



Commission of the Status of Women (CSW)

Background Guide

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The Commission on the Status of Women was founded as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on June 21, 1946. It is the principal global intergovernmental body that is exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. CSW plays an instrumental role in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives across the world, and shaping the global standards on gender equality. In 1996, ECOSOC expanded the mandate of the Commission, giving CSW the leading role in monitoring, and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Declaration serves as the key global policy document on gender equality. CSW annually meets for two weeks in March to discuss the Beijing Declaration and emerging issues that impact gender equality and the empowerment of women.¹

I. The Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Girls

Statement of the Issue:

As COVID-19 spread across the globe, countries turned towards the strategy of using full or partial lockdowns to combat the spread. With these lockdown measures in place, by January 2021, according to the International Labour Organization, approximately 93% of the world's workforce had been impacted.² Before the start of the pandemic, women across the world earned less, saved less, held less secure jobs, and were more likely to be employed in the informal sector. As a result, women have less capacity to absorb economic shocks

¹ "Commission on the Status of Women," UN Women, accessed April 7, 2021, [https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status,II\)%20of%2021%20June%201946](https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status,II)%20of%2021%20June%201946).

² International Labour Organization, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work*, 1-2, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_767028.pdf.

compared to men. While extreme poverty overall has been decreasing over the past 22 years, women are much more likely to live in extreme poverty than men. It was estimated that by 2030, before the pandemic hit, 206 million women and girls would be living in extreme poverty compared to 195 million men.³ During the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence has shown that women's economic and productive lives have disproportionately and differently been affected than men.⁴ Overall, women's jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable to the pandemic than men's jobs. Women make up only 39% of global employment but account for 54% of job losses throughout the pandemic.⁵ It is clear that even before the pandemic, women faced a disadvantage in the workforce as a result of existing systems. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this inequality and in many ways, has reversed some of the forward progress that has been made in education, employment, and social rights for women around the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected service sector jobs including retail, hospitality, and tourism. Women make up the majority of these service sector jobs, employing 40% of all employed women compared to 36.6% of employed men.⁶ Informal employment within these sectors is common. Even before the pandemic, women in these sectors were subject to low pay, poor working conditions, and lacked social protections. Globally 58% of employed women work in the informal employment industry. It is estimated that during the first month of the pandemic, informal workers lost an average of 60% of their income.⁷ With the loss of jobs and income, the pandemic will push 96 million people into extreme poverty by 2021, 47 million of whom are women and girls.⁸ Domestic service jobs have also been highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. 80% of domestic workers around the world are women, and as a result of the pandemic, 72% of domestic workers have lost their jobs.⁹ With a loss of income, women are unable to provide for their families. This is especially dangerous for single income and single parent households of which women make up the majority.

With lockdown measures, children have been home from school, care needs for older and ill persons have intensified, and with overwhelmed healthcare services, the need for care

³ "COVID-19 and Its Economic Toll on Women: The Story Behind the Numbers," UN Women, last modified September 16, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Anu Madgavkar et al., "COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Countering the Regressive Effects," McKinsey Global Institute, last modified July 15, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#>.

⁶ "COVID-19 and Its Economic," UN Women.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

work has intensified exponentially. This has made it starkly visible that the maintenance of our daily lives is built on the invisible and unpaid labor of women and girls.¹⁰ As a result of the greater care demands at home, jobs held by women were disproportionately affected by cuts and layoffs. Even before the pandemic, women averaged 4.1 hours per day committed to unpaid work while men averaged 1.7 hours.¹¹ The increased demand for care work during the pandemic has only deepened already existing inequalities in the gender division of labor as the brunt of care work continued to be handed to women. As hospitals and other medical centers struggled to handle COVID-19 infections, access to healthcare to non-related COVID-19 issues was limited. This has meant that families have had to provide more support to ill members of the family, especially those ill with chronic illnesses. As the default unpaid family caregivers, this responsibility has largely fallen to women.¹² According to UNESCO, the pandemic has forced 1.52 billion students, 87% of all students, to stay home due to school closures.¹³ Because of social norms, the demand for unpaid childcare provisions is also falling on women. This is harmful because unless jobs can be carried out remotely, the ability to work is constrained, especially for essential workers. Even when women are able to maintain their jobs, there is increased pressure to stay home to take care of their children with schools and childcare facilities closed. Because women tend to be paid less than men, women are pressured into giving up their jobs as many families decide that the lower-paid parent should prioritize childcare over their job.¹⁴ Overall, this impacts the already fragile gains made in female labor force participation, which limits a woman's ability to support herself and her family.¹⁵

History:

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic after the virus originated in Wuhan China and spread uncontrollably around the world.¹⁶ As a result, WHO suggested that countries use large scale physical distancing measures and movement restrictions referred to as lockdowns. These lockdowns were used to slow the transmission of COVID-19 by limiting contact between people. By March 2020, well

¹⁰ "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women," United Nations, 13, last modified April 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>.

¹¹ Ibid, 13.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Amanda Taub, "Pandemic Will 'Take Our Women 10 Years Back' in the Workplace," *New York Times* (New York, NY), September 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/26/world/covid-women-childcare-equality.html>.

¹⁵ "Policy Brief," United Nations, 4.

¹⁶ "Archived: WHO Timeline - COVID-19," World Health Organization, last modified April 27, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news/item/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>.

over 100 countries had instituted either a full or partial lockdown affecting billions of people.¹⁷ The lockdowns have had a profound negative impact on individuals, communities, and societies as social and economic life nearly stopped.¹⁸ By January 2021, 93% of the world's workers resided in countries with some form of COVID-19 related restrictions. These restrictions still affect 77% of the workers, only a little bit down from the peak of 85% reached in July 2020.¹⁹ This has led to an unprecedented global employment loss in 2020 as 114 million more jobs were lost relative to 2019. Overall, employment losses were higher for women at 5%, compared to men.²⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic is not the first time lockdowns due to virus spread have disproportionately affected women; as an example of this, women were similarly impacted during the Ebola epidemic.

At the 65th Commission on the Status of Women held in March 2021, members met to discuss women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, including the obstacles created by the social and economic impact of COVID-19. The Commission recognized that the pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities faced by women and girls. As a result, COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on women and girls, which has only exacerbated vulnerabilities in regards to their social and economic situations. The rise in demand for unpaid care and domestic work was deeply concerning for the Commission.²¹ The Commission also recognized that women have played and will continue to play a critical role in COVID-19 response efforts, as well as economic recovery and growth. Women need to be ensured access to decent work, just work conditions, living wages, equal pay, and social protections. These protections are necessary for full, equal, and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all stages of COVID-19 response and recovery.²² As a result, the Commission called for an increase of women leadership in response and recovery efforts, including the use of gender balanced task forces, standing committees, and decision-making bodies. The Commission also recognized that women and girls should be targeted in economic response efforts including poverty eradication, social assistance and protection, as well as fiscal and stimulus packages. It is important that these responses are equally accessible to all and

¹⁷ Daniel Dunford et al., "Coronavirus: The World in Lockdown in Maps and Charts," BBC, last modified April 7, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52103747>.

¹⁸ "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Herd Immunity, Lockdowns and COVID-19," World Health Organization, last modified December 31, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/herd-immunity-lockdowns-and-covid-19>.

¹⁹ International Labour Organization, *ILO Monitor*, 1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Commission on the Status of Women, *CSW65 Agreed Conclusions*, 5, March 29, 2021,

https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/65/csw65_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_29_march_2021.pdf?la=en&vs=5504.

²² Ibid, 6.

specifically address the care sector to reduce women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work.²³

Analysis:

Full participation of women and girls in the workforce is essential for economic growth. In fact, when more women are in the workforce, everyone benefits; considering that women and men bring different skills and perspectives to the workplace, adding to the dialogue and decision-making processes. Women and men complement each other, which means that adding more women to the labor force leads to large economic gains. Closing the gender gap could overall increase GDP growth by an average of 35%.²⁴ Productivity will also increase, leading to higher wages for men and women. However, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, progress towards reaching gender parity was uneven, leaving large gender gaps across the world. With the onset of the pandemic, there is a large risk that progress already made could be reversed. This would be a setback not only for women but the global economy.²⁵ If this trend continues without action to counter these effects, it is estimated that global GDP growth could be \$1 trillion lower in 2030 than originally projected. However, taking action now to advance gender equality would add \$13 trillion to global GDP in 2030.²⁶ This indicates that women's employment is essential to the growth of economic activity worldwide, and that action is needed imminently.

As of March 31, 2020, 105 countries had already passed fiscal response packages. By April, 106 countries had introduced or adapted social protections and job programs in response to COVID-19.²⁷ The packages used social assistance, social insurance, and supply-side labor market interventions. But it is important that these packages take a gender lens and include both the public and private spheres. Some countries have included a gender lens in these packages. In March 2020, Brazil's Congress passed a cash transfer program to provide support for informal workers, with the majority of informal workers being women. The program allocated 66 billion U.S. dollars to 65.9 million informal workers who make up 30% of the population. This amounted to an average of 110 U.S. dollars of extra income each month. Female heads of households received twice as much money as men. The program helped drop the poverty rate

²³ Ibid, 16.

²⁴ Christine Lagarde and Jonathan D. Ostry, "When More Women Join the Workforce, Everyone Benefits. Here's Why," World Economic Forum, last modified December 4, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/economic-gains-from-gender-inclusion-even-greater-than-you-thought/>.

²⁵ Madgavkar et al., "COVID-19 and Gender," McKinsey Global Institute.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Policy Brief," United Nations, 5.

in Brazil from 11% at the start of 2020 to 4.5% by August 2020.²⁸ While the program ended in December 2020, it overall had a profound impact on women because of the use of a gender lens.

The international community must intervene to hold countries accountable that do not incorporate a gender lens. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work, a free choice of employment, just working conditions, protection against unemployment, and the right to equal pay for equal work. But, existing inequalities in regard to employment have become even worse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, women must be put at the forefront of economic and social pandemic response and recovery plans in order to aim to build more equal, inclusive, and sustainable economies and societies.

Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly disproportionately affects women and girls socially and economically. With millions around the world out of work, it could take years to recover from the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. The international community must take action to ensure that already fragile progress is maintained and expanded further in regard to paid work in the formal and informal sector as well as unpaid domestic work. Economically, everyone will be better off with more women and girls in the workforce as productivity and GDP will rise, leading to a reduction in global poverty rates. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the international community to address the economic impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. Swift action must be taken in order to ensure economic recovery and prosperity.

Questions:

1. How do we get women and girls back into the workforce?
2. What can CSW do to ensure social protections for working women?
3. How do we change cultural factors that limit female participation in the workforce?
4. How can we ensure that women and girls are not disproportionately affected by future pandemics

²⁸ Jamie McGeever, "Millions in Brazil Thrown Back into Poverty as Pandemic Aid Dries Up," Reuters, last modified March 26, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-economy-poverty/millions-in-brazil-thrown-back-into-poverty-as-pandemic-aid-dries-up-idUSKBN2BI2OE>.

Resources:

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Commission on the Status of Women. *CSW65 Agreed Conclusions*. March 29, 2021. https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/65/csw65_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_29_march_2021.pdf?la=en&vs=5504.

"Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women. Accessed April 7, 2021. [https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Statu s,II\)%20of%2021%20June%201946](https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Statu s,II)%20of%2021%20June%201946).

"Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Herd Immunity, Lockdowns and COVID-19." World Health Organization. Last modified December 31, 2020. <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/herd-immunity-lockdowns-and-covid-19>.

"COVID-19 and Its Economic Toll on Women: The Story Behind the Numbers." UN Women. Last modified September 16, 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>.

Dunford, Daniel, Becky Dale, Nassos Stylianou, Ed Lowther, Maryam Ahmed, and Irene de la Torre Arenas. "Coronavirus: The World in Lockdown in Maps and Charts." BBC. Last modified April 7, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52103747>.

International Labour Organization. *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work*. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_767028.pdf.

Lagarde, Christine, and Jonathan D. Ostry. "When More Women Join the Workforce, Everyone Benefits. Here's Why." World Economic Forum. Last modified December 4, 2018. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/economic-gains-from-gender-inclusion-even-greater-than-you-thought/>.

Madgavkar, Anu, Olivia White, Mekala Krishnan, Deepa Mahajan, and Xavier Azcue. "COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Countering the Regressive Effects." McKinsey Global Institute. Last modified July 15, 2020. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#>.

McGeever, Jamie. "Millions in Brazil Thrown Back into Poverty as Pandemic Aid Dries Up." Reuters. Last modified March 26, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil->

economy-poverty/millions-in-brazil-thrown-back-into-poverty-as-pandemic-aid-dries-up-idUSKBN2BI2OE.

"Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women." United Nations. Last modified April 2020.
<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>.

Taub, Amanda. "Pandemic Will 'Take Our Women 10 Years Back' in the Workplace." *New York Times* (New York, NY), September 26, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/26/world/covid-women-childcare-equality.html>.

II. Women in Conflict Zones

Statement of the Issue:

Throughout conflict zones, women and men share many of the same lived experiences. They suffer the effects of trauma, are forcibly displaced, injured and killed, and their lives are often uprooted.²⁹ However, women are disproportionately affected in conflict zones because of preexisting gender inequalities. During conflict, these inequalities are manifested and exacerbated in many ways, as conflict leads to an increase in sexual and gender-based violence, a lack of basic resources, and an increase of responsibilities for women.³⁰ Physical, verbal, and sexual violence against women and girls during conflict are used to impose political agendas, humiliate opponents, and destroy communities.³¹ As a result, women and girls are vulnerable to all forms of violence, including torture, rape, and trafficking.³² Among female refugees and women who have been displaced due to conflict, 1 in 5 have experienced sexual violence.³³ Existing gender inequalities also lead to inequitable distribution of food to women and girls, causing malnutrition and other health problems. These health problems include high rates of maternal mortality, as 60% of all preventable maternal mortality deaths occur in conflict zones.³⁴ Additionally, women's daily tasks as caregivers become more difficult and dangerous as public services and household goods become less available.³⁵ Women are forced to take on more responsibilities for family security and livelihoods, but a lack of land and property rights makes this difficult. As a result, women are pushed out of traditional occupations in the formal sector. With increasing competition in the informal sector, women and girls may be pushed into dangerous illegal activities.³⁶ The increased responsibilities at home has also made girls living in conflict zones 2.5 times more likely to not be in school compared to other females their age.³⁷

With women disproportionately impacted by conflict, their ability to participate in conflict prevention and the peacebuilding process is limited because of the impact of gender inequality. Between 1992 and 2019, women made up, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators,

²⁹"Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Girls (conclusions from S/2002/1154)," UN Security Council, last modified 2010, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/WPS%202010%20Sidebar2.pdf>.

³⁰ Australian National Committee for UN Women, *Women, Peace, and Security: An Introductory Manual*, 13, 2014, https://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/Government/wps_manual.pdf.

³¹ Oxfam Intermón, *Women in Conflict Zones*, by Paula San Pedro, report no. 51, 11, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bp-women-in-conflict-zones-290319-en.pdf>.

³² "Impact of Armed," UN Security Council.

³³ Oxfam Intermón, *Women in Conflict*, 11.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "Impact of Armed," UN Security Council.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Oxfam Intermón, *Women in Conflict*, 11.

and 6% of signatories in major peace processes. While progress has been made, 7 out of every 10 peace processes still do not include women mediators or signatories.³⁸ Yet, when women are at the table, peace agreements are more likely to last. In a study of 182 signed peace agreements from the International Peace Institute, peace agreements from 1989 to 2011 that included women had a 35% increase in the probability that the agreement would last 15 years or more.³⁹ The peace agreements are also 64% less likely to fail when women are involved in some capacity.⁴⁰ This is because women are more likely to raise social issues in negotiations to help societies reconcile and recover. Typical conflict resolution processes focus on military action, power-sharing arrangements, and territorial gains. But when women are involved, issues of political and legal reforms, social and economic recovery, and transitional justice are raised, helping to make agreements more durable.⁴¹ Women also take a more collaborative approach to peacemaking. This approach, which helps to incorporate the concerns of diverse demographics, increases the prospects for long-term stability. In turn, stability reduces the likelihood of state failure, resumed conflict, and poverty moving forward.⁴²

As one looks at women in peacemaking and the peace process, consider the example of Kenya. After the 2007 election in Kenya was disputed, violence broke out, killing a thousand and displacing hundreds of thousands. This was largely a result of pervasive structural issues, including political discrimination, historical grievances over land, government corruption, economic shocks, and high rates of poverty and unemployment.⁴³ Peace talks began three weeks after violence broke out, lasting for forty-one days. These talks resulted in the signing of the 2008 Agreement on the Principles of Partnership of the Coalition Government which led to a power-sharing system, transitional government, and constitutional reform. While no women were signatories, 25% of negotiators and 33% of mediators were women.⁴⁴ These women helped to make a difference in peace efforts as they worked across lines. With the support of Graca Machel, a key mediator in the peace process, the Women's Consultation Group (WCG) helped members overcome their grievances and political differences to unite on shared

³⁸ "Women's Participation in Peace Processes," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>.

³⁹ Nancy Lindborg, "The Essential Role of Women in Peacebuilding," United States Institute of Peace, last modified November 20, 2017, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/11/essential-role-women-peacebuilding#:~:text=Evidence%20indicates%20that%20women%20participants,elements%20of%20a%20sustained%20peace.>

⁴⁰ "Women's Participation," Council on Foreign Relations.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Kenya Case Study," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/kenya.>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

priorities. Women also helped broaden the agenda to combat gender-based violence and to address the root causes of violence as WCG provided suggestions to mediators and negotiators. WCG used the media to generate public support and lobbied international organizations to reinforce their priorities. This led to WCG's recommendations being included in the final agreement. As the final agreement established new commissions, women contributed to the successful implementation of the agreement as they helped draft the new constitution and addressed other pressing issues like truth and reconciliation and election violence.⁴⁵ The post conflict situation has not been perfect in Kenya, as ethnic tension still runs deep. But with a new constitution in 2010, a new system of checks and balances on the president's power was created along with a one-third quota for female representation in elective and appointed positions. As a result, violence did not occur in the 2013 elections; this showcases the positive impact that women can have on peace negotiations.⁴⁶

History:

In 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, outlining 12 critical areas of concern for women's empowerment, including women and armed conflict. The Declaration recognized that peace is inevitably linked to gender equality. As a result, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stated that women must participate in decision-making around conflict resolutions and that women have been powerful drivers of peace movements.⁴⁷ Following the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSCR 1325 in 2000, establishing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS). This landmark resolution recognized that women are disproportionately impacted by war and that women should and do play a pivotal role in conflict prevention, conflict management, and sustainable peace efforts.⁴⁸ As a result, the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda rests on four pillars. First, the prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women in conflict and post-conflict. Second, women's equal participation and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes. Third, the protection of women from all forms of sexual violence as well as the protection and promotion of their rights in conflict situations. Lastly, the agenda makes sure the specific relief needs of women are met

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷"Women and Armed Conflict," UN Women, last modified 2020, <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/armed-conflict>.

⁴⁸ "Advancing Women, Peace and Security," United States Institute of Peace, <https://www.usip.org/programs/advancing-women-peace-and-security>.

and that women are involved in relief and recovery efforts.⁴⁹ Since the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda was adopted, 9 more resolutions have been adopted, the most recent in 2019. The resolutions continue to reaffirm the important role of women in conflict resolution and peace negotiations, while also providing more detailed guidance on specific aspects of war and its impact on women. These issues include sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, terrorism, and the gendered aspects of peacekeeping.⁵⁰

Beginning in 2005, the Security Council called upon UN Member States to continue implementing the WPS agenda through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs). Through the use of NAPs, the goal was for member states to articulate their priorities and detailed actions for implementing the objectives of the WPS agenda.⁵¹ As of April 2021, 92 Member States, equating to 47% of member states, have adopted National Action Plans. The first being Denmark in 2005, and the most recent being South Africa.⁵² Member States around the world are continuing to adopt and implement their own National Action Plans.

The Commission on the Status of Women has continued to contribute to the Women, Peace, and Security framework. During the 48th Commission in 2004, the topic of discussion was women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building. The agreed upon conclusion recognized that the drafting of peace agreements provides an opportunity to restructure women's access to political, economic, and social institutions. It also recommended that women are included in peace negotiations. Serving to both empower women to participate and ensure that agreements address more than security issues, including domestic gender equality politics.⁵³

Analysis:

Since 2005, the National Action Plans have grown to cover a wide range of issues. Attention is still paid to the pillars of the WPS agenda, especially participation and prevention. Overall, more women are needed in peace processes and conflict prevention as women bring diverse and new perspectives to the table. While NAPs continue to focus on participation and prevention, since 2014, NAPs have begun to feature new WPS issues, including disasters and

⁴⁹ United Nations Development Program, *Parliament as Partners: Supporting the Women Peace and Security Agenda*, 5, 2019.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Advancing Women," United States Institute of Peace.

⁵² "1325 National Action Plans (NAPs)," Peacewomen, last modified 2021, <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/>.

⁵³ Commission on the Status of Women, *Women's Equal Participation in Conflict Prevention, Management and Conflict Resolution and in Post-Conflict Peace-Building: CSW48 Agreed Conclusions*, 1-4, https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/48/csw48b_e_final.pdf?la=en&vs=3723.

violent extremism.⁵⁴ There has also been an uptick in the levels of inclusive practices specified in the National Action Plans. Since NAPs first started being implemented, the plans have continued to specify monitoring and evaluation plans.⁵⁵ Despite the implementation of the WPS agenda and several NAPs, there is limited consensus on how to best address women's inclusion in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Of all 92 action plans, only 28 include an allocated budget, 26 include references to and specific actions towards disarmament, and 66 allocate a role to civil society.⁵⁶ With differences in National Action Plans much improvement is needed to ensure that the goals of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda are met and implemented.

For example, Afghanistan has engaged in peace talks with the Taliban since 2005. By 2020, there had been 67 rounds of talk. Yet, women have participated in only 15 rounds of these talks, despite the Afghan government's pledge to ensure women's representation in the peace process. President Ashraf Ghani recognized that nation-building is impossible without the active role of women. The Afghani National Action Plan in 2015 committed to developing a roster of and providing training to potential women negotiators.⁵⁷ But in the September 2020 peace talks, despite the goals of the NAP, only four women served on the 21 member team representing the Afghan government and none on the side of the Taliban. As a result, only 10% of all negotiators were women, down from 15% in July 2019 peace talks.⁵⁸ More women are needed at the table, as Afghan women have long feared that male negotiators would trade away women's rights for the chance to end the war. But when women have participated, they have made notable progress against the Taliban, who view women as second class citizens.⁵⁹ Under Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, Afghan women were banned from schools and work, faced public beatings and executions, and faced severe restrictions of movement. Today, because of Afghan women, all women have the opportunity to attend school and participate in political and economic life. However, women continue to face targeted violence and harassment as they have limited access to justice.⁶⁰ As women still face obstacles because of conflict, it is imperative that the Afghan government ensures that more women are actually at the table so that women's rights and needs are addressed.

⁵⁴Henri Myrntinen et al., *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*, 5-6, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/444577.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "1325 National," Peacewomen.

⁵⁷ "Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Afghanistan Case Study," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/afghanistan>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

It is clear that when women are involved in peace agreements and conflict prevention, sustainable peace is more likely to be reached. Therefore, it is imperative that the international community continues to push forward and expand the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. In 2020, the United Nations celebrated the 20th year of UNSCR 1325. But despite 20 years of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda more still needs to be done by the international community to ensure women's participation in peace processes. This includes encouraging member-states who have not yet adopted NAPs to do so and incentivize those with NAPs to push further. If there is to be a world without conflict, women need to have much larger roles in peace processes and conflict prevention.

Conclusion:

Women are disproportionately impacted by conflict. Yet, women are missing from peace processes and conflict prevention. In order to get more women at the table during peace negotiations, the impact of conflict needs to be addressed. This is because when women are at the table, peace agreements are likely to be more inclusive, address a wider range of issues, and include a gender lens. When women are involved in peace negotiations, agreements are not only more likely to be reached, but more likely to be long lasting. Therefore, it is imperative that more women are included in peace negotiations. It is up to the international community to ensure that women's voices are brought to the forefront of peace talks. Without more women at the table, millions of people around the world will continue to be impacted by conflict.

Questions:

1. How can the international community address the issue of conflict on women as a barrier to women's participation in peace processes and conflict prevention?
2. How can the international community make sure that the goals of the WPS agenda and NAPs are being met?
3. What strategies can CSW use to ensure that there is an increase in the number of women in peace process across the world?
4. What impact could women and peacebuilding serve in your country and region

Resources:

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"Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Afghanistan Case Study." Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/afghanistan>.

"Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Kenya Case Study." Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/kenya>.