



Campion School MUN

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## Special Conference on the Fight Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

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**MENTAL, PHYSICAL, AND  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN**

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**International  
Community**

**Memorable  
Experience**

**Challenges  
Skills**



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# INTRODUCTION

Less than 50 years ago, violence, of all kinds, against women, was not considered an issue worthy of international attention; of international concern. And even though women from all around the globe had been fighting for their rights for more than a century, victims of mental, physical and sexual abuse stayed silent. Nowadays, gender-based violence is one of the most important issues with both sexes trying to help the ones in need while also dealing with the problem. Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5 “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. However, 35% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse. Moreover, 150 million girls under the age of 18 have been sexually assaulted and half of them were under the age of 16. Due to these facts, we must take into serious consideration the question of abuse against women since it concerns a great percentage of them.





## DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

- **Violence**

The use of physical force or words so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy.<sup>1</sup>

- **Mental Violence**

Any act, including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.<sup>2</sup>

- **Physical Violence**

Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to, scratching; pushing; shoving; throwing; grabbing; biting; choking; shaking; slapping; punching; burning; use of a weapon; and use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person.<sup>3</sup>

- **Sexual Violence**

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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Violence." Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/violence](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/violence).

<sup>2</sup> Tracyn. "Emotional Abuse: Definitions, Signs, Symptoms, Examples." HealthyPlace, Healthy Place, 24 July 2012, [www.healthyplace.com/abuse/emotional-psychological-abuse/emotional-abuse-definitions-signs-symptoms-examples](http://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/emotional-psychological-abuse/emotional-abuse-definitions-signs-symptoms-examples).

<sup>3</sup> "Physical Violence, Definition(s) Of." Long Work Hours, Definition(s) of | Work and Family Researchers Network, [workfamily.sas.upenn.edu/glossary/p/physical-violence-definitions](http://workfamily.sas.upenn.edu/glossary/p/physical-violence-definitions).

<sup>4</sup> "Violence against Women." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women).



- **Gender-based Violence**

Any act, including physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual violence, that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships.<sup>5</sup>

- **Violence Against Women**

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women (and transgender women), including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations. "Sexual and Gender Based Violence." UNHCR, [www.unhcr.org/sexual-and-gender-based-violence.html](http://www.unhcr.org/sexual-and-gender-based-violence.html).

<sup>6</sup> "Beijing Conference." United Nations, United Nations, [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-overview.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-overview.htm).



## TIMELINE

1817	The public whipping of women was abolished.
1975	International Women’s Day was adopted by the United Nations.
1986	Sexual harassment was recognized by the Supreme Court as a form of sex discrimination.
1991	Anita Hill accused U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment.
1993	The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women is adopted by the UN General Assembly for the protection of women against sexual and gender-based violence.
2004	Resolution “Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women” is adopted by the UN General Assembly.
2005	The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, an Act of the Parliament of India, passed.
2013	“A Promise is a Promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women” is the UN theme for the International Women’s Day.



## **TOPIC DISCUSSION**

From the Roman years, when men were allowed, by the law, to kill their wives, to the 18th century in United Kingdom, when the law gave a man permission to hit his wife with a whip in order to discipline her, and from then to today, many years have gone by yet not many things have changed. For example, during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped and in 1994, 250,000 to 500,000 women were rape during the genocide in Rwanda. Moreover, it is known that since 2012, the percentage of sexual assaults has risen dramatically. However, the issue of violence against women was firstly addressed many years ago during the Women’s Rights Movement (1848-1998). Later on, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written on the December 10th, 1948 which protected all human beings, no matter the sex. On June 25, 1993 the “Vienna Declaration and Program of Action” was adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and on December 20, 1993 “The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women” was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly without vote. No matter how many efforts have been made, gender- based violence is still one of the most important issues worldwide and women from all parts of the world suffer daily.

Nowadays, in Latin America for example, violence against women costs countries up to 3.7% of their GDP – more than double what most governments spend one education. The number of American troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq between 2001 and 2012 was 6,488. The number of American women who were murdered by current or ex male partners during that time was 11,766. That’s nearly double the number of casualties lost during war.



## **CAUSES**

- **Socioeconomic reasons**

Throughout the years, men had the opportunity to educate themselves, to develop their potentials, to build their careers while women were fighting for their rights. As a result, men were able to support their families and thus had the upper hand on their relationships. On the contrary, women didn't have the education nor the economical background to support themselves and their offspring. Due to these factors, women were obliged to obey their partners and suppress their feelings and needs. All of the above led empowered men to dominate over the other sex and exercise mental, physical and sexual abuse.

- **Psychological and biological factor**

The personal history background of both the perpetrator and the victim had a crucial role in all kinds of violence. People with past experience of abuse tend to exercise violence or become tolerant of it in the future. Furthermore, biological reasons affect seriously our behavior, as far as violence is concerned. For example, Psychotic Disorder, Bipolar Disorder and Schizophrenia are some out of the many mental illnesses that may cue exercise or accept violence.

- **Social welfare**

The state owes to support and help the victims of gender- based violence by providing services while enacting laws protecting women from mental, physical and sexual abuse. However, the extent of tolerance towards that kind of crimes is often high. As a result, it enables people who exercise violence to continue to do so. On the other hand, due to the state's inability to prevent abuse against women and protect them, women themselves feel helpless and desperate. So, controlled by fear, they are "forced" to remain silent.





## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

A possible solution would be to educate the youth, as they are the future. The only way to ensure the interest of future generations is via education. Informing the children about issues like gender-based violence and gender equality would help them form their opinions early and activate their defense mechanisms regarding such problems. The factor of exposure to violence in childhood is a major cause of violence later in life. Whether it's the husband abusing his wife or a father abusing his child, the post violence affect is disastrous.

Explaining women all over the world their fundamental rights and the importance of their safety and well-being will help eliminate the percentage of violence against women. Especially in LEDCs, where the income is low, many women don't go to school and thus are not informed about their right as human beings. A great solution would be to organize informative campaigns regarding gender-based violence so that people, both men and women, will learn more about mental, physical and sexual abuse against women and what to do about it.

Each member state should guarantee the better cooperation between organizations regarding the protection of women. All countries having the predisposition to tackle the issue of gender-based violence must do everything in their power to assist agencies, wishing to help the victims and put an end to abuse against women, work together in order to get the best result possible.



# **MAJOR COUNTRIES & ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

## **Organizations**

### **UN Women**

Founded in 2010, UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. One of their 5 main goals is to end violence against women, which they have been trying ever since their establishment.

## **Countries**

### **Burundi**

Violence against women, and especially sexual assault is quite common in Burundi, since 77% of men believe women "ask to be raped" by the way they dress and behave. However, women are even more affected by such stereotypes since 95% of them agree with the previous statement.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

The percentages of violence against women are extremely high, with 64% of them saying their first sexual experience was assault. Gender- based violence has been characterized by the United Nations a "weapon of war" since the women population is raped and beaten daily during conflicts.

### **Guinea**

Almost half the male population (41%) has raped someone, while over 2/3 of the opposite sex have been victims of physical or sexual violence. However, the outnumbering percentage of 90% of women believe mental, physical and sexual violence against women should be allowed.



## **United States of America**

Every year, 340,000 women are sexually assaulted. Several attempts have been made by the Congress, such as the “Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (1948)”, or the “Violence Against Women Act (September 1994), which was reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013, however the percentages still remain high. In Brazil, forced prostitution and forceful servitude at home is a common practice for trafficked victims. These victims are made to work both locally as well as transported abroad. While women and children face forced prostitution, sex slavery and home servitude, for men, the fate is slightly different. Men are made to work in the fields of mining, cattle ranching and the likes. Nevertheless, it is unpaid labor and highly exploitative.



## **UN INVOLVEMENT: Relevant Resolutions & Treaties**

The UN Women is the main body responsible for the problem of mental, physical and sexual abuse against women. Yet, the United Nations themselves have done an outstanding job regarding the issue. Two of the most important resolutions adopted by the UN are the “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women” (1993) and “Elimination of domestic violence against women” (2004).



## Research Questions

Research more about the historical background of the issue. Also, read the 1993 UN “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women” resolution.





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