

# Commission on the Status of Women

## CIMUN

Topic 1: Establishing a universal code of conduct to combat sexual violence against women and ensure the safety of the victims

Amélie Schulz and Arnas Bieliauskas



**Trigger warning:** This report mentions and/or discusses forms of sexual assault, domestic violence and trauma responses. If any of these topics or related topics are triggering to you, the author of this report highly recommends not participating in this committee.

## Introduction

The World Health Organization estimates that around 30% of women worldwide have been a victim of physical and/or sexual violence, either from an intimate partner or non-partner. Such violence can and does occur in every country, and can be an isolated event or in combination with a larger issue, such as armed conflict. This report intends to offer an overall idea of the severity of the issue, as well as provide the delegates with background information, relevant UN resources and guidance for when conducting their own research. For this topic, it is particularly necessary for delegates to be aware of their own countries policies regarding sexual violence and the safety of the victims of such violence, and to what extent these policies have been successful.

Side note: The author of this report is very well aware that men also experience sexual violence. The author in no way is trying to simply disregard this. However, the topic of discussion is sexual violence against women, therefore, the research report will focus on women specifically.

## Key Terms

**Violence against women:** The United Nations 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” ([United Nations](#)).

**Sexual violence:** The World Health Organization defines sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object, attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching and other non-contact forms” ([World Health Organization](#)).

**Code of conduct:** “a set of rules that members of an organization or people with a particular job or position must follow” ([The Cambridge dictionary](#)).

## Background Information

Experiencing sexual violence has severe, possibly life-long impacts on the victim. These impacts include but are not limited to common trauma responses, such as substance abuse, self-harming behaviour, flashbacks, etc. (RAINN). Despite these short- and long-term impacts, of the women who experience sexual violence, UN Women estimates that less than 40% seek help.

Furthermore, they mention that less than 10% end up going to the police for help (UN Women). As mentioned in the introduction, the World Health Organization estimates that a third of women have experienced sexual violence.

When conducting country-specific research, delegates should keep in mind that victims of sexual assault do not always speak up, for a variety of reasons. Such reasons include but are not limited to “inadequate support systems, shame, fear or risk of retaliation, fear or risk of being blamed, fear or risk of not being believed, fear or risk of being mistreated and/or socially ostracized” (World Health Organization). This can contribute to statistics in some cases not being 100% accurate.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Most individual countries will have their own individual organizations which fight for and oversee this issue.

**UN Women:** Also known as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en>

**UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict:** This is a network of 20 different United Nations entities which work together to put an end to sexual violence occurring during armed conflict.

<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/about-us/un-action/>

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:** Also known as OHCHR. A lot of relevant documents mentioned and quoted in this report are by this office. Their purpose is the promotion and protection of human rights.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>

## Relevant UN Resolutions and Reports

Declaration on the elimination of violence against women

Adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/violenceagainstwomen.aspx>

Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls:  
sexual harassment

Adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018

<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/148>

Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women

Adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 17 July 2020

[https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2020/15](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2020/15)

To search for more or specific ECOSOC documents on specific topics, use the following website: [United Nations ECOSOC documents](#)

## Previous Attempts at Resolving This Issue

Specific countries will have specific prior attempts at resolving this issue. Delegates should be aware of these attempts and to what extent they were successful. This, for example, includes laws put into place to combat the issue and specific organisations.

Overall, international awareness of sexual violence against women is increasing. This can be seen on social media platforms, in the news, etc. UN reports and resolutions have attempted to combat the issue and prompt discussions. An example of this is a resolution adopted by the general assembly in 2018, which reaffirms past declarations and plans, condemns violence against women and makes suggestions for how to deal with the issue; “Encourages national legislative authorities and political parties, as appropriate, to adopt codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms,” ([United Nations](#)).

## Possible Solutions

Possible solutions for this issue fall into different categories, such as prevention, providing aid for victims, gathering information, etc. When looking for possible solutions, delegates should keep in mind that different countries have different resources available, and that sexual violence can often be the result of a greater armed conflict. Such conflicts can not simply be stopped by the UN.

A common suggestion is spreading awareness, especially at younger ages to educate people about the topic as soon as possible. However, it should be kept in mind that the topic of what children can and should be exposed to is a controversial one and that the individual parents will have their own opinions on this.

Another aspect of addressing this issue is gathering information and statistics. An EU wide survey about violence against women suggests that “the EU and Member States should promote and fund surveys in a concerted effort to uncover information on the extent and nature of violence experienced by women. These surveys can be repeated every few years to measure developments over time” ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#)).

Support systems for victims of sexual violence, which can include economic, emotional and medical support, are already prevalent in many countries, but not all and in many cases underfunded or difficult to access. This can especially be the case in situations where sexual violence against women occurs in combination with armed conflict. Marginalized groups in particular have even less of an opportunity to access help services. Furthermore, as mentioned in the background section, a large percentage of women never seek help for their experiences, and even fewer seek out authorities such as the police. Delegates should consider ways in which victims can be provided with more and more accessible support, and how marginalized groups, in particular, can be considered. This can include support systems and further ways to ensure the safety of victims, especially in cases where said victims may fear for their safety being compromised as a result of seeking help.

### For more information

List of international organizations: [link](#)

Sexual harassment explained by the UN: [link](#)

Sexual and gender-based violence in the context of transitional justice: [link](#)

Facts and figures on violence against women: [link](#)

Specific countries: [link](#)

Rape statistics by country 2021: [link](#)

EU wide survey on violence against women: [link](#)

Understanding and addressing violence against women - WHO 2012: [link](#)

Sexual violence in armed conflict: [link](#)

## Bibliography

"Addressing Sexual Violence." International Committee of the Red Cross, 22 Feb. 2021, [www.icrc.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-violence](http://www.icrc.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-violence).

"Code of Conduct." Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/code-of-conduct](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/code-of-conduct).

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. United Nations, General Assembly, 1993, [www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/eliminationvaw.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/eliminationvaw.pdf).

"Effects of Sexual Violence." RAINN | The Nation's Largest Anti-sexual Violence Organization, 2021, [www.rainn.org/effects-sexual-violence](http://www.rainn.org/effects-sexual-violence).

"Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women | What We Do." UN Women, [www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures).

"Gender Statistics - Violence Against Women." 2016, [unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/vaw/](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/vaw/).

Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment. United Nations, General Assembly, 2018, [undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/148](http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/148).

"Links to International Organisations." Rape Crisis Network Europe, [www.rcne.com/links/international-organisations/](http://www.rcne.com/links/international-organisations/).

Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women. United Nations, Economic And Social Council, 2020, [www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2020/15](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2020/15).

"OHCHR | Home." [www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx).

"Rape Statistics By Country 2021." 2021 World Population by Country, 2021, [worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/rape-statistics-by-country](http://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/rape-statistics-by-country).

"Search ECOSOC Documents." Welcome to the United Nations,  
[www.un.org/ecosoc/en/documents/search-documents](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/documents/search-documents).

Sexual and gender-based violence in the context of transitional justice. United Nations, 2014,  
[www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/women/wrgs/onepagers/sexual\\_and\\_gender-based\\_violence.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/women/wrgs/onepagers/sexual_and_gender-based_violence.pdf).

"UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict." United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 5 Mar. 2021,  
[www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/about-us/un-action/](http://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/about-us/un-action/).

Understanding and addressing violence against women. World Health Organization, 2012,  
[https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77434/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.37\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77434/WHO_RHR_12.37_eng.pdf?sequence=1).

"United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women." UN Women,  
[unwomen.org/en](http://unwomen.org/en).

Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. European Union Agency For Federal Rights, 2014.  
[fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14_en.pdf).

"Violence Against Women." WHO | World Health Organization, 9 Mar. 2021,  
[www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women).

What is Sexual Harassment. United Nations, [www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/whatish.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/whatish.pdf).