

Committee: SOCHUM 2

Topic: The question of the eradication of gender-based violence and harassment in MEDCs

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Summary

Many of us are aware of the fact that many Muslim-majority nations are often viewed as the worst countries for gender equality. However, they are not the only ones struggling to become equal, as surprisingly or not, as the most economically developed countries are not as developed or on top of this issue. In fact, after those commonly guided by Islamic Sharia law, stand countries such as “Sweden, the U.K., Botswana and Australia, [having] the highest reported rates of sexual violence” (US News).

Definition of Key Terms

MEDCs: More Economically Developed Countries

LEDCs: Less Economically Developed Countries

Gender: “Either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female” (Oxford Dictionary).

Gender-based violence against women: is “any act that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (United Nations, 1995, Platform for Action D.112)

Gender equality: the state in which access to equality is not restricted by gender, in which males and females have equal rights.

Harassment: behaviour that annoys or deeply upsets someone, we usually talk about sexual harassment, from a male to a female.

Background Information

Violence against women, or girls, is, unfortunately, a very common global issue which affects 1 out of 3 women in their lifetime. These assaults come in various forms such as murders and sexual and physical assaults and from either intimate partners or complete strangers. In fact, more than 38% of murdered women were killed by their intimate partner, who should have provided a safe and non-violent environment for their female partner. However, that was not the case. Most of the times women report

any physical / sexual / verbal assault against their partner, these reports are saved as false and therefore not taken into consideration by the law, in which if the woman is unlucky, having the case not been taken seriously could even end up with the woman, and sometimes, kids' life. This is why this issue is so important and why it has to be taken seriously once and for all, by not only trying to end up with gender-based violence, but by empowering women and girls from all over the globe.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

UNODC: The United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime considers violence against women a crucial crime which has to be stopped. They, in fact, along with the United Nations Office in Vienna, have released a Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2018-2021).

UN Women: UN Women, among other issues, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, empowerment of women and achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.

WHO: The Global Gender, Equity and Human Rights team, comprised of staff across all six regions as well as in some WHO country offices, oversees the integration of gender, equity and human rights into healthcare programmes and policies across the different programme areas that make up the World Health Organization.

The World Bank: "The World Bank Group works with public- and private-sector clients to close gaps between males and females globally for lasting impact in tackling poverty and driving sustainable economic growth that benefits all" (The World Bank).

Sweden: Even though Sweden was ranked by the OECD as the 3rd best country for gender equality, having ended with 82% of the gender gap in the last couple of years, Sweden is also the 3rd country with the highest rape rates. In fact, according to the FRA's study there's a strong correlation between higher levels of gender equality and disclosure of sexual violence.

Australia: Results from a national survey show that almost two out of five women (39 per cent) aged 15 and older, who have been in the workforce in the last five years, have experienced sexual harassment. However, domestic violence is more common as around one woman per week is murdered in Australia by a current or former male partner.

Iceland: Iceland has been entitled the country with the least gender gap for more than a decade, but although, we, as outsiders see this as a paradise for women, it isn't. In 2010, the University of Iceland found out that 30% of Icelandic women aged 18 to 80 reported having been physically attacked by a man at least once (The National).

Syrian Arab Republic: According to data collected in 2018, it has been reconfirmed that gender-based violence is still an ongoing issue in Syria, especially for adolescent girls. In fact, they are forced into early marriage as an excuse for these high rates of rapes and violence to decrease, but making teenage girls marry a thirty or forty-year old man is not making any positive difference, as it is only making matters worse.

Afghanistan: Gender-based violence is a pervasive problem in Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, 87% of Afghan women experience at least one form of physical, sexual or psychological violence, and 62 percent experience multiple forms. However, fortunately, the UNFPA has focused on changing these statistics by training and bringing awareness to police recruits, judges, prosecutors, and health staff on responding to GBV.

Yemen: Women from the Yemeni society are expected to provide for their family and household. However, this turns into something impossible for them to do when they have been deprived from education and vocational training, especially after the Yemeni Civil War broke out in 2015. And if on top of that they are among the 4.3 million people displaced in the last 3 years, they tend to suffer most from lack of privacy, threats to safety and limited access to basic services, making them ever more vulnerable to violence and abuse.

South Africa: While many think, President Cyril Ramaphosa included, South Africa to be the country with the highest rape rates in the world, police reports say otherwise. They, in fact, state they issue to be under control, with the least number of reported rapes ever to be recorded. I strongly suggest you read this article for further clarification and detail on the issue.

Botswana: Rape and GBV in Botswana, as Ngozi Chukra explains it, it's such a common issue that nobody seems to care about it anymore. In fact, policemen in charge of any rape case will rather give up on their responsibility or say that the file has gone missing than expose the predator and make him have a bad image of himself all around town, and this is clearly the reason why Botswana is the second country with the highest number of rapes in the world.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
1979	CEDAW was implemented
1993	World Conference on Human Rights in which the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was implemented
1994	International Conference on Population and Development, gave importance to violence against women as a human right
1995	Beijing Platform for Action, tracks specific actions for Governments
2006	Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women was released
2011	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence became the second legally binding regional instrument on violence against women and girls but, unlike other regional agreements, it can be signed and ratified by any State.

2012 UN General Assembly adopts bi-annual resolutions on the issue of violence against women.

(Just a brief description of the main events to provide context)

Information courtesy of: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/global-norms-and-standards>

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

UN-SWAP: The UN-SWAP, the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, firstly implemented in 2006 by UN Women, along with the United Nations, is a United Nations System-wide Policy on GEEW, which for the first time in UN history, enabled gender issues to be mainstreamed systematically and measurably into all major institutional functions of the UN system entities.

CEDAW: The Convention/Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted in 1979, and is often known as the international bill of rights for women. In this committee many experts on women's rights from various countries debate on new forms of empowering women.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Beijing Platform for Action: In September 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing, where anyone from anywhere attended with just one thing in their mind: gender equality and the empowerment of all women, everywhere. Still, "this pivotal document continues to guide the global struggle against constraints and obstacles to the empowerment of women around the world" (Ki-Moon, BAN)

Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women: This study, launched the 9 October 2006, focused on the discussion on "Ending violence against women: The role and responsibility of various sectors in effective prevention and response", and aims to:

1. "Highlight the persistence and unacceptability of all forms of violence against women in all parts of the world;
2. Strengthen the political commitment and joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate violence against women; and
3. Identify ways and means to ensure more sustained and effective implementation of State obligations to address all forms of violence against women, and to increase State accountability" (UN WOMEN).

Commission on the Status of Women: "The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946" (UN WOMEN).

Possible Solutions

- Implement the “UNODC strategy for gender equality and the empowerment of women (2018–2021)” in all MEDCs.
- Implement a national telephone number in order for any girl who is experiencing any harassment to report it and receive immediate help, in any country in which this has not yet been implemented
- Information from such calls could be automatically saved and analysed for the country to decide on points of improvement in terms of safety for these women
- Increase the parental leave policy
- Ensure stricter laws are implemented and followed in order for the denounce to be taken serious before deciding on its credibility
- Sanction any country which the UN considers to not be making any progress while protecting women from gender-based violence
- Ensure every country has completed a survey addressing the issue, as well as informed the UN about the real number of murders and attacks on women because of gender
- Implement an NGO or UN organization which will provide a global educational program

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