-and-respond-to-gender-based-violence-globally-2022/>.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

5. How can research, data, or even technology be used to leverage public awareness?
6. What existing challenges does your country face that must be addressed to properly tackle gender-based violence?
7. What social standards in your country prevent progress towards eliminating gender-based violence?  
How can this be addressed using international influence?



## Additional Resources

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>

UN Women Essential Services: Ending Violence Against Women:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/services-for-all-women>

UN Women: Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/12/essential-services-package-for-women-and-girls-subject-to-violence>

UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund):

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/trust-funds/un-trust-fund-to-end-violence-against-women>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence:

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-policy-prevention-risk-mitigation-and-response-gender-based-violence-2020-pdf>

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