



SNISMUN VII

CSW

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Letter from the Executive Board

*Addressing the Gendered Impact of Forced Displacement on Women and Girls in
Major Refugee Crises*

Dear Delegates,

The Executive Board of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women extends its warmest regards to all participants. As delegates who have sat on both sides of the placard at a number of Model United Nations conferences, we understand exactly what a background guide is for. It is a starting point for research and not a substitute for it, and it is certainly not a document that hands you your answers on a silver platter.

This guide sets out the factual terrain, the legal instruments, and the genuine disagreements surrounding the agenda "Addressing the Gendered Impact of Forced Displacement on Women and Girls in Major Refugee Crises." We would ask you to read it with two questions in mind. First, what does your country's own law and practice actually do, and what has your delegation said in this Commission, in the Third Committee, in the Human Rights Council, or before the CEDAW Committee? Second, where does your delegation's interest genuinely lie when protection, sovereignty, fiscal constraint and domestic politics pull in different directions? Positions built only on sympathy for refugees collapse in the first round of debate. Positions built on your state's real asylum practice, nationality law, funding record and voting history survive it.

A specific word about this Commission. The CSW is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. It does not adopt binding resolutions, it does not deploy anything, and it does not fund anything directly. Its output is Agreed Conclusions, reached by negotiation and by consensus, which set normative standards that states then choose whether to implement. That is not a weakness to be apologised for; it is the nature of the body, and delegates who draft as though they were sitting in the Security Council will produce a document the Commission has no capacity to adopt. Learn what this Commission can actually do, and then do it well.

Come with an open mind, come having read primary documents rather than summaries of them, and come prepared to be wrong about something. That is where the learning happens.

Thank you,

The Executive Board

Chairperson: Noel Ankit Nayak

Vice-Chairperson: Shreyansh Jain

Moderator: Tarun Chindabaram





CSW



Introduction to the Committee:

Forced displacement is not gender-neutral. Global forced displacement exceeded 120 million people during 2024 according to UNHCR, the highest figure ever recorded, driven by Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Venezuela, the Sahel, and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Roughly half of that population is female. The majority of the world's displaced are not refugees in the legal sense but internally displaced persons who have never crossed an international border and are therefore not covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention. Most displacement today is protracted rather than temporary, measured in years and in some cases decades, and the overwhelming majority of refugees are hosted in low and middle income countries neighbouring the crisis

What displacement does to women and girls is best understood as a sequence. It removes the legal identity that determines what a person can do, as documents are lost, destroyed, confiscated or never issued in a woman's own name. It removes the household economy that determined her position, frequently making her the sole provider without the legal right to work. It removes the physical infrastructure that made daily activity safe, so that collecting water, using a latrine, gathering fuel or walking to a distribution point becomes a risk calculation. It removes health services at the moment when the proportion of the population that is pregnant does not fall. It removes school, and adolescent girls who leave during displacement very often do not return. It removes the informal community structures that previously constrained violence within the family, while adding the stress, confinement and economic desperation that increase it. And it introduces new actors — armed groups, smugglers, employers, landlords, and in documented cases the very people deployed to provide assistance — each with power over women who have almost no means of complaint.

The international community has known about these dynamics since at least the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, which devoted a full critical area of concern to women in armed conflict and displacement. Thirty years on, the CSW's Beijing plus thirty review recorded that implementation has been uneven and that funding for gender-specific protection remains a fraction of what is assessed as needed.

The central question before this Commission is this: how can states and international institutions address the specific and predictable harms that displacement inflicts on women and girls, when the states hosting the largest displaced populations have the fewest resources, when the legal framework that would protect them was not designed with them in mind, and when the funding on which every existing mechanism depends is voluntary, declining, and politically contingent?

1. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Across the Displacement Cycle:

Sexual and gender-based violence is present at every stage of displacement, and the response differs by stage

At the point of flight

Violence here is typically conflict-related sexual violence committed by parties to the conflict, and it is often the cause of displacement rather than an incident of it. The Secretary-General's annual reports on conflict-related sexual violence, produced under the monitoring arrangements of Security Council resolution 1960 (2010), verify cases each year and note that verified figures represent a small fraction of true incidence. Where sexual violence is used systematically against a community it functions as a displacement instrument, making return unthinkable and destroying the social fabric that would sustain a claim to the territory.

In transit

Violence is committed largely by smugglers, traffickers, border officials and opportunistic criminals, and is structurally underreported because the woman is usually engaged in irregular movement and has every reason to avoid authorities. It is routinely documented along the central Mediterranean route, the Darién Gap, the eastern route towards the Gulf, and the routes out of Sudan and Afghanistan — a general feature of irregular movement, not an aberration of any single corridor.

In camps and settlements Violence is predominantly intimate partner violence — the most common form of violence against women in displacement as outside it — alongside opportunistic assault linked to site design. Site planning is a protection intervention: the location, lighting and locks of latrines and washing facilities, the distance to water and firewood, whether distribution queues separate women, and whether female-headed households are sheltered in the interior of a settlement rather than at its edge all measurably affect incidence.

In host communities

Where the majority of refugees actually live, violence is the least monitored. Urban displaced women are dispersed, often undocumented, frequently in informal rental arrangements, and outside the reach of camp-based services. Exploitation by landlords and employers in exchange for accommodation or wages is documented across many urban refugee populations and is very rarely prosecuted.

Reporting rates are low everywhere: stigma and possible ostracism, the risk of retaliation from a perpetrator who may control shelter or rations, an often unsympathetic host-state police service, a language barrier, and the real prospect that reporting exposes irregular status. Confidential, survivor-centred case management is the standard response, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines set out the operational minimum.

2. Trafficking, Exploitation and Coerced Survival Strategies:

Displacement produces the exact conditions on which trafficking depends: people with no documentation, no lawful income, no local protection network, and an urgent need to move. UNODC's Global Report on Trafficking in Persons finds that women and girls together constitute the majority of detected victims worldwide and are disproportionately trafficked for sexual exploitation, with detection increasingly involving recruitment through online platforms and through networks embedded in displaced communities.

Recruitment typically involves a plausible offer of work, marriage or onward travel, made by someone from the same community. Control is exercised through debt, confiscation of documents, threats to family members remaining in the country of origin, and the warning that the woman herself will be prosecuted or deported if she approaches authorities. That last mechanism is a legal problem states can fix: Article 5 of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol provides that smuggled migrants shall not be liable to prosecution under that Protocol for having been smuggled, and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol contemplates non-punishment of victims — but very few states have enacted a clear statutory non-punishment provision covering offences committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked.

Adjacent coerced survival strategies produce comparable harm. Transactional sex undertaken to secure food, rent, documents or passage through a checkpoint is widely documented in protracted displacement and is a direct function of the denial of lawful livelihoods. Child and early marriage rises measurably: the drivers are families facing destitution, the perception that marriage protects a daughter from assault or its stigma, the collapse of schooling that would otherwise delay marriage, and in some contexts dowry or bride-price economics. Evidence from Syrian refugee populations in Jordan and Lebanon documented a marked increase in the marriage of girls under eighteen relative to pre-conflict Syrian rates. Prohibition alone has a poor record; the interventions with measurable effect are cash transfers to households, keeping girls in secondary school, and legal registration of marriages, which at least makes the practice visible.

3. Legal Identity, Documentation, Nationality and Statelessness:

A woman who cannot prove who she is cannot register a birth, enrol a child in school, access a health facility, open an account, receive a cash transfer in her own name, claim an inheritance, register a complaint, obtain lawful work, or in many systems bring a case at all.

Displacement destroys documentation in predictable ways. Papers are lost in flight, destroyed deliberately by parties to a conflict, confiscated by smugglers or employers as a means of control, or held by a husband or male relative who then dies, disappears or is separated from the family. In many countries of origin, key



documents were only ever issued in a man's name, so a widowed or separated woman has no independent proof of her marriage, her property, or her relationship to her own children.

Nationality law compounds the problem. Around two dozen states still do not permit women to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men, and a smaller group restrict a woman's ability to acquire, change or retain her nationality on marriage. In a displacement setting, where the father is absent, unknown, deceased or himself stateless, these laws generate statelessness in the next generation directly. Article 9 of CEDAW addresses precisely this and is among the most heavily reserved provisions of the Convention. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness requires contracting states to grant nationality to a person born in their territory who would otherwise be stateless, but its membership is far from universal.

Birth registration is the practical front line. Where a child born in a camp or in irregular urban displacement is not registered, that child begins life without a legal identity and frequently never acquires one. Barriers include registration fees, the requirement of a father's presence or documentation, short registration windows, distance to registry offices, and the well-founded fear among undocumented parents that approaching a state office will result in detention or deportation. Target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals commits states to legal identity for all including birth registration, and the Global Alliance to End Statelessness launched in 2024 is the current institutional vehicle.

4. Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Mental Health:

The proportion of a displaced population that is pregnant does not fall because a crisis has occurred. UNFPA's standard planning assumption is that roughly one in four women of reproductive age in a humanitarian setting is pregnant at any given time, and that a predictable proportion of those pregnancies will develop complications requiring emergency obstetric care. Where that care is unavailable, maternal deaths follow, and a substantial share of global maternal mortality is concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected states.

The operational standard is the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for sexual and reproductive health in crisis situations, developed by the Inter-Agency Working Group, which sets out what must be delivered from the earliest days of an emergency: prevention of sexual violence and clinical management of rape including emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis; prevention of excess maternal and newborn death through skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric and newborn care; reduction of HIV and other sexually transmitted infection transmission; prevention of unintended pregnancy through contraceptive availability; and planning for integration into comprehensive services.



Sexual and reproductive health is the most reliably contested language in this Commission. The negotiation of Agreed Conclusions and of comparable texts elsewhere has repeatedly stalled over references to sexual and reproductive health and rights, to comprehensive sexuality education, and to services for survivors of rape in conflict. Security Council resolution 2467 (2019) is the standard illustration: language on sexual and reproductive health was removed under pressure and three permanent members abstained.

Mental health is systematically underfunded relative to its prevalence. Rates of depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress in displaced populations are substantially elevated, and displaced women carry the additional load of caregiving in conditions of scarcity, often alone. The mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) framework in humanitarian settings is well developed on paper and thinly resourced in practice, with a persistent shortage of female providers and of services in the languages displaced women actually speak.

5. Education, Adolescent Girls and the Cost of Interruption

Refugee children are far less likely to be in school than their non-displaced peers, and the gap widens sharply at secondary level. UNHCR's education reporting has consistently shown enrolment falling substantially between primary and secondary, with refugee girls at secondary level among the least likely groups in the world to be in education. Tertiary enrolment among refugees remains in the low single digits as a percentage.

The reasons are practical and mostly addressable: distance and the safety of the journey to school, the absence of separate and functioning sanitation facilities, the absence of menstrual health supplies, the requirement of documentation or certified prior schooling that a displaced family cannot produce, language of instruction differing from the language of origin, school fees and uniform costs, the opportunity cost of a girl's labour in a household under economic stress, and early marriage. Where displacement is protracted, an interruption of two or three years is often permanent, because a girl who is fifteen and has not attended school since she was twelve is unlikely to re-enter a system that places her with much younger children.

Certification and recognition of qualifications is an underdiscussed component. A woman who was a nurse, a teacher or an engineer before displacement and cannot prove it is a wasted resource in a setting acutely short of exactly those skills. Mechanisms for qualification recognition in displacement exist in some regions but are far from general.

6. Livelihoods, the Right to Work, and Economic Autonomy:

Displacement frequently converts women into primary earners while denying them the legal capacity to earn. Male family members are disproportionately killed, detained, conscripted or left behind, and female-headed households constitute a large share of displaced families in most major crises.



The right to work under Articles 17 to 19 of the 1951 Convention is heavily qualified, is often subject to reciprocity and to the treatment accorded to foreign nationals generally, and in practice many major host states restrict refugee employment to specified sectors, require permits that are expensive or unobtainable, or prohibit formal work altogether.

Women pushed into informal work have no wage protection, no recourse against harassment, and no ability to report exploitation without exposing their own irregular status. Aid dependency is not a character flaw; it is the predictable result of a legal prohibition on self-reliance. The host-state objection is neither irrational nor purely xenophobic: labour market absorption capacity is genuinely limited in states already facing high domestic unemployment, and host community resentment where refugees are perceived to be favoured is a real political constraint that has ended more than one generous policy.

Modality of assistance matters for gender outcomes. Cash transfers delivered to women in their own names increase household decision-making power and are administratively efficient, and they also depend on the recipient possessing identity documentation and, frequently, a mobile phone and account. There is also documented risk that cash delivered to women can generate intimate partner conflict in some households, which is an argument for careful design rather than against the modality.

7. Internal Displacement and the Limits of the Refugee Framework :

The distinction is legal, not rhetorical. A refugee has crossed an international border and, if recognised, is protected by the 1951 Convention and by UNHCR's mandate. An internally displaced person has not crossed a border, remains under the jurisdiction of her own state, and is protected by that state's obligations under general human rights law and, where applicable, international humanitarian law. There is no universal treaty on internal displacement. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 are an authoritative restatement of existing law rather than a binding instrument in themselves. The only binding regional treaty is the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the Kampala Convention, adopted in 2009 and in force since 2012.



This matters because internally displaced persons outnumber refugees globally by a wide margin, because internally displaced women are frequently displaced by the same actor that is legally responsible for protecting them, and because humanitarian access to them depends on the consent of that state. Where a government restricts access, denies visas to protection staff, or refuses to acknowledge displacement, there is no equivalent of asylum. The largest displacement crises of the present decade, including Sudan, have their centre of gravity in internal rather than cross-border displacement.

8. Durable Solutions and Their Gendered Distribution :

Three durable solutions are conventionally recognised — voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, local integration, and resettlement to a third country — and all three distribute unevenly by gender.

Voluntary repatriation

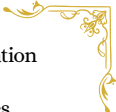
The solution most states prefer and the one most vulnerable to political pressure. The legal constraint is nonrefoulement under Article 33 of the 1951 Convention and Article 3 of the Convention against Torture, and the practical constraint is that a declaration of safety by a host or origin state is not the same as safety. A woman may be returning to a place where the perpetrator of violence against her still lives, where her property rights are not recognised, where her documentation problem is unresolved, or where she is a widow without the male guardianship a system requires.

Local integration

Depends on the host state's willingness to grant secure status, work rights and eventually naturalisation, and is politically difficult almost everywhere. Where it is available, gendered barriers persist in the form of nationality laws, documentation requirements and language and skills recognition.

Resettlement

Available to well under one per cent of the global refugee population annually, and available places have contracted in recent years. UNHCR maintains a Women and Girls at Risk submission category precisely because women facing specific protection risks would otherwise be underrepresented in referrals, but the category depends entirely on the number of places receiving states offer, which is a sovereign discretion.



Complementary pathways such as labour mobility, family reunification and student pathways are the current growth area, though family reunification rules that recognise only formally registered marriages disadvantage precisely those women whose documentation was destroyed.

9. Accountability, Funding and the Aid System Itself:

Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel

The standards are set out in the Secretary-General's Bulletin of 2003 on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, which prohibits sexual activity with persons under eighteen and the exchange of assistance for sex, and which applies to United Nations staff and to implementing partners. The record of enforcement is poor.

Investigations of allegations involving personnel deployed in West Africa in 2002, the allegations concerning an international NGO in Haiti that became public in 2018, and repeated later findings all point to the same structural problems: a complaints mechanism that requires a beneficiary to report to the organisation on which she depends for food, jurisdictional immunity or national-jurisdiction referral that ends in no prosecution, and staff who move between organisations without their record following them.

Funding

Every mechanism discussed in this guide depends on voluntary contributions. Humanitarian appeals are routinely funded at well under half of assessed requirements; gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health components are consistently among the least funded sectors within those appeals; and the sharp contraction in donor funding during 2025, following major reductions in bilateral assistance, forced UNHCR, UNFPA and their partners to close programmes, including safe spaces and survivor services, in multiple operations. Options for funding new activity include assessed rather than voluntary contributions, multi-year and unearmarked funding, pooled country-based funds, international financial institution instruments for host states such as the World Bank's window for refugee-hosting countries, and domestic budget commitments by host states themselves. A draft that funds nothing commits nothing.

Existing Mechanisms and Their Limitations

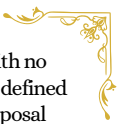
The following already exist. Agreed Conclusions that strengthen and direct them are far more credible than text inventing an agency this Commission has no power to create.

UN Women holds a coordination and normative mandate under General Assembly resolution 64/289 and services this Commission. It has no enforcement power and is funded very largely by voluntary contributions, and its country presence is thin in exactly the fragile settings this agenda concerns.

UNHCR holds the supervisory responsibility under Article 35 of the 1951 Convention, runs registration, refugee status determination and resettlement referral, and issues the influential, non-binding Guidelines on International Protection. IOM manages migration programming, assisted voluntary return and countertrafficking casework. UNFPA leads on sexual and reproductive health in emergencies and co-leads the GenderBased Violence Area of Responsibility within the protection cluster. The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies is a voluntary multi-stakeholder commitment with no enforcement mechanism.

Among human rights mechanisms, the CEDAW Committee reviews state reports and, for states party to the Optional Protocol, receives individual communications; General Recommendation 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness is the single most important interpretive document for this agenda. The Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls, on the human rights of migrants, on trafficking, and on the human rights of internally displaced persons all hold relevant mandates and depend on state cooperation for country visits.

Within the wider system, the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict coordinates the UN Action network and deploys the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law; the Global Refugee Forum convenes pledging every four years under the Global Compact on Refugees; and the Global Alliance to End Statelessness succeeded the earlier campaign in 2024.



Most are coordination bodies funded by voluntary contributions with no compulsory powers — which is why “give an existing mechanism a defined function, a funding line and a reporting obligation” is a stronger proposal than “establish a new agency.”

Key Points of Contention

The following are real fault lines rather than rhetorical ones, and delegates should expect to be pushed on them.

Sovereignty over asylum against responsibility-sharing. Every host state in the top ten is a low or middle income country neighbouring a conflict, and every such state points out that the states funding the response are also the states restricting access to their own territory. Proposals for binding quotas or mandatory relocation have failed repeatedly, most visibly within the European Union, and delegates should know why before proposing them again.

Camps against freedom of movement. Encampment policies concentrate services and make protection monitoring possible, and they also restrict movement, prevent self-reliance and produce long-term dependency. Out-of-camp policies improve autonomy and disperse people beyond the reach of protection services. Neither is straightforwardly better for women and the answer is context-specific.

Gender as a Convention ground. Gender is not one of the five grounds in Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention, and gender-related claims are brought under membership of a particular social group. Some delegations argue for an interpretive instrument or protocol adding gender explicitly; others regard reopening the Convention as an unacceptable risk, on the view that a renegotiation in the current political climate would produce a weaker instrument, not a stronger one.

Declared safety of return against non-refoulement. Where a conflict formally ends or a government changes, host states move quickly to declare return conditions adequate. Whether return is safe for women specifically, given property, guardianship, documentation and impunity conditions on the ground, is a separable question that delegates should insist on separating.



Criminalisation against protection in trafficking response. Enforcement-led approaches raise prosecution numbers and also drive victims away from authorities where non-punishment provisions are absent and irregular status carries immigration consequences.

Data collection against protection risk. Registration and biometric identification prevent fraud, make assistance verifiable and enable family tracing, and they also concentrate sensitive data on populations who may have fled the very state that would most like to obtain it, in circumstances where refusing registration means losing assistance.

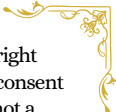
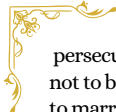
Localisation against capacity. Women-led local organisations are closest to affected populations and receive a very small share of humanitarian funding. Donors cite fiduciary and capacity concerns; local actors reply that capacity is not built by being excluded from funding.

International Law Pertinent to the Agenda

Delegates must distinguish throughout between what the law actually requires of a state party, what a treaty body has interpreted it to require, and what states are merely encouraged to do. All three are legitimate material for argument. Only the first may be described as an obligation. This distinction is especially important in this Commission, whose own output is normative rather than binding.

Charter of the United Nations (1945). Article 1(3) makes promotion of respect for human rights without distinction as to sex a purpose of the Organization. Article 8 provides that there shall be no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its organs. Articles 55 and 56 commit members to joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization for the achievement of universal respect for human rights. The Commission on the Status of Women was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 1946 and reports to the Council; its Agreed Conclusions are negotiated recommendations, not decisions binding on member states.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Article 13 recognises freedom of movement and the right to leave any country and return to one's own. Article 14 recognises the right to seek and enjoy asylum from



persecution. Article 15 recognises the right to a nationality and the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of it. Article 16 addresses free and full consent to marriage. The Declaration is a General Assembly resolution and not a treaty, although parts of it are widely accepted as customary international law.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). Note that CEDAW contains no express provision on violence against women; that prohibition was developed interpretively. Article 6 requires suppression of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution. Article 9 requires equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain nationality and to confer nationality on children, and is among the most heavily reserved provisions of the Convention. Articles 10, 11 and 12 address education, employment and health. Article 14 addresses rural women and is frequently overlooked in displacement contexts. Article 15(4) protects liberty of movement and freedom to choose residence. Article 16 addresses equality in marriage and family relations, including that the betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect. General Recommendations 19 (1992) and 35 (2017) establish gender-based violence as a form of discrimination and articulate the due diligence standard under which a state may incur responsibility for failing to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish and provide reparation for acts by private persons. General Recommendation 30 (2013) covers women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and asserts extraterritorial application where a state exercises jurisdiction, a reading some states expressly reject. General Recommendation 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women is the central interpretive text for this agenda and delegates should read it in full. General Recommendation 33 (2015) covers access to justice. The Optional Protocol (1999) provides individual communications and inquiry procedures only against states party to it.

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its 1967 Protocol. Article 1A(2) defines a refugee by reference to a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; gender is not a ground, and gender-related claims proceed under particular social group following UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection No. 1 (2002), which are not

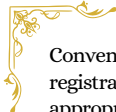


binding and are applied unevenly. Article 3 requires application without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin. Article 12 addresses personal status. Articles 17 to 19 address wage-earning employment, self-employment and the liberal professions, and are heavily qualified. Article 22 addresses public education. Article 26 addresses freedom of movement. Articles 27 and 28 require identity papers and travel documents. Article 31 prohibits penalties for irregular entry subject to conditions. Article 33 states the principle of nonrefoulement, subject to the narrow exception in Article 33(2). Article 34 asks states to facilitate naturalisation, in terms that are hortatory rather than obligatory. Article 35 requires cooperation with UNHCR.

Statelessness conventions. The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons defines a stateless person and sets a status framework. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness requires contracting states to grant nationality to a person born in their territory who would otherwise be stateless. Both have significantly narrower membership than the refugee instruments, which delegates should check for their own state.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). Article 2(1) obliges states to respect and ensure Covenant rights to all individuals within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction. Article 3 requires equal enjoyment by men and women. Article 12 protects liberty of movement. Article 23 addresses free consent to marriage. Article 24(2) and (3) require birth registration and the right of every child to acquire a nationality

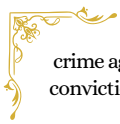
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Article 2(1) operates on progressive realisation to the maximum of available resources, producing obligations of effort rather than of immediate result, and Article 2(3) permits developing countries to determine the extent of economic rights guaranteed to non-nationals, a provision host states cite. Article 12 recognises the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and Article 13 the right to education.



Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Article 7 requires birth registration and the right to acquire a nationality. Article 22 requires appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance for refugee and asylumseeking children. Articles 34 and 35 require protection from sexual exploitation and measures against abduction, sale and traffic. The joint CEDAW and CRC General Recommendation 31 and General Comment 18 (2014) on harmful practices addresses child and forced marriage and sets eighteen as the minimum age of marriage without exception in the view of the treaty bodies.

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) and its Protocols. Article 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol supplies the act, means and purpose definition, with means irrelevant where the victim is a child. Article 5 contains mandatory criminalisation obligations, while Articles 6 and 7 on victim assistance and temporary residence are qualified by language such as “in appropriate cases” and “shall consider implementing.” That asymmetry between hard criminalisation duties and soft protection duties is the clearest illustration in this agenda of the required and encouraged distinction. Article 5 of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol provides that smuggled migrants shall not become liable to prosecution under that Protocol for having been smuggled.

International humanitarian and criminal law. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions prohibits violence to life and person and outrages upon personal dignity in non-international armed conflict and binds non-state armed groups as well as states. Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that women shall be especially protected against rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault, restated in Additional Protocol I Article 76(1) and Additional Protocol II Article 4(2)(e), and the prohibition is recorded as customary in both types of conflict. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits forcible transfers and deportations of protected persons. The Rome Statute lists rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and enforced sterilisation as crimes against humanity under Article 7(1)(g) and as war crimes under Articles 8(2)(b)(xxii) and 8(2)(e)(vi), lists deportation or forcible transfer of population under Article 7(1)(d), and lists persecution on gender grounds under Article 7(1)(h). Akayesu (ICTR, 1998) established that rape can constitute genocide, Kunarac (ICTY, 2001) established sexual slavery as a



crime against humanity, and Ongwen (ICC, 2021) produced the first conviction for forced pregnancy.

Regional instruments. The 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration both extend the refugee definition beyond the 1951 grounds to circumstances of generalised violence and public disorder, and delegates from those regions should use them. The Kampala Convention of 2009 is the only binding treaty on internal displacement. The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention addresses gender-based asylum claims at Article 60 and non-refoulement at Article 61. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) restate existing law and are not themselves binding.

Political frameworks. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), particularly critical area of concern E on women and armed conflict; the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (both 2018); Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security beginning with 1325 (2000); and Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16.9. These are political commitments. They may be cited as evidence of consensus. They may not be cited as obligations.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Syria, Protracted Displacement and Early Marriage

More than a decade of conflict produced one of the largest displacement crises in modern history, with millions of Syrians hosted principally in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt and a far larger number internally displaced. Among refugee populations in Jordan and Lebanon, the recorded proportion of registered marriages involving girls under eighteen rose markedly above pre-conflict Syrian rates, driven by household destitution, restricted legal work for adults, interrupted secondary schooling and families' perception that marriage offered protection. The case demonstrates that a harmful practice can be produced by displacement conditions rather than merely transported by displaced people, which implies that the effective interventions are economic and educational rather than purely legal. The change of government in Damascus at the end of 2024 has reopened the return debate, and delegates should treat the question of whether conditions are safe for women specifically, given property restitution, documentation, missing-persons



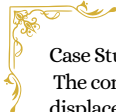
and accountability conditions, as separable from the general political assessment.

Case Study 2: The Rohingya, Statelessness and Repatriation

Following the 2017 military operations in Rakhine State, some three-quarters of a million Rohingya crossed into Bangladesh, joining earlier arrivals to form one of the largest and densest refugee settlements in the world at Cox's Bazar. The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar documented sexual violence on a large scale as a feature of the operations. The population is stateless as a matter of Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law, which is the reason repatriation has repeatedly failed: return without citizenship returns people to the legal condition that made them expellable. Bangladesh is not a party to the 1951 Convention, which shapes what can and cannot be asked of it. The Gambia's case against Myanmar under the Genocide Convention is before the International Court of Justice. For this Commission the case illustrates the link between nationality law and the durability of any solution, and the specific position of women whose children born in the camps inherit statelessness.

Case Study 3: Afghanistan and the Question of Gender Persecution

Since August 2021 successive edicts have excluded women and girls from secondary and tertiary education, from most employment including work for the United Nations and non-governmental organisations, and from travel without a male guardian. The effects on displacement are twofold: they generate outward movement, and they severely constrain humanitarian delivery to displaced women inside the country, since female staff are required to reach female beneficiaries. Legally, the situation has driven the argument that systematic gender-based exclusion may amount to the crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, and proceedings at the International Criminal Court concerning senior Taliban figures have advanced on that basis; delegates should verify the current procedural status before citing it. Asylum systems in several states have moved towards recognising Afghan women as refugees by reason of their gender alone, which is a significant and contested development in the interpretation of particular social group.



Case Study 4: Sudan and the Primacy of Internal Displacement

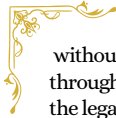
The conflict that began in April 2023 rapidly produced the largest displacement crisis in the world by number, with the majority of those displaced remaining inside Sudan and further large movements into Chad, Egypt, South Sudan and beyond. United Nations reporting has documented conflict-related sexual violence on a large scale, including in and around displacement sites, alongside famine conditions in several areas. The case is instructive because almost none of the refugee-law machinery applies to the majority of those affected, humanitarian access depends on the consent and cooperation of parties to the conflict, and the neighbouring states receiving those who do cross are among the least resourced in the world. Any proposal in this committee that assumes a functioning asylum system, a cooperative state, and accessible protection services should be tested against Sudan.

Case Study 5: Ukraine and the Temporary Protection Precedent

Following the full-scale invasion in February 2022, the European Union activated the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time since its adoption in 2001, granting immediate residence, labour market access, healthcare and education to those fleeing without individual status determination. The displaced population was overwhelmingly women and children, since men of military age were largely subject to exit restrictions. The case demonstrates that rapid, rights-rich reception at scale is administratively possible when political will exists, which is precisely why other displaced populations and their advocates have invoked it as a comparator and raised questions of differential treatment. It also illustrates the specific risks of a large, mobile population of women and children moving across borders at speed, with documented trafficking-prevention concerns at reception points in the early weeks, and the difficulty of planning when a protection status is by design temporary and requires periodic political renewal.

Conclusion

The harms this agenda concerns are documented, and they recur with striking consistency across crises that otherwise have nothing in common. The operational responses that reduce them are largely known: lighting and locks on latrines, cash in a woman's own name, birth registration



without a father's documentation, secondary schooling that continues through displacement, a functioning referral pathway for survivors, and the legal right to earn a living. They are unevenly delivered not for lack of knowledge but because the framework built in 1951 was designed for a different displacement pattern, because the states hosting the most displaced people have the fewest resources, because the response depends on voluntary money that is currently contracting, and because the legal category most likely to help a displaced woman — gender — is the one the founding instrument omits.

This Commission cannot bind a state, compel access, deploy a mission or appropriate a budget. What it can do is set normative standards with unusual authority, direct the reporting of the entities that report to it, and articulate what states should be measured against in their CEDAW reviews and national reporting. Every Agreed Conclusion that has moved practice did so by being specific. Prefer three precise, implementable, verifiable commitments over thirty aspirational ones, and be able to say for each who implements it, who funds it, who monitors it, and what happens when a state does nothing.

Suggested Research and References

These are starting points only. Delegates are expected to locate the primary documents themselves and to consult their own state's submissions, reservations and national legislation in every case.

- United Nations track. CEDAW Committee General Recommendation 32, together with General Recommendations 19, 30, 33 and 35 and the joint CEDAW and CRC recommendation on harmful practices (ohchr.org); UNHCR's Global Trends: Forced Displacement, Guidelines on International Protection No. 1 on gender-related persecution, and its education reporting (unhcr.org); UNFPA's State of World Population report and the Inter-Agency Working Group's Minimum Initial Service Package guidance (unfpa.org, iawg.net); the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (unodc.org); and the most recent annual Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (documents.un.org).

- This Commission specifically. The Agreed Conclusions of recent sessions and the Beijing plus thirty political declaration, together with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action itself, particularly critical area of concern E (unwomen.org). Read at least one full set of Agreed Conclusions before the conference to understand the register in which this body writes.
- Operational standards. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action and the Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (gbvaor.net, interagencystandingcommittee.org); the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention (au.int); and the Global Compact on Refugees together with Global Refugee Forum pledge documentation (globalcompactrefugees.org).

QARMA

Delegates should be prepared to address the following.

1. Should gender be recognised as a ground of persecution in its own right, and if so through an interpretive instrument, a protocol, or state practice, given the risk that reopening the 1951 Convention produces a weaker text?
2. What is owed to internally displaced women, who outnumber refugee women and are frequently displaced by the state legally responsible for protecting them?
3. What specific reforms to nationality and birth registration law would most reduce statelessness among children born in displacement, and how should states that have entered reservations to Article 9 of CEDAW be engaged?
4. On what terms, if any, should host states be expected to grant lawful work rights, and what reciprocal support from the international community would make that politically viable?
5. How should the safety of return be assessed for women specifically, and who should make that assessment where host state and origin state agree that conditions are adequate?
6. What would an effective, independent complaint mechanism for sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel actually look like, and who would operate it?

7. Given that funding is voluntary and contracting, which of the interventions in this guide should be prioritised, and on what stated criteria?
8. For every proposal: who implements, funds and monitors it, how is compliance verified, what happens when a state does nothing, and how could it be misused against the women it is meant to protect?





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