Committee: UN Women
Topic: Addressing harmful practices, gender-based violence, and killings of women and girls in Afghanistan.
Chair: Luisa Fernanda Martinez Duarte
Moderator: Luisa Maria Tovar Tristan

Overview of the Problem

Since many years ago,women, and girls in Afghanistan have faced discrimination, domestic violence, forced and child marriage, and threats to their safety. These problems did not begin in 2021. However, the return of the Taliban to power on 15 August 2021 made them harder to prevent and report. Restrictions on education, work, movement, and public life have also reduced the independence and protection available to women and girls (UN Women, 2026b).

Since August 2021, the Taliban de facto authorities have issued more than 100 decrees and directives restricting the daily lives of women and girls (UN Women, 2026b). These restrictions include bans on girl´s secondary education, exclusions from university studies, restrictions on employment, and strict control on dress and movement.

These restrictions have also made many women depend more on male family members for money, making it harder for them to leave dangerous situations.

Harmful practices and killings of women and girls require attention alongside these restrictions. Abuse at home can be difficult to report when women survivors have limited access to legal support, money, transportation and trustworthy institutions. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), only 14% of women consulted declared access to formal dispute-resolution services, compared with 53% of men (UNAMA, 2026e). These numbers show that preventing violence is not enough. Women also need real support and ways to get help when they are in danger.

Afghan women and girls, local community leaders, and the Taliban de facto authorities are central to this issue. Pakistan, Iran, countries that provide aid, and United Nations agencies are also involved. Each group has different concerns. Afghan women want to feel safe and have equal opportunities, aid organizations need money and permissions

to provide help, and governments have different opinions on how to deal with the Taliban. Delegates will discuss ways to prevent violence, protect survivors, and restore opportunities for women and girls.

Introduction

This background paper introduces the history of the issue, the situation facing Afghan women and girls today, the main stakeholders, and the international efforts already made.

UN Women is the United Nations entity that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment through international standards, coordination, and support for programs on the ground. All through the committee sessions, delegates will have to compare different countries' concerns and work on realistic proposals to prevent these harmful practices and violence, improve access to services for survivors, and protect Afghan women.

Gender-based violence is based on physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse related to a person's gender. Harmful practices are based on forced marriage and child marriage. Femicide refers to the killing of women or girls because of their gender; however, a killing should not be classified as femicide without evidence of a gender-related motive. These abuses affect families and communities as well as individual rights. UN Women can support standards, humanitarian partnerships, and women's participation, although it cannot enforce domestic laws in Afghanistan (UN Women, n.d; UN Women, 2026b).

Historical Background

For many years, women in Afghanistan have faced difficult situations because of war, poverty, political problems, and limited access to education. From 1996 to 2001, when the Taliban first controlled the country, many women were not allowed to go to school, work, or participate in public activities. (UNAMA, 2026a). When the Taliban lost power in 2001, things slowly started to change. More girls had the chance to study. However, these changes did not reach everyone, especially women living in rural areas. Even so, they made a real difference in the lives of many Afghan women and their families.

Between 2001 and 2021, girls returned to classrooms, women were able to enter universities and workplaces, and some became teachers, doctors, journalists, judges, and public officials. In 2003, Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), accepting an international legal obligation to address discrimination against women (United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.). In 2009, the government introduced the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law, which attempted to provide protections against harmful practices and several forms of abuse. The enforcement stands incomplete, particularly where fear, local customs, or limited legal services stopped survivors from seeking help.

The United Nations Security Council had already established an important international framework in Resolution 1325 (2000). It connects women's protection during conflict with their participation in peace and decision-making processes (United Nations Security Council, 2000). This principle became relevant to Afghanistan during exertion to rebuild state institutions and later on, during negotiations over the country's political future.

On 15 August 2021, the Taliban took control of Kabul and restored their de facto rule. Many institutions supporting women's rights were closed or drained, and women were progressively excluded from public decision making and legal professions. Although gender-based violence existed before 2021, the dismantling of legal institutional protections has reduced survivors' access to justice and essential support (UNAMA, 2026e).

Previous reforms show both the possibilities and the limits of change. More girls attending school and women working in public professions were real achievements between 2001 and 2021. However, laws alone did not erase domestic violence, pressure to early marriage, or unequal access to justice, especially in communities where support services were difficult to reach. After 2021, many advances became harder to protect. This history suggests that future proposals need more than promises,

they also need trained local staff, funding, safe ways to report abuse, and monitoring that can continue over time (UNAMA, 2026e; United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.).

The Situation Today

Education, employment, and freedom of movement

As of October 2026, nationwide restrictions on girls secondary schooling, women's university education, formal employment, and freedom of movement remain in force. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 2.6 million girls have been rejected for secondary education since 2021. Girls have generally been unable to attend formal school after sixth grade since September 2021, while women have been excluded from universities since December 2022 (UNICEF, 2026b). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) warned in August 2026 that these policies reverse years of progress and limit future opportunities for Afghan women (UNESCO,2026).

The impact goes to further education. When women cannot freely work or travel, families can lose income, girls can lose role models, and violence survivors can become more dependent on the people around them. Restrictions also reduce the number of women who are able to work as educators, health professionals, aid workers, and legal advisers. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP,2026), investment in women remains essential to Afghanistan's longer-term recovery.

Violence, child marriage, and access to justice

Gender based violence includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm directed at a person because of gender. Forced marriage and child marriage can increase girls vulnerability to abuse and remove their choices about education and health. In October 2026, UNICEF cited Afghanistan's 2022-2023 household survey, which found that 28.7% of women aged 20-24 had married before age 18. This figure comes from that survey and should not be presented as a new 2026 count (UNICEF, 2026a).

Obtaining justice has become especially difficult. UNAMA reported that many women have lost access to wome-focused services and professional legal support. On 21 May 2026, it criticized Decree No. 18 on judicial separation: men retained a unilateral right to divorce, while women had to follow more restrictive procedures to seek separation (UNAMA, 2026c). These unjust rules make it harder for someone facing abuse to leave this situation.

Women also experience risks in public spaces and have insufficient ways to report violence. On 8 October 2026, UNAMA reported the verified arrest or detention of at least 52 women and one girl in Herat and Kabul between July and September over alleged dress code violations (UNAMA,2026b). In a separate review covering January through June 2026, Afghanistan Women's Rights Watch documented 225 cases involving physical, psychological, or structural violence, including killings and attempted killings, domestic abuse, and arbitrary detention (Afghanistan Women's Rights Watch, 2026). These documented cases do not represent the entire incidents: fear of retaliation, stigma, and deficiencies in reporting systems make the total number of gender related killings difficult to establish. UNAMA's findings on women's limited access to formal dispute resolution also show why some abuse remains outside effective legal protection (UNAMA,2026e).

Health and humanitarian needs

Women who need medical care, mental health support, or help after violence may face travel restrictions, lack of female staff, and limited near services, The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported in its updated on the Afghanistan emergency, last revised in September 2026, that gender based violence services persist extremely limited because of restrictive operating conditions and insufficient funding. It also described support through female health workers, mobile teams, and community based services (UNFPA,2026).

Although the humanitarian crisis affects the whole population, women and girls can face extra impediments to receive assistance safely and privately. Policies that prevent

female aid workers from joining women also limit how international organizations determine needs. The United Nations must therefore consider both access to services and the ability of women to participate in delivering those services.

Regional effects and everyday consequences

The crisis also affects countries bordering Afghanistan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that, as of 30 June 2026, Iran hosted about 1.55 million and Pakistan about 1.07 million Afghan refugees and other Afghans in need of international protection. These figures cover more than formally registered refugees and should not be described as registration totals (UNHCR,2026). Both countries confront pressure on public services and decisions about humanitarian support, border management, and returns. These territorial conditions also affect the safety and stability of displaced Afghan women and girls.

These obstacles reinforce one another. A woman living under domestic violence may be incapable of reaching legal support or a trained female health worker if she cannot travel safely. Besides, a girl excluded from school may face lower future employment opportunities and higher economic dependence. Restricted movement, limited education, and gaps in survivor services therefore increase risks together rather than separately (UNICEF, 2026a; UNAMA, 2026e).

Key Stakeholders and Their Positions

Afghan women, girls, and women-led organizations

Afghan women and girls are the people directly affected by the policies and violence discussed in this committee. Their needs are not all the same:a girl in a rural community may face different impediments from a journalist, a student, a displaced mother, or a survivor seeking legal support. Local women-led groups usually understand these risks best. A central priority is safe access to education, healthcare, protection, livelihoods, and genuine participation in decisions about their future (UN WOMEN, 2026a).

Local non-profit and women-led organizations

Local nonprofit organizations help women and girls reach services, understand their rights, receive medical or emotional support, and find ways to continue learning or earning an income. They may be more reliable than distant international institutions because they understand local languages and community needs. But their workers can face conditions and safety risks, and funding shortages can force services to close. These organizations want solid support, protection for staff and clients, and a real voice in how aid is designed. International groups should work with them rather than make decisions on their behalf (UN Women, 2026a; UNFPA, 2026).

Taliban de facto authorities

The Taliban exercise control over the country's administration and the rules affecting women's movement, employment, education, and family life. Their restrictions are the direct subject of international criticism. Any proposal forcing permission for services or changes to law must recognize that the de facto authorities control practical access, while also making clear that engagement is not the same as political recognition of discrimination (UNAMA, 2026a).

Regional neighbors: Pakistan and Iran

Pakistan and Iran host large displaced Afghan populations, but their policy priorities differ. UNHCR figures for 30 June 2026 listed approximately 1.07 million Afghan refugees and others in need of international protection in Pakistan and 1.55 million in Iran (UNHCR, 2026). Pakistan has emphasized border security, immigration enforcement, and returns under its illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, while UNHCR has supported safeguards for people at risk of harm upon return (UNHCR, n.d.-b). Iran has emphasized support for refugee hosting services, education, and healthcare while also tightening documentation and return procedures under economic pressure (UNHCR, n.d-a). These different approaches build each country's interests in regional negotiation and humanitarian assistance.

Donor governments and other Muslim-majority states

Muslim-majority countries do not share one policy on Afghanistan. Qatar has hosted diplomatic dialogue in Doha and continued discussions about education and regional stability, including talks with Afghan officials (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, 2025). Indonesia has focused on educational cooperation for Afghan women, including jointly organizing an international conference on Afghan women's education with Qatar (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, 2023). Other donor governments focus on humanitarian financing, accountability, and protection of women's rights. These approaches contrast in the balance they place on direct dialogue, international pressure, and support for services on the ground.

Private businesses and employers

Restrictions on women's work have also affected private businesses. In July 2023, the Taliban ordered the closure of beauty salons across Afghanistan. Reports at the time estimated that more than 60,000 women face the loss of employment in a sector that had provided income and independent work opportunities (Afghan Witness, 2023). The injunction shows that the restrictions affect not only government jobs but also small private businesses run by women. Responsible employers and donors can support safe livelihood opportunities where access and protection can be maintained (UNDP, 2026).

United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners

UN Women focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment. UNAMA monitors and reports on human rights concerns, UNICEF and UNESCO work on education and children's needs, and UNFPA supports sexual and reproductive healthcare and services related to gender based violence. Local civil society groups are essential partners, although restrictions and funding shortages make their work difficult (UNFPA, 2026; UNAMA, 2026d).

Development banks and other financial partners

International financial institutions, including the World Bank, are another part of the response. They are not part of UN Women, but their funding and development work can help maintain health, education, livelihoods, and other basic services. The World Bank

reported in 2025 that its Afghanistan support and donor funding were directed through UN agencies and non.governmental partners rather than through the Taliban interim administration. Financial partners therefore focus on service delivery and accountability, while UN Women gives particular attention to gender equality and the voices of Afghan women (World Bank, 2025).

Past Attempts and Existing Frameworks

Afghanistan has agreed to several international human rights obligations, including CEDAW, which it ratified on 5 March 2003. Ratification does not mean that every protection is currently enforced. It does mean that Afghanistan continues to have legal responsibilities under their treaty, regardless of changes in its de facto leadership (United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.).

Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) remains important because it calls for the protection of women and girls and for women to participate meaningfully in peace and security processes. In April 2023, Security Council Resolution 2681 specifically condemned the Taliban's ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations and called for restrictions on women's rights to be reversed (United Nations Security Council, 2000, 2023). Neither resolution has, by itself, removed the restrictions on the ground.

International organizations have also continued practical work. UNICEF and UNESCO support learning alternatives where possible, while UNFPA and local partners support healthcare protection services. UN Women documents the life story of Afghan women and works with partners to keep their priorities visible. UNAMA continues to monitor human rights and raise concerns with the de facto authorities (UNESCO, 2026; UNFPA, 2026; UNAMA, 2026d).

Accountability efforts have developed as well. On 5 October 2026, the International Criminal Court made public four arrest warrants issued in 2025 for senior Taliban figures in the Afghanistan investigation. The allegations concern the crime against humanity persecution, including on gender grounds. Arrest warrants are not criminal convictions, and the cases remain part of a legal process (International Criminal Court, 2026).

These steps show that the international community has interceded through law, diplomacy, measurement, and humanitarian assistance. The major challenge is that the declarations and resolutions alone do not guarantee that a girl can return to school or that a survivor can harmlessly request help. The next phase of the debate should focus on how existing frameworks can be applied without declaring Afghan women and local aid workers at higher risk.

Different responses have helped in different ways. Education and healthcare partners have kept some community-level services possible, and international funding has backed basic needs even when direct cooperation with de facto authorities is difficult. The World Bank's approach of channeling funds through UN and non-governmental partners is one example of an attempt to support people while limiting direct control by the Taliban authorities (World Bank, 2025). Next door countries also assume roles in responding to displaced Afghans, while their migration and security priorities differ. These actions can offer immediate help, but they have not restored girls regular secondary education or women's equal access to public life (UNESCO, 2026; UNAMA, 2026a).

The main message is that emergency assistance and long-term protection must be linked. A short project may reach people for a few months, but survivors need trustworthy services after the project ends. Political allegations are important, since they have limited effects if girls still cannot go to school or women cannot safely report abuse. What still is missing is predictable funding, access for female aid workers, stronger protection for local partners, and ways to measure results without exposing Afghan women to new risks (UN Women, 2026a; UNFPA, 2026).

Challenges and Complications

Another major challenge is the relationship between human dialogue and political recognition. International organizations may need to engage with the de facto authorities to ensure clinics remain open and communities being accessible, but such contact must not be presented as approval of restrictions against women. Governments have different opinions about how to use dialogue, apply diplomatic pressure, and provide support creating difficulties in being coordinated.(UNAMA, 2026a).

Access to services can also be an issue. Rural distance, poverty, displacement, disability, limited transportation, and shortages of female professionals can keep women from services even when some programs exist. Cultural pressure and fear of retaliation can deter survivors from reporting abuse. In these conditions, underreporting is a severe problem and an absence of complaints cannot be taken as proof that violence is absent (UNAMA, 2026e).

Funding is a further barrier. Local organizations may know how to reach women, yet they often have limited resources and face security concerns. UNFPA reported that funding losses have disrupted services for women and girls in Afghanistan. Proposals must therefore consider long term financing, confidentiality, staffing, and the practical safety of service providers (UNFPA, 2026).

Finally, international attention may focus on a specific restriction while overlooking the broader connections between different challenges. A girl who is unable to attend school may become more economically dependent, while a woman unable to travel freely may not be able to attend a clinic or seek justice. Successful approaches should treat education, prevention of violence, access to services, and women's participation as linked issues, not separate problems (UNICEF, 2026a; UN Women, 2026a).

Although technology can play an important role in addressing these problems, it should not be considered as a solution on its own. Remote lessons, telephone support, and

digital reporting may fail if someone cannot afford a device, does not have reliable internet or electricity, or cannot use a phone privately. In addition, inadequate protection of personal information may expose survivors and local workers to further risks. Programs should therefore include safer offline options and protect confidentiality instead of assuming that every Afghan girl or woman can use the same technology (UNFPA,2026).

There are also legal and cultural disagreements. While international treaties call for equal protection, regulations imposed by the de facto authorities continue to limit many aspects of women's lives. Communities across Afghanistan are not all alike, and neither Afghan women nor Muslim-majority countries share one identical view. Delegates should respect distinct local experiences and religious perspectives without treating violence or discrimination as acceptable or justifying acts. Practical solutions must involve affected women and trusted local partners while keeping basic rights at the center of the discussion (UNAMA, 2026c; UN Women, 2026a).

The Committee's Role and Powers

UN Women is the United Nations entity responsible for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It was established by the General Assembly in 2010. Its work includes supporting international standards, coordinating the UN system, carrying out programs with partners, and helping governments and civil society improve policies and services. It also supports the work of intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women; it is not itself that commission (UN Women, n.d.).

For this Model United Nations simulation, delegates must recommend stronger cooperation among existing UN agencies, encourage funding for women-led organizations, propose educational and protection initiatives, support reliable monitoring, and call for meaningful Afghan women’s participation. The resolutions should explain who would carry out the action, how people could safely access it, and how success could be measured.

UN Women does not have the authority to send peacekeeping forces, impose economic sanctions, issue arrest warrants, or require a government to change its laws by force. Those powers apply to other institutions or legal processes. Solutions should stay within UN Women's policy, coordination, advocacy, and programming role rather than assigning it powers that it does not possess.

In this Model United Nations committee, delegates will normally turn their proposals into working papers and draft resolutions or recommendations, depending on the official SUNS roles. A strong document should name the agencies or partners responsible, explain the needed resources, and show how results will be checked. Delegates should work through discussion, negotiation, and cooperation with other UN bodies instead of writing actions that UN Women could not carry out.

Guiding Questions for Debate

1. How can UN Women and partners communicate with survivors of violence without exposing them or local staff to further danger?
2. What workable steps could improve access to education for girls under the restrictions that remain in place?
3. How can international community provide funding to women-led Afghan organizations while protecting their independence and security?
4. How can the international community ensure reliable and trustworthy reporting of gender based violence and killings when many incidents are never reported?
5. How can delegates promote protection against child and forced marriage while confronting the poverty that increases girls' vulnerability?
6. What can UN agencies do to protect female humanitarian workers when the de facto authorities are limiting their movement and employment?
7. How can member states ensure they can still maintain effective humanitarian communication without appearing to recognise or accept discriminatory policies?

8. Which actual international agreements and UN resolutions offer the strongest starting point for practical action?
9. How can Pakistan, Iran, donor countries, and other regional partners work together while considering the different needs of Afghan women and girls?
10. How should delegates measure whether a proposal actually upgrades safety, access to justice, and participation for Afghan women and girls?
11. How can responsible employers, donors, and development banks support women's livelihoods without undermining the protections for local communities?
12. What role can community leaders play to prevent harmful practices while protecting women's freedom and equal rights?

Conclusion and Call to Action

The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan is both a human rights issue and a question of safety in everyday life. Since August 2021, restrictions have made education, employment, healthcare, and access to justice much harder to obtain. Harmful practices and gender-based violence are especially difficult to prevent when institutions are weak and survivors have few safe places to turn.

Delegates should analyze what the international community has already tried, identify the limits of UN Women’s authority, and propose new actions that are practical under current conditions. During the sessions, delegates are called on to negotiate actionable draft resolutions that identify responsible partners, funding needs, and measures to protect local women and staff. They should consider ways to expand survivor support, sustain learning opportunities, and strengthen safe reporting and community-based services without putting Afghan women at further risk. Each proposal should explain how success will be measured and how women’s own priorities will be included. The strongest solutions will be realistic, respectful, and centered on the people whose lives are affected.

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