



LAGOS
MODEL
UNITED
NATIONS

2025

BACKGROUND GUIDE



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

(UNWomen)

Property of the Lagos Model United Nations

Background Guide: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

Edited and Reviewed by

Okegbemi Mofloluwalowo Oluwatunmise (Deputy-Secretary-General)

Onyinye Madubugwu (Under-Secretary-General Research)

Anita Madu (Under-Secretary-General, Development)

Oluwatimilehin Oluwasemilore (Under-Secretary-General, Peace and Security)

Written by

Erekiye Ugo (Chair)

Oyinkansola Ademeso (Vice-Chair)

Uchechukwugeme Nonyalim (Researcher)

Genevieve Ikhazuagbe (Researcher)

Tolúwanímí Idowu (Departmental Researcher)

Designed by

Agam Joy Ngozi

LMUN 2025: The Ninth Session

Table of Contents

Letter From the USG	5
Abbreviations	9
Committee Overview	11
I - Introduction	11
II - Governance, Structure, and Membership	16
III - Mandate, Functions, and Powers	17
IV - Recent Sessions and Current Priorities	21
V - Annotated Bibliography	22
VI - Bibliography	25
Topic One: The Global Femicide Pandemic: Addressing the Prevalence of Intimate Partner/ Family Member Femicide	31
II- Introduction	31
III- Definition of Key Terms	33
IV- International and Regional Legal Frameworks	35
V - Role of the International System	41
1. Historical and Cultural Context of Femicide	46
2. Key Drivers And Causes Of Femicide	51
3. Impact of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicide On The Society	56
4. Case Studies and Best Practices	62
5. Barriers to Addressing Femicide	70
VI - Conclusion	75
VII - Further Research	76
VIII - Annotated Bibliography	77
IX - Bibliography	80
Topic Two: Women and AI Ethics: Balancing Innovation and Bias Prevention	87
II. Introduction	87
III - Definition of Key Terms	89
IV - International and Regional Legal Framework	92
V - Role of the International System	95
1. Understanding AI Bias	98



2. Key instances of gender bias in AI	101
3. Ethical Implications Of Gender Bias In AI	102
4. Women In AI: Challenges And Opportunities	104
VI - Conclusion	113
VII - Further Research	114
VIII - Annotated Bibliography	115
IX - Bibliography	118

Letter From the USG


Dear Delegates,

It is with genuine pleasure that I welcome you to the **9th session of the Lagos Model United Nations 2025**. As we approach a decade of nurturing diplomatic talent and global consciousness among Nigerian youth, **LMUN** continues to serve as a platform where meaningful dialogue, collaboration and principled leadership address our world's most pressing challenges.

This year, I am delighted to invite you to participate in the **UN Women committee**, where you will explore critical gender equality issues that shape our contemporary world. Throughout this conference, you will advocate for policies that recognise women's dignity, defend their rights and promote their full participation across all spheres of society, an experience that promises to be both intellectually stimulating and personally rewarding.

To guide you through this journey, we have assembled a remarkable team whose dedication to gender equality is complemented by their commitment to your development as delegates: **Erekiye Ugo** (Chair); **Oyinkansola Ademeso** (Vice-Chair); **Uchechukwugeme Nonyalim** (Researcher I); **Genevieve Ikhazuagbe** (Researcher II); **Tolúwanimí Idowu** (Departmental Researcher).

Erekiye, a 400-level law student at the University of Lagos, brings valuable experience as your Vice-Chair. Her LMUN journey began with her participation in the Lagos Model United Nations 2021 as a delegate of India in the UNHCR where she was awarded the Position Paper award and the Outstanding Delegate award. The experience furthered her participation in the 2023 edition where she was a delegate of Switzerland in the General Assembly 1. Having experienced LMUN as a delegate, Erekiye participated in the 2024



edition as a staff member. She served as the Vice-Chair of the UN Women committee. She possesses a deep interest in the achievement of equality and women empowerment in Africa, as well as the achievement of SDGs in developing countries.

Oyinkansola is a 400-level student at the Faculty of Law, University of Lagos. Her first MUN was the virtual LMUN conference in 2020, where she represented the United Kingdom as a delegate in UNICEF. She won the Position Paper and Honorable Mention awards. In 2021, she went on to earn the Position Paper and Honorable Mention awards again after representing South Africa in GA2. At the 2024 conference, she served as a Researcher for UN Women. Beyond MUNs, she enjoys lending her voices to causes through volunteer work and advocacy, and strongly believes that issues around women's rights can never be over discussed.

Uchechukwugeme is a final-year law student in the University of Lagos with a deep commitment to advocacy and social justice. In 2019, she served as a delegate representing the United States of America to UN Women at the Lagos Model United Nations, where she actively contributed to discussions on gender equality and women's empowerment. Passionate about writing and civic engagement, she consistently participates in initiatives aimed at improving the lives of women and children. She remains a steadfast voice for women, using every platform available to champion their and amplify their stories.

Genevieve is a 300-level student at the Faculty of Law, University of Lagos, whose MUN journey began impressively in 2023 as Italy's delegate in UNICEF, earning both the Position Paper Award and Honourable Mention Award. In LMUN 2024, she represented Sweden in UN Women, again securing the Honourable Mention Award. Her focus on the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in promoting equity and protection for women and children globally, makes her an excellent Chair for your committee.

Tolúwanimí is a communications strategist with a focus on research communications for sustainable outcomes. Her first Model United Nations experience was as the delegate of Albania at the Babcock International Model United Nations. She thereafter participated in LMUN 2024 as the Delegate of Zimbabwe in the UN Women committee, where she earned a Honourable Mention Award. She is passionate about how indigenous languages can facilitate educational equity in the world.

UN Women serves as the global champion for gender equality, working to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, empower women, and achieve equality between women and men as partners in development, human rights, humanitarian action, peace, and security. In our current global landscape, where women continue to face barriers to full participation in society, UN Women's mandate remains vitally important.


Topics for deliberation under this committee include:

I. The Global Femicide Pandemic: Addressing the Prevalence of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicide

II. Women and AI Ethics: Balancing Innovation and Bias Prevention

The Background Guide provides insights into these topics, offering key definitions, relevant legal frameworks and analysis of current challenges. I encourage you to use it as a foundation for your research, while exploring the resources provided in the Bibliography and Annotated Bibliography sections.

Please also review the **Delegate Preparation Guide** and **Rules of Procedure** available on the LMUN website (www.lmun.ng). These resources will help you navigate committee sessions with confidence.



All delegates must submit a position paper by the deadline announced after country assignments. Your paper should present your assigned country's perspective on both agenda topics, showing thorough research and understanding of your country's policies. Please follow the position paper guidelines available on the LMUN website.

If you have questions or need assistance during your preparation, please reach out to usgdevelopment@lmun.ng. Our team is ready to support you.

As you prepare, remember that your discussions reflect real challenges faced by women and girls worldwide. Your contributions have genuine potential to inspire solutions that might one day influence global policy and improve lives.

Welcome to LMUN 2025. Welcome to UN Women. I look forward to seeing your engagement with these important issues and your growth throughout this conference.

Anita Madu,

USG, Development, LMUN 2025.



Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBM	International Business Machines
ICC	International Criminal Court
ILO	International Labour Organization
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS



UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VDPA	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
WHO	World Health Organization

Committee Overview


I - Introduction

From time immemorial, women have fought for the right to participate fully and equally in society. Even the most fundamental human rights - to life, education, and expression- have had to be canvassed through years and years of activism and advocacy. The first organised movement for women's rights began in America in July 1848, marked by the Seneca Falls Convention. The historical gathering was the first of its kind, focused particularly on women's right to suffrage.¹

Three centuries down the road, gender inequality still persists as a global problem requiring attention, as it affects women's human rights and societal development at large. However, in 2010, the global community, through the United Nations, resolved to create a body with the main aim of advancing gender equality and empowering women. The United Nations General Assembly, through the *General Assembly Resolution 64/289*, established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN Women, a composite entity of the UN system from 1 January 2011.²

¹National Women's History Alliance, "History of the Women's Rights Movement"

²UN Women – Headquarters, "Overview"



The UN Women is a product of the consolidation of four divisions of the United Nations.³ the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). All four of these organisations were merged to create what is currently the UN Women in hopes of achieving greater objectives.⁴

Despite the establishment of UN Women, gender inequality prevails in several sectors and aspects of life. According to the World Food Programme (WFP) Gender Policy and Strategy,⁵ It is estimated that 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls.⁶ Meanwhile, women make up about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries.

In the educational sector, a UN Women report noted that women constitute more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people.⁷ This is detrimental to the economic rights of a woman, as having a basic education is a key ingredient to securing jobs and ultimately, economic independence. According to the World Bank's Women, Business and

³ Sundholm M, *"UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth"* (2013)

⁴ Sundholm M, *"UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth"* (2013)

⁵ UN World Food Programme, "WFP Gender Policy 2022"

⁶ UN World Food Programme, "WFP Gender Policy 2022"

⁷ UN Women – Headquarters, "Facts & Figures"



the Law 2022 report,⁸ approximately 2.4 billion women of working age are not afforded equal economic opportunities. Even the women who manage to gain employment or economic opportunities suffer from discrimination on the basis of their gender. For instance, the gender pay gap stands at 20 percent worldwide, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2022 report.

Additionally, in some countries, women face significant challenges in obtaining employment. A World Bank report in 2022 notes that about 178 countries maintain legal barriers that prevent the full economic participation of women. In 86 countries, women face some form of job restriction, and 95 countries do not guarantee equal pay for equal work.⁹


In terms of leadership, the UN Women reports that only 27 countries are currently led by women, while 107 countries have never had a woman leader.¹⁰ Additionally, the World Bank in a 2024 report notes that women enjoy less than two-thirds of the legal rights generally available to men.¹¹

⁸World Bank Group, “Women, Business and the Law - Gender Equality, Women Economic Empowerment”

⁹ World Bank Group, “Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don’t Have Same Economic Rights as Men”

¹⁰UN Women – Headquarters, “Why so Few Women Are in Political Leadership, and Five Actions to Boost Women’s Political Participation”

¹¹ (*Women, business and the law 2024*)



Another key aspect of gender inequality is the violence against women. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in its 2024 report,¹² more than 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation in the countries where the practice is concentrated. In addition, every year, more than 4 million girls are estimated to be at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation, the majority of whom are cut before they turn 15 years old.¹³ Up to 140 women and girls are also reported to die every day at the hands of their partner or a close relative.¹⁴ This means one woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes.¹⁵


While the statistics highlight the ongoing issue of gender inequality, UN Women has made significant efforts to reduce these disparities and achieve its objectives. Some of these key achievements include the creation of notable legislations and laws that support and protect women's rights. They include the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, the *HeforShe Campaigns*, which are an invitation for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality. Also, the UN Women has aided in the increase of bilateral aid to target gender equality in fragile

¹² UN Women – Headquarters, “Intensifying Global Efforts for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Report of the Secretary-General” (2024)

¹³ World Health Organization: WHO, “Female Genital Mutilation”

¹⁴ UN Women – Headquarters, “One Woman or Girl Is Killed Every 10 Minutes by Their Intimate Partner or Family Member”

¹⁵ UN Women – Headquarters, “One Woman or Girl Is Killed Every 10 Minutes by Their Intimate Partner or Family Member”



or conflict-affected situations. The organisation has raised about \$21 billion in bilateral aid between 2017 and 2018. That is a significant increase from \$12.1 billion between 2011 and 2012.¹⁶

Notably, UN Women has collaborated with other bodies, such as state governments, civil society organisations, and private sector organisations. For instance, in 2022, the Asian Development Bank and UN Women signed a five-year agreement to promote gender equality and empower women.¹⁷ Additionally, Member States like Sweden, Germany, and Finland have long been noted as UN Women’s top funding partners.¹⁸

Furthermore, the UN Women has collaborated with other UN bodies in the attainment of its goals. Globally, UN Women works through high-level UN interagency bodies and the World Health Organization (WHO) to promote women’s health and the intersection between health and gender equality. UN Women also works with UNODC and UNICEF, inter alia, to combat exploitation focusing on women and girls and promote the integration of gender perspectives in system-wide policies and those applicable to specific issues and sectors. In intergovernmental forums, such as major world conferences, UN Women helps coordinate inputs from diverse UN entities to support expanded global commitments to gender equality.

¹⁶ United Nations, “*Annual Session of 2021*” (2021)

¹⁷ UN Women – Asia-Pacific, “Asian Development Bank, UN Women Sign 5-Year Agreement to Raise Women’s Status in Asia-Pacific”

¹⁸ UN Women – Asia-Pacific, “Asian Development Bank, UN Women Sign 5-Year Agreement to Raise Women’s Status in Asia-Pacific”

II - Governance, Structure, and Membership


The *UN General Assembly Resolution 64/289*, which established the UN Women, outlines the governance and structure of the organisation. The UN Women is overseen by a multilayered intergovernmental structure, which will be discussed in detail below¹⁹:

“(a) ... the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women shall constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the normative support functions and shall provide normative policy guidance to the Entity;

“(b) ... the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Board of the Entity shall constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the operational activities and shall provide operational policy guidance to the Entity.”

The UN Women is headed by the Executive Director, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation and is appointed by the UN Secretary-General. The Executive Director appoints the Deputy Executive Directors in consultation with the UN Secretary General. They are responsible for overseeing specific areas or operations of the organisation, such as policy, programmes, partnerships, or management, alongside working closely with the executive director to lead and implement

¹⁹UN Women – Headquarters, “Executive Leadership”



the UN Women’s global initiatives. The Executive Director also appoints the Regional Directors with the approval of the Secretary General; they are responsible for ensuring that the UN Women’s global mandate is implemented in their respective regions.²⁰

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Executive Board is established by the General Assembly as the entity's governing body, tasked with providing intergovernmental support and overseeing its operational activities. It comprises representatives from 41 Member States, each serving a three-year term, as elected by the UN Economic and Social Council. The composition of the Board is regionally distributed as follows: Africa (10 members), Asia and the Pacific (10 members), Eastern Europe (four members), Latin America and the Caribbean (six members), Western Europe and other States (five members), and contributing countries (six members).

III - Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The major goal of the UN Women is to end gender disparity and discrimination to enable women and girls to achieve their full potential. In doing this, the committee has set out what it calls its “Triple Mandate”²¹ and this includes:

²⁰UN Women – Headquarters, “Governance”


²¹ UNDP-JPOSC UNWOMEN



1. The UN Women assists United Nations Member States in striving for gender equality that meets global standards. To achieve gender equality, the UN Women works on promoting leadership and political participation, ensuring economic empowerment, promoting peace and security, and ending violence and extreme practices for all women in all of its Member States.
2. Successfully implement these standards through government assistance and lawmaking bodies by ensuring that laws are created with women and their benefits in mind and constantly checking that such laws are also implemented through women-centred programmes and policies.
3. Ensuring the full realisation of women's equal representation and recognition in any society. This is achieved through empowering women to participate in economic and political advancement nationally, regionally, and globally.

In line with its mandates, the UN Women has several functions, some of which are provided for in the resolution creating the institution, while others have been adopted by virtue of its vision and mission. Some of the UN Women's functions are:


- i. To reach Landmark agreements that advance gender equality: e.g. **The Beijing Declaration And Platform For Action**; and the establishment of treaties such as **The Convention on The Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, the **1993 UN Declaration on The Elimination Of Violence against Women**, etc.

- 
- ii. To monitor the advancement of the rights and liberties of women through accountability, and finding solutions to hindrances to progress, while also drawing attention to issues affecting women that are sidelined.
 - iii. To provide a safe platform, through advocacy and sensitisation, as well as training for women who are politically inclined and interested in participation.²² This is done by working hand in hand with national bodies, civil society organisations, other UN bodies, and private organisations, such as NGOs, to create sensitisation and empowerment campaigns for these women.²³
 - iv. To take progressive initiative to end violence against women through prevention, as it is considered the most cost-effective means to end such violence, as well as sanctions on the perpetrators of such offences against women. Prevention as a mechanism would include empowering young boys and men, early education, etc. Other initiatives employed include partnering up with agencies to collect extensive data on the violence perpetrated against women in order to check the extent of such offences²⁴.
 - v. To enable the inclusion and equal representation of women with disabilities (1 in 5 women experience an impairment) by providing opportunities for them in different fields of life, ensuring their active participation, as well as ensuring that they are actively

²² UN Women, “Creating Safe and Empowering Public Spaces with Women and Girls”

²³ UN Women, “Governance and National Planning”

²⁴ UN Women, “Focusing On Prevention: Ending Violence Against Women”



informed. In 2017, the UN Women established a “Global Task Team on Disability and Inclusion” to serve as a backbone for the successful achievement of UN Women’s Corporate strategy on issues of persons with disabilities. UN Women also seeks to create a workforce that recruits and retains persons with disabilities²⁵.

vi. To allow women contribute to global peace and building a peaceful community, as war and conflict usually have a more damning effect on women (sexual violence in conflicts). The UN Security Council, in guiding the UN Women, has adopted several resolutions, including resolutions 1325, 1888, 1889, 2242, 2467, 2493, etc, to ensure women’s participation in the achievement of peace and security, and reaffirm the important role of women in peace building²⁶.

vii. To carry out humanitarian action in cases where women lose their properties and livelihoods to crisis and pandemic. UN Women manages this through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which it joined in 2022, and has been involved in providing essential services to affected women²⁷. During the Ebola outbreak in 2014-2016, UN Women mobilised information to women affected all around the world. In Cameroon, they have also established eight refugee camps to serve as a safe space for women who are refugees or were former hostages of Boko Haram.²⁸

²⁵ UN Women, “Women and Girls with Disabilities”

²⁶ UN Women, “Peace and Security”

²⁷ UN Women, “Humanitarian Action”

²⁸ UN Women, “Humanitarian Action- Crisis Response and Recovery”

IV - Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

The UN Women held its first regular session of 2024 between the 12th and 13th of February 2024.²⁹ The Executive Board discussed, among other things, the UN Women's follow-up to the recommendations of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board, noting the impacts of gender biases on women's access to HIV prevention methods and services.³⁰ It also noted the more extensive barriers that are associated with factors such as gender identity, sex work, and even incarceration. Alarming, progress in reducing new infections in Sub-Saharan Africa is slower among women and adolescent girls. The committee reaffirmed its commitment as a co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS by emphasising its strategy of integrating and prioritising gender equality in the fight against HIV.

The 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW86)³¹ took place from the 11th to the 22nd of March 2024 under the theme, 'Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls by Addressing Poverty and Strengthening Institutions and Financing with a Gender Perspective.'

²⁹ UN Women, "Report on First Regular Session" 2024

³⁰ UNAIDS, "Briefing on UN-Women's Follow-up to Recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board" (2024)

³¹ "68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women" (*UN Women – Headquarters*)

The committee, while acknowledging that eradicating poverty in all its forms is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, noted with concern the feminisation of poverty, with women and girls experiencing higher poverty levels than men and boys. It equally noted the systemic biases that make women and girls disproportionately vulnerable to violence and, in turn, poverty. The committee advocates for governments to take a more gender-centric approach in their poverty eradication efforts, as well as take into account gender statistics on multi-dimensional poverty among women, the informal economy, unpaid care work, etc.

The committee also adopted a resolution on Women, the Girl Child, and HIV and AIDS.³²

V - Annotated Bibliography

UN Women, “About UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025” Accessed on 8 February 2025 from: <https://open.unwomen.org/en/our-global-results/strategic-plan/2022-2025>

³²The Commission on the Status of Women, “Resolution 47/1 Women, the Girl Child and Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS)”

This webpage contains an overview of the visions and roadmaps UN Women seeks to use as a guide to strategic goals by 2030. Delegates are expected to garner knowledge about the strategies and mandates the UN Women put in place in order to align their thoughts and work with the goals of the UN Women.

National Women's History Alliance, "History of the Women's Rights Movement", November 5, 2019) Accessed 7 February 2025 from:
<https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/history-of-the-womens-rights-movement/>

In order to begin any conversation relating to women and women's rights, a self familiarisation with the historical developments of women's rights, including the milestones hit and the roadblocks encountered along the way. This would assist delegates in to compare, contrast, and measure what is with what was, and also proffer solutions and suggestions as to what ought to be.

World Health Organization: WHO, "Female Genital Mutilation" (September 4, 2019). Accessed 7 February 2025 from:
https://www.who.int/health-topics/female-genital-mutilation#tab=tab_1

This webpage contains one of the major inhumane violations of Women's Rights: Female Genital Mutilation. It is a part of the UN Women's 2030 Sustainable

Development Goals to abandon Female Genital Mutilation. This practice, mostly carried out on women and girls by their family members, can be said to be one of the reasons behind Femicide (one of the major topics in this paper). Hence, a perusal of the webpage and the brief essay would allow delegates to explore the evils done to women and arrive at logical conclusions as they delve into the topic of femicide.

**Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board, First Regular Session 2024
“Briefing on UN-Women’s follow-up to recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme
Coordinating Board” Background and context on gender equality and HIV/AIDS.**

Accessed February 9 2025 From:
[https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/bn_follow-up_to_unaids_pcb_re
commendations_frs_2024.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/bn_follow-up_to_unaids_pcb_recommendations_frs_2024.pdf)

This document examines the widespread of HIV/AIDS and considers this statistically, as ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030 is also a part of the UN’s sustainable development goals. Delegates should consider this paper in their research, as it would give them an in depth view into the measures taken to enable progress in achieving this goal.

International Labour Organization, “The Gender Pay Gap”, (December 6, 2024)

Accessed February 7 2025 from: <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/gender-pay-gap>

There are steps to be taken in order to ensure that the inequalities that are deeply rooted in every society to the disadvantage of women, are uprooted. The first step is finding and acknowledging the root cause of these inequalities. This thematic page of the International Labour Organisation acknowledges and examines Gender Pay Gap which in turn perpetuates inequalities. By taking this article on gender pay gap into consideration, delegates will also be taking their first steps to creating solutions to dissipate gender inequalities.

VI - Bibliography

International Labour Organization, “The Gender Pay Gap”, (December 6, 2024)
<<https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/gender-pay-gap>> (accessed February 7 2025)

National Women’s History Alliance, “History of the Women’s Rights Movement”, November 5, 2019)
<<https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/history-of-the-womens-rights-movement/>> (accessed February 7 2025)

Sundholm M, “UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth” (Office of the

Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, November 19, 2018)
<<https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/07/un-women-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women/>> (accessed February 7 2025)

UNAIDS, "Briefing on UN-Women's Follow-up to Recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board" (2024)
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/bn_follow-up_to_unaids_pcb_recommendations_frs_2024.pdf> accessed February 9, 2025

UNDP- JPOSC UN Women <https://www.undp.org/jposc/un-women> (accessed February 9 2025)

United Nations, "Annual Session of 2021" (2021)
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3926702/files/UNW_2021_2-EN.pdf > (accessed February 7 2025)

UN Women, "About UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025"
<https://open.unwomen.org/en/our-global-results/strategic-plan/2022-2025> > (accessed February 8 2025)

UN Women – Asia-Pacific, "Asian Development Bank, UN Women Sign 5-Year Agreement to Raise Women's Status in Asia-Pacific", (March 3, 2022)
<<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/press-release/2022/03/adb-un-women-sig>

[n-5-year-agreement-to-raise-womens-status-in-asia-pacific](#) > (accessed February 7 2025)

United Nations, “United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategies”
<https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/> > (accessed February 6 2025)

UN Women- Creating Safe and Empowering Public Spaces with Women and Girls
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces> (accessed February 9 2025)

UN Women- Focusing On Prevention: Ending Violence Against Women
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention> (accessed February 9 2025)

UN Women- Governance and National Planning
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/governance-and-national-planning>
(accessed February 9 2025)

UN Women – Headquarters, “Executive Leadership”
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/directorate>> accessed February 9, 2025

UN Women – Headquarters, “Facts & Figures”
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/commission-on-the-status-of-women-2>

[012/facts-and-figures#:~:text=fare%20much%20better-.Education.urban%20boys%20\(60%20percent\).>](#) (accessed February 7 2025)

UN Women – Headquarters, “*Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*”
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>> (accessed February 7 2025)

UN Women – Headquarters, “*Governance*”
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/governance>> accessed February 9, 2025

UN Women – Headquarters, “*Global Coordination*”
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/global-coordination>> accessed February 9, 2025

UN Women – Headquarters, “*One Woman or Girl Is Killed Every 10 Minutes by Their Intimate Partner or Family Member*” (November 25, 2024)
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/11/one-woman-or-girl-is-killed-every-10-minutes-by-their-intimate-partner-or-family-member>> (accessed February 7 2025)



UN Women – Headquarters, “Overview”
<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/overview>> (accessed February 7 2025)

UN Women – Headquarters, “Why so Few Women Are in Political Leadership, and Five Actions to Boost Women’s Political Participation” (September 10, 2024)

<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation#:~:text=The%20most%20significant%20gap%20in,members%20as%20of%20this%20year.>> (accessed February 7 2025)

UN Women- Humanitarian Action
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action> (accessed February 9 2025)

UN Women, “UN Women: Humanitarian Action: Crisis Response and Recovery”
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action/emergency-response>
(accessed February 8 2025)

UN Women- Peace and Security
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security> (accessed February 9 2025)

UN Women- Women and Girls With Disabilities

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/women-and-girls-with-disabilities>

(accessed February 9 2025)

UN Women, “UN System Coordination”

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination> > (accessed

February 6 2025)

UN Women, “UN Women Transparency Portal”

<https://open.unwomen.org/our-global-results/sp-outcomes/SP_D_0.3/2022-2025>

(accessed February 7 2025)

UN World Food Programme, “WFP Gender Policy 2022”,

<<https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-gender-policy-2022>> (accessed February 7

2025)

World Bank Group, “Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don’t Have Same Economic Rights as Men” World Bank (March 8, 2022)

<<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/01/nearly-2-4-billion-women-globally-don-t-have-same-economic-rights-as-men>> (accessed February 7 2025)

World Bank Group, “Women, Business and the Law - Gender Equality, Women Economic Empowerment” (World Bank) <<https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>> (accessed February 7 2025)


Topic One: The Global Femicide Pandemic: Addressing the Prevalence of Intimate Partner/ Family Member Femicide

I. Quote

"We live in a world where it is safer to be a man on the battlefield than a woman in her own home." - Hillary Clinton (Former Secretary of State, United States of America)

II- Introduction

The concept of women's rights emerged in response to societal discrimination and bias against women. These rights were established to affirm that women, like men, are entitled to the same fundamental human rights and freedoms. However, in recent times, the enjoyment of these rights, particularly the primary Right to Life – guaranteed under *Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* and *Article 6 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*– has been threatened by the continuous gender-related killings, also known as femicide. According to the United Nations, femicide is the most prevalent violence committed against women.



The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2023 report noted that about 81,000 women were intentionally killed in 2023, the reason being their gender.³³ Out of this number of women, it was sadly noted that about 60 percent of the women knew and even lived with their killers.³⁴

The UNODC report noted that about 51,000 of these women and girls are estimated to have been killed by family members or intimate partners worldwide in 2023.³⁵ A UN Women report further noted that 140 women and girls die every day at the hands of their partner or a close relative, which means one woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes.³⁶ These reports underscore the extreme nature of femicide, especially the intimate partner/family member femicide.

The issue of femicide is closely linked to societal norms and ideologies that devalue the importance of women and girls.. This phenomenon has plagued and continues to plague several countries, particularly countries that are highly conservative with their culture and discriminatory societal norms. This is why reports have shown that Africa has the highest number of femicide related cases.³⁷


³³ UNODC and UN Women and others, “*Femicides in 2023*” (United Nations 2023)

³⁴ UNODC and UN Women and others, “*Femicides in 2023*” (United Nations 2023)

³⁵ UNODC and UN Women and others, “*Femicides in 2023*” (United Nations 2023)

³⁶UN Women – Headquarters, “One Woman or Girl Is Killed Every 10 Minutes by Their Intimate Partner or Family Member” (November 25, 2024)

³⁷ UNODC and UN Women and others, “Femicides in 2023”




This background guide seeks to shed light on the issue of femicide, particularly the intimate partner and family member femicide. It will also highlight the key drivers of gender related killings and their impact on society, as well as the barriers to addressing intimate partner and family member femicide and the role of international bodies in combating this issue.

III- Definition of Key Terms

Femicide is a term that has been defined repeatedly by international organisations and different bodies. According to the **UN Women**, Femicide (or feminicide, as it is referred to in some contexts) is defined as an intentional killing with a gender-related motivation. It is different from homicide, where the motivation may not be gender-related.³⁸

The **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** defined femicide as killing of women and girls because of their gender which can take the form of, inter alia; the murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence; the torture and misogynist slaying of women; killing of women and girls in the name of “honour”; targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; dowry-related killings of women; killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; the killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; female infanticide and

³⁸ UN Women – Headquarters “Five Essential Facts to Know about Femicide” (November 25, 2024)



gender-based sex selection foeticide; genital mutilation related deaths; accusations of witchcraft; and other femicides connected with gangs, organised crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms.³⁹

Femicide or gender related killings are in different forms. *The Latin American Protocol For the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women*⁴⁰ highlighted 15 different types of femicide, ranging from intimate femicide, non-intimate femicide, child femicide, family femicide, racist femicide, lesbophobic femicide, femicide due to Female Genital Mutilation, and so on.

The *Vienna Declaration on Femicide* defines the term femicide and highlights 11 different aspects. It states that:

femicide is the “murder of women because of their gender”, which can take the form of:

1. murder as a result of domestic violence / intimate partner violence;
2. torture and misogynistic killing of women;
3. killing women in the “name of honor”;
4. targeted killing of women in armed conflict;

³⁹ European Institute for Gender Equality, “Femicide” (December 10, 2024)

⁴⁰ The United Nations High Commissioner For Human Rights: Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women (femicide/feminicide)



5. dowry-related murder of women;
6. murder of women due to their sexual orientation and gender identity;
7. murder of Aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender;
8. female infanticide and feticide (gender - based sex selection);
9. death as a result of female genital mutilation;
10. murder on charges of witchcraft;
11. other types of femicides related to gangs, organised crime, drugs, human trafficking and possession of weapons.

IV- International and Regional Legal Frameworks

The fight against Femicide is one which has been entrenched in several international and regional frameworks some of which will be subsequently discussed.

*Article 3 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**,*⁴¹ 1948, is primary to the discussion of the right to life. *Article 5 of the UDHR* further provides for the freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The UDHR being the first human rights document, is the first attempt of the global community to eradicate the inhuman and degrading treatment of any and every means of violence against everyone,

⁴¹ UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 217 A (III), 10 December 1948, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1948/en/11563> [accessed February 6 2025]


including women. *The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*,⁴² 1966, is another document which aims to protect women from femicide. Article 6 of the ICCPR also guarantees the right to life, and Article 7 discusses the freedom from torture.

These documents were the foundation upon which international laws and resolutions on women's rights lie. These instruments, however, were too generic and did not specifically cater to women. This was the reason for the enactment of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*⁴³ in 1979. The CEDAW is an international comprehensive framework for addressing gender-based discrimination. Article 3 of the CEDAW provides that state parties shall ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. This article purports to ensure that any act contrary to the advancement of women's rights be discouraged in states. Although the CEDAW inadvertently discusses the issue of femicide, it is not until its general recommendations that it specifically discusses femicide and gender-based violence as a problem. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19 (1992),⁴⁴ defines discrimination in CEDAW to include

⁴² UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, 16 December 1966, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/unga/1966/en/17703> [accessed February 6 2025]

⁴³ UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, p. 13, 18 December 1979, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/unga/1979/en/13757> [accessed February 6 2025]

⁴⁴ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19: Violence against women, 1992, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/cedaw/1992/en/96542> [accessed February 6 2025]



gender-based violence, which is an impairment to the right to life and freedom from torture. It further expounds on the provisions of the CEDAW in line with the issue of gender-based violence. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 (2017)*,⁴⁵ however, provides more updates to the *General Recommendation No. 19*. It also expands the liability of the state to acts of gender-based violence.

The ***Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action (VDPA)***,⁴⁶ 1993, urged states to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women, both hidden and overt. It further calls upon the General Assembly to adopt the draft declaration on violence against women and to combat violence against women in accordance with its provisions. Violence, which includes, in particular, murder. *Article 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*,⁴⁷ 1993, established by ***General Assembly resolution 48/104***, also provides an expansion to the meaning of Violence against women and *Article 3* provides for the rights of women which should be protected, some of which are the right to life and the right to liberty and security of person. The ***Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action***,

⁴⁵ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35: Gender-based Violence against women*, 2017

⁴⁶ The World Conference on Human Rights, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, A/CONF.157/23, UN General Assembly, 12 July 1993, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1993/en/14730> [accessed February 6 2025]

⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, A/RES/48/104, UN General Assembly, 20 December 1993, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1993/en/10685> [accessed February 7 2025]

1995⁴⁸ considered the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights, outlines violence against women as a critical area for global concern. Femicide is the ultimate form of Violence against women.

The *Vienna Declaration on Femicide 2012*,⁴⁹ is the first international framework to identify different types of femicide. It intensifies the fight against femicide and provides specific obligations to Member States on the issue of femicide.


Other resolutions, such as *United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/191; Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls*,⁵⁰ 2013 and *United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/176; Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls*,⁵¹ 2015 have also been adopted as key guidelines in relation to femicide. They address action against gender-related killing of women and girls, while noting it is criminalised in some countries as “femicide” or “feminicide.”

⁴⁸ United Nations Specialised Conferences, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, -, United Nations, 27 October 1995, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/un/1995/en/73680> [accessed 06 February 2025]

⁴⁹ United Nations Economic and Social Council; Vienna Declaration on Femicide

⁵⁰ UN General Assembly, Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/68/191, 11 February 2014, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2014/en/97439> [accessed 07 February 2025]

⁵¹ UN General Assembly, Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/70/176, 8 January 2016, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2016/en/108605> [accessed 07 February 2025]



On a regional level, different regional bodies have made provisions for a legal framework against femicide. The European Union, through the *European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)*,⁵² protected women's rights against violence. The main provisions relevant to femicide are the right to life (*Article 2 ECHR*), the right to be free from degrading and inhuman treatment and the prohibition of torture (*Article 3 ECHR*), the right to private and family life (*Article 8 ECHR*), as well as the principle of non-discrimination (*Article 14 ECHR*).

Additionally, there is a more specific framework, the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (The Istanbul Convention)*,⁵³ 2014. It is the first legally binding instrument in Europe to create a comprehensive legal framework to protect women from acts of violence. Its chapters provide for data collection, prevention, protection, and support of gender-based violence victims. Another invention of the European Union is the *Directive (EU) 2024/1385* of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

⁵² Council of Europe, European Convention on Human Rights, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11, 14 and 15, ETS No. 005, 4 November 1950, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/coe/1950/en/18688> [accessed 06 February 2025]

⁵³ Council of Europe, The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, ISBN 978-92-871-7990-6, November 2014, available at <https://www.refworld.org/reference/regionalreport/coe/2014/en/102469> [accessed 07 February 2025]

In Northern America, the *Inter-American Convention on Human Rights*⁵⁴ also specifies the rights available: *Article 4* provides for the right to life, *Article 5*, the right to humane treatment, and this applies without discrimination against women, according to *Article 1*. These provisions, read together, protect women's rights against femicide.

The region however has a specific legal framework, The *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará Convention)*, 1994 which is primary in its fight against femicide, it serves as a foundation upon which such killings can be considered by other jurisdictions who wish to recognise femicide as a distinct type of homicide.


The *Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women (Femicide/Feminicide)*, 2014, is another law which is specific and protects the rights of women in Latin American countries.

In Africa, the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*⁵⁵ provides for rights and the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)*,⁵⁶ 2003. While the Maputo Protocol contains no reference to femicide,

⁵⁴ Organization of American States (OAS), American Convention on Human Rights, "Pact of San Jose", Costa Rica, -, 22 November 1969, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/oas/1969/en/20081> [accessed 06 February 2025]

⁵⁵ Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ("Banjul Charter"), CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), 27 June 1981, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/au/1981/en/17306> [accessed 07 February 2025]

⁵⁶ African Union, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, -, African Union, 11 July 2003, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/au/2003/en/18176> [accessed 07 February 2025]



Article 4 of the Maputo Protocol requires States to take measures to prohibit all forms of violence *including unwanted or forced sex,*” to identify causes and consequences of violence against women, and to tackle stereotypes which perpetuate such violence.

V - Role of the International System

The international body as a whole plays an important role in the eradication of femicide. State bodies, international bodies, Non-governmental organisations and the likes are key in attaining a better and more gender empowered world.

Femicide, as a great disservice to women, is preventable if timely and effective interventions are put into practice. They can be combated by the enactment of legislations that criminalise femicide specifically, as well as actions that can be referred to as “near femicide experiences”, awareness programs such as schools and campaigns and empowerment programs held in the society and so on to deeply sensitise the society about the destructive effect the absence of women would have on its economy and the society as a whole.

As highlighted by Sima Bahous, the UN Women Executive Director,

Violence against women and girls is not inevitable—it is preventable. We need robust legislation, improved data collection, greater government accountability, a zero-tolerance




culture, and increased funding for women's rights organisations and institutional bodies.

As we approach the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2025, it is time for world leaders to UNiTE and act with urgency, recommit, and channel the resources needed to end this crisis once and for all.

In combating the increasing rate of femicide, international organizations, regional bodies and state bodies work together and within their own means. From enacting legislations, to creating means of implementation, these bodies are tasked with different duties some of which may intertwine in the fulfillment of this goal. Some of these bodies will subsequently be discussed.

First is the *United Nations*. The first law enacted by the UN towards the aim of eradicating femicide and inequality in general was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which was enacted in 1979. The law continues to stand as the grundnorm for women's rights globally, and its provisions have been interpreted in its committee recommendations to combat Gender Based Violence and Femicide. In 2013, femicide was addressed globally and a resolution was reached by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The Assembly sought to “*take action against the gender-related killings of women and girls*”⁵⁷. In that same year, through a review, it was found that national data in relation to the drastic spread of Intimate Partner Femicide was only available in a

⁵⁷Taking action against the gender-related killings of women and girls (Resolution 68/191) 2013



few high-income countries. Thus, it became the UNGA's goal to create a means by which records on femicide will be kept. Additionally, the UNGA has enacted several international laws aimed at the eradication of femicide globally.⁵⁸

On a more regional level are the Unions. The European Union, the African Union, and the Organization of American States have also aided in the goal towards the eradication of femicide by the enactment of regional laws. In Africa, the Maputo Protocol and African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AUCEVAWG) are the most comprehensive legal instruments for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls on the Continent.⁵⁹ In Europe, the Directive on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is one of the laws which require member states to criminalise certain acts and provide protection and support for victims.


Apart from the regional unions, there are other organisations which have in one way or another played a vital role in eradicating femicide.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU):⁶⁰ This is a global organisation for National Parliaments whose main aim is to combat all forms of violence against women. This is to

⁵⁸ UNODC and UN Women and others, "Femicides in 2023" (United Nations 2023)

⁵⁹ African Union, "The African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls | African Union"

⁶⁰ InterParliamentary Union-About Us




be done by enacting a legal framework that combats and addresses violence against women.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Record keeping is one of the ways to bring to the public's awareness the rate at which ills in society are growing. In conjunction with UN Women, the UNFPA has taken up the duty to coordinate records and statistics of the gross and intentional killing of women, coordinate data, while also providing response services. This is because although laws are important, they may hold no water without the backing of organisations such as this and the citizens' interventions.

The European Union (EU): In noting the contribution of the EU in combating femicide, **Adriana Quinones**, Head of Human Rights and Development, UN Women, stated that through a \$500 million investment, the EU focused on specific issues that translate to violence against women in different regions; as the results of this violence is mostly death. In Asia, the focus was on human trafficking. In Africa, the focus was on domestic violence⁶¹.

The World Bank: The World Bank, in an attempt to assist states in combating femicide, made its contribution through educating persons in societies about the importance of respecting women's rights, as this will, in turn, boost the economy's GDP and productivity. Studies have shown that when there is gender bias and any form of violence that keeps

⁶¹ Luisa Ballin "How to Combat Femicide at National and International Level"




women in fear for their life and security, the economy would also be at grave detriment. According to the World Bank, legislation on violence against women is not great as a standalone. There must also be an active creation of an equal playing field in all areas. The World Bank's strategy is through investment and collaboration with stakeholders worldwide, e.g, since 2003, the World Bank has invested over \$300 million into providing safety, transport, and education for victims of gross Gender Based Violence⁶².

UNODC and UN Women: These organisations have been mentioned numerous times in this paper because together they are the greatest contributors to combating all forms of violence against women (particularly femicide in reference to the topic in question). These organisations have created a statistical framework for measuring and checking the gender-related killing of women and girls in a bid to produce comprehensive and accurate data on femicide. In 2022, this process was endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in response to the need to produce comprehensive and standardised data on femicide.

Regional courts

Another key organization that creates impacts is the regional courts. They act as implementation mechanisms for laws made by regions to eradicate femicide. Some of the

⁶² World Bank Group, *Gender Based Violence (Violence Against Women and Girls)*



regional courts have made certain judgements and decisions that have aided in the fight against femicide.

For instance, the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Campo Algodonero (Mexico) case of November 16, 2009, is today the only instrument of international legal value, strictly mandatory, that contains a tangential reference to femicide.⁶³ The Court made use of the expression “gender-based murders of women,” also known as femicide. It regarded the deaths that occurred in the instant case as gender-based murders of women. The Court further established a state obligation to prevent acts of violence to protect women from the risks that increase their exposure to acts of violence.

In addition, enforcement mechanisms must be put in place. Specialised units should be established to carefully and thoroughly investigate and prosecute these crimes against women. Examples of countries that have done this are Canada, Sweden, and Jordan. In Canada, the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability was established as a response to the UN's call. In Sweden, as a response to the high rate of femicide, the National Board of Health and Welfare is often commissioned to investigate the rate of fatality and injuries caused to women as a result of domestic violence since 2012.⁶⁴

⁶³ Case of González et al. (“Cotton Field”) v. Mexico. Judgment of November 16, 2009. Par. 132.

⁶⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality: Measuring Femicide in Sweden



1. Historical and Cultural Context of Femicide

According to the UNODC,⁶⁵ femicide refers to all types of intentional killings of women and girls committed for gender-related factors. As outlined by UNODC and UN Women, this can include the belief that men are entitled to more power or privilege than women, social expectations about how men should act, and the desire to maintain power or control, enforce traditional gender roles, or punish women for so-called unacceptable behaviours.


The monstrosity that is femicide is a global peril that must be recognised and addressed as it underscores deep-rooted gender inequality and violations of women's basic human rights. It often results from a culture that devalues women, with killings motivated by misogyny, control, and power. As such, femicide is not only a violent crime but also a stark manifestation of systemic gender discrimination.⁶⁶ The history of femicide predates the coining of the term. In ancient societies, acts of violence against women were widespread but not distinctly labeled as “femicide.” Some early instances of these acts include;

i. Honour killings: This is the killing of women or girls by male family members who justify this killing by claiming that the victim has brought dishonor to the family name or prestige.

In many patriarchal societies, the activities of women are closely monitored, and sexual

⁶⁵ UNODC, “Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)

⁶⁶Femadmin, *History of the Term Femicide - Femicide in Canada* (December 5, 2023)




affairs, which ought to be a person's private dealings, are not the case for women in these societies. Most victims of honour killings are usually alleged to have engaged in sexually immoral affairs. The ambit of honour killings also covers other contexts, like a woman refusing to enter into an arranged marriage or seeking a divorce from one. Killings in the name of honour are treated to a lesser extent, and sometimes, the perpetrators are exempted from punishment. Furthermore, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reports a steady increase in the frequency of honor killings; in 2013, 869 cases of honour killings were reported, while in 2014, it was estimated as 1000 cases, and in 2015, there were 1100 cases.⁶⁷

ii. **Dowry-related Violence:** In regions such as ancient Greece, Rome, and later in medieval Europe, the practice of dowries created conditions where women were seen as property that could be exchanged in marriage. If a dowry was insufficient or if the woman did not meet her husband's expectations, she could face abuse or even death. This kind of violence was often overlooked as part of marriage customs rather than as a serious crime⁶⁸

iii. **Witch Hunts:** In medieval Europe, witch hunts began as a religious cleansing of evil. However, the target of this cleansing was women. According to Ben-Yehuda, the writer of

⁶⁷ Heydari A., Teymoori A., Trappes R. Honor killing as a dark side of modernity: Prevalence, common discourses, and a critical view

⁶⁸Angela Me and others, "Global Estimates of Female Intimate Partner/Family-Related Homicides in 2022"




Malleus maleficarum (The Witch's Hammer), he notes that witchcraft was practiced mainly by women because they were more credulous and because "witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is insatiable in women."⁶⁹ This underlying belief of evil in women was the basis for witch hunts in most cultures. During the witch hunts, women were disproportionately targeted, accused of witchcraft, and subjected to torture or execution. These women were often killed for social, political, or religious reasons, and their deaths were framed as necessary to protect the community from perceived evil or danger. This violence was deeply gendered, as women were more likely to be accused of witchcraft than men, particularly because of their lower social standing and association with certain roles in society.

iv. **Sacrificial Practices:** In certain ancient cultures, women were occasionally offered in religious ceremonies as sacrifices. These acts were viewed as expressions of devotion to deities or as means to secure prosperity and protection. While culturally accepted, these violent practices were profoundly gendered, with women being disproportionately selected for sacrifice.

These forms of violence were often culturally justified and buttressed by the idea that women were property and subject to the control of men, although these acts entailed the killing of women; however, it was not regarded as a separate systemic issue. Marylène

⁶⁹ Gershon L, "Where Witch Hunts Began" [2022]



Patou-Mathis, a leading prehistorian studying the origins of human violence, has found that collective violence began with the "sedentarization of communities" around 15,000 years⁷⁰ ago. She emphasises that "violence is not encoded in our genes; its emergence is rooted in historical and social causes."

Emergence of The Term *Femicide*

The term "femicide" was first recorded in John Corry's 1801 book, *A Satirical View of London at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century*, where it was used to describe the act of killing a woman. However, it was reintroduced in 1976 by the late Professor Diana E.H. Russell, a leading feminist activist and expert on male violence against women, during the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women. Professor Russell used the term to highlight issues of male violence and discrimination directed at women.

....The first time the term femicide was used in public in the modern age, was when I testified about these lethal misogynist crimes at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels, Belgium in 1976. This was a four day radical feminist global women's speakout attended by about 2,000 women from 40 countries, which Simone de

⁷⁰ Van der Horst, P. (2003). *Violence and Honor: The Social Context of Gender-Based Violence*. Cambridge University Press



Beauvoir saluted as ‘the beginning of the radical decolonization of women’... We must realize that a lot of homicides are in fact femicide. We must recognize the sexual politics of murder. From the burning of witches in the past, to the more recent widespread custom of female infanticide in many societies, to the killing of women for "honor," we realize that femicide has been going on a long time. But since it involves mere females, there was no name for it before the term femicide was coined.

- Professor Diana E.H Russell.⁷¹


2. Key Drivers And Causes Of Femicide

The problem of femicide has continued to be a menace in society and the global community at large. Unlike the “male homicide”, which occurs at random, most female deaths are intentional and are primarily based on their gender.

According to the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC),⁷² The vast majority of male homicides occur outside the domestic sphere, 60 percent of female deaths occur within the walls of their own homes. Additionally, available data from France, South Africa, and Colombia reveals a pattern: a significant portion of

⁷¹ Diana Russell; Introductory speech presented to the United Nations Symposium on Femicide on 11/26/2012

⁷²UN Women – Europe and Central Asia, “TAKE FIVE: ‘Femicide Is Fueled by Patriarchal Social Norms and Changing Minds Is of Utmost Importance’”



women killed by their intimate partners, ranging from 22 percent to 37 percent, had previously reported experiencing physical, sexual, or psychological violence from the same person.

With the abundance of statistics, the prevalence of femicide as a global phenomenon cannot be argued. Femicide results from the complex interaction of risk factors.⁷³ It is a problem that cannot be traced to a single cause but is rather a combination of different factors. Below are some significant factors that drive femicide.

a. Influence of Culture and Societal Norms

As earlier discovered, femicide is a product of traditional and cultural norms in society. The UN Women, in its article noted that femicide is fueled by patriarchal social norms and changing minds is of utmost importance.⁷⁴ Especially patriarchal traditions and norms that reinforce male dominance and female subordination. In most cultures, women are expected to be obedient and subservient, and society has in place structures and penalties for adverse behaviour. This has been affirmed by several surveys and data collected.

⁷³Corradi C and European Parliament coordinator: Policy Department for External Relations, “Femicide, Its Cause and Recent Trends: What Do We Know?”

⁷⁴UN Women – Europe and Central Asia, “TAKE FIVE: ‘Femicide Is Fueled by Patriarchal Social Norms and Changing Minds Is of Utmost Importance’”



One such survey of interest is the United Nations survey of the Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC) on the issue of patriarchy as a leading cause of femicide. The research from LAC region found young men have significant control over their partners' social media use and phones, with 80 percent of young people saying their male friends monitor their partner's phone.⁷⁵ Also, in the Solomon Islands,⁷⁶ 49% of respondents agreed that a good wife should obey her husband even if he is wrong. Unsurprisingly, the same research revealed that 65 percent of women respondents and 35 percent of male respondents agree with the statement 'it is acceptable for a man to hit and hurt his wife if she doesn't do the housework to his liking'.

These research solidifies the fact that societal norms are a key underlying cause of femicide. It is imperative to note that unless the societal and cultural narratives are changed, femicide will continue to be a global issue.

b. Poverty and Economic Dependency

Another primary cause of femicide is the economic dependency of women and the high rate of poverty. According to the UN Women, one in every 10 women is living in extreme poverty (10.3 percent).⁷⁷ If current trends continue, by 2030, an estimated 8 percent of the world's female population – 342.4 million women and girls – will still be living on less

⁷⁵Oxfam International, "Ten Harmful Beliefs That Perpetuate Violence against Women and Girls"

⁷⁶ A part of the LAC

⁷⁷ UN Women – Headquarters, "Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment"



than \$2.15 a day.⁷⁸ In Ghana, the scale of economic losses was approximately 65 million days annually, equivalent to 4.5% of employable women not actually working because of societal norms and other discriminatory acts.

The LAC regional research found that 59 percent of young women and men (20-25) think one of the main reasons why women endure violence is their lack of financial autonomy.⁷⁹ This has also been supported by the European Institute for Gender Equality report, which stated that not having economic support makes it harder for abused women to leave violent relationships and increases the risk of returning to the violent cycle.⁸⁰

c. Lack of Education

An uneducated girl or woman is less likely to make her own decisions and more likely to be enveloped in poverty. According to World Bank, Low educational attainment is both the cause and the consequence of child marriage: girls with less access to education are more likely to marry early, and conversely, child marriage means the end of a girl's education.⁸¹ Even in this case, Unicef reports that every year about 15 million girls are married as children.⁸²


⁷⁸ UN Women – Headquarters, “Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment”

⁷⁹ Oxfam International, “Ten Harmful Beliefs That Perpetuate Violence against Women and Girls”

⁸⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality, “*Financial Independence and Gender Equality: Joining the Dots between Income, Wealth, and Power*”

⁸¹ World Bank, *Education as a Vehicle to End Violence against Women*

⁸² UNICEF, “Child Marriage Report” 2023



Educated women are more likely to know their rights and thus avoid situations of GBV.⁸³ Education allows girls to differentiate rights from wrongs and particularly wrongs committed by the cultural norms of the society.

d. Lack of awareness

Globally, less than 40 percent of women who experience violence seek help.⁸⁴ This is because women cannot protect themselves or be protected against harm unless they are aware that such acts are unlawful. For instance, honour killings have been noted to be a culture in countries like Pakistan and unless there is awareness to educate women on the unlawfulness of femicide, it would continue to persist as part of their culture.

Awareness raising approaches can also help publicise relevant Violence Against Women laws and policies, which can illustrate the unlawfulness of femicide.⁸⁵ Campaigns like the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, for instance, are critical in helping raise awareness of the issue of femicide, the available laws against such crime, and the methods towards seeking help. With increased awareness, there is an increased hope of change.⁸⁶

⁸³Project Good for Girls, “The Link between Education and Girls’ Risk of Abuse”

⁸⁴ UN Women- Headquarters, *Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women*

⁸⁵ C. Mcloughlin (2011). Impact evaluations of programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report. Available at <https://gsdrc.org/publications/impact-evaluations-ofprogrammes-to-prevent-andrespond-to-violence-against-women-andgirls/>

⁸⁶Tavares P, “Raising Awareness to Root out Violence against Women and Girls”

3. Impact of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicide On The Society

For every act of violence perpetrated against a woman, there are consequences suffered not only by the victim but by the family, the society, the economy, and other girls and women. This is why the United Nations has strengthened its efforts towards the fight against Femicide.

a. Psychological Impact on Women


The psychological impact of femicide can be explained from the excerpt of a Translation of the poem in the book “Ahora que ya bailas” by Miguel Gane.

“Today another woman has been killed and now another daughter cries, a mother cries, and another woman trembles remembering the last beating, because she could be next.”

GBV has been noted to be an experience riddled with negative psychological effects on the victims and other women and girls who watched the violence take place, and this may end up as transgenerational trauma. Some of the key psychological effects of GBV have been noted to be anxiety, fear, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

In a study of GBV in the Vhembe district,⁸⁷ analysis showed four main themes that described the psychosocial effects of GBV on women in the Vhembe district. The first

⁸⁷ Rikhotso, Rodney et al. “Psychosocial effects of gender-based violence among women in Vhembe district: A qualitative study.”




main theme was an effect of ‘worthlessness’ as a result of GBV. The second effect of GBV among women in Vhembe district was ‘social isolation’. The third was ‘depression’ as a consequence of GBV. The last theme was that GBV had a psychosocial effect of causing ‘anger towards children’ among women in the Vhembe district.

Femicide, as the highest level of GBV, is one that does not have an effect on the victim herself, as the woman would lose her life; however, the psychological effects are portrayed in the lives of women and girls who live in the society where femicide occurs. Femicide robs women of their right to safety and right to life.⁸⁸

b. Psychological Impact on the Society

Femicide seems to be an epidemic throughout the world, and the consequences for the family and community can be enormous. For example, children whose mothers have been killed by their fathers suffer long-term psychological, psychiatric, and social problems. Additionally, Children who have experienced or witnessed violence and its consequences learn to accept this violence as a way to solve conflicts. Therefore, creating violent persons within the society.

⁸⁸HumAngle Foundation, “*On the Issue of Femicide in Nigeria: Analysis and Recommendations*” (November 23, 2024)




Furthermore, there is the issue of transgenerational trauma. Women who have experienced sexualised violence can pass on the traumatic experience to their children and grandchildren subconsciously as transgenerational trauma, which manifests as anxiety, stress, or protective responses. This adversely affects the family and society at large.

In instances where femicide is perpetuated at a large scale, such as sexualised wartime violence, the adverse effects can be felt by the whole society for generations. And can create a climate of violence in which women do not feel safe to move around in public spaces or to fully live their lives. Thus affecting the society's ability to benefit from the potential of the female gender, which is half of the society's population.

c. Violation of Women's Right to Life and Freedom from Torture

Femicide is a violation of a number of human rights. From the right to life, to the right to liberty, the right to dignity, the right to freedom from discrimination, and the freedom from torture, femicide touches these and many more rights.

The recognition of Femicide as a violation of women's right has been codified in the Latin American model protocol which noted that Femicide amounts to the violation of several fundamental rights of women that are established in the core international human rights




instruments—especially the right to life, the right to physical and sexual integrity, and the right to personal liberty.⁸⁹

The right to life is a fundamental human right, meaning every individual has the inherent right to exist and live without being subjected to violence or death. Femicide, by its very nature, directly and intentionally violates this right by taking a woman's life because of her gender, making it a grave human rights abuse.

Along with the violation of the right to life, femicide is a part of Gender based violence and International bodies like The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) tends to decide cases of domestic violence and rape under the right to private life (Art. 8), the prohibition of degrading or inhuman treatment, and, rarely, under the prohibition of torture (Art. 3 ECHR) or the right to life (Art. 2 ECHR). Currently, the ECHR tends to overlook gendered harm, although it really should consistently apply the non-discrimination principle (Art. 14 ECHR) in torture and domestic violence cases.

Also, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) more readily classifies its emblematic femicide cases as gender-based, involving the right to life (Art. 4), the right to personal integrity and liberty (Arts 5 and 7), the right to judicial protection and due

⁸⁹ Carmilo Bernal Sarmiento, Miguel Lorente Acosta, Françoise Roth, & Margarita Zambrano, U.N. Women, Latin American Model Protocol For The Investigation Of Gender-Related Killings Of Women (Femicide/Feminicide) 3 (2015).



process (Arts 8(1) and 25(1) ACHR), and the state duty to prevent violence under Article 7 Belém do Pará Convention. The IACtHR has also begun to classify the violence in non-state actor femicide as torture.

Therefore, unless there is an eradication of the issue of femicide, there will be a continuous violation of the right to life, right to dignity, right to freedom from torture amongst several other rights. The International bodies, national systems and Non-governmental organizations must work together to ensure the protection of the rights of women.

d. Economic Impacts on the Society

Another key impact of femicide is its economic impact on society. Society also bears the costs of violence against women in the form of the costs for women's safe houses, court cases, police operations, and psychological or medical treatments.

The UN noted that Two percent of the Global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is allocated to the resolution of issues on femicide. In 2013, a comparative study in a mixture of nine high, medium and low income countries estimated the economic costs of intimate partner violence at 1-2 percent of national GDP. Other evidence gathered estimated the annual costs of all intimate partner violence cases for victims at: \$1.2 million in Uganda; \$ 17.5



million (rural areas) and \$ 6.14 million (urban areas) in Bangladesh; and \$ 6.6 million in Morocco. When compared to the countries' income levels, these amounts are extremely high.

Therefore, a reduction in the level of Femicide and GBV would lead to the reduction in the amount allocated to the resolution of femicide, and this can be reallocated to more women empowerment schemes.

Additionally, studies show that the extent of participation of women has a direct influence on the stability of a state and on its economic success. Women who have been subjected to violence suffer more frequently from physical and psychological injuries, leading to their absence from the workplace, which reduces the productivity of companies and harms the national economy.

According to the CEDAW committee, 'the underlying consequences of these forms of gender-based violence help to maintain women in subordinate roles and contribute to the low level of political participation and to their lower level of education, skills, and work opportunities.'⁹⁰ This reduces the participation of smart, skilled women in these fields, thus affecting the output and the economy in general.

⁹⁰ General Recommendation No 19, para. 11; General Recommendation No 35, para. 19.



4. Case Studies and Best Practices

In a show of power imbalance, femicide (intimate partner and non-intimate partner), as one of the most deadly forms of violence against women, has risen over the years, leaving no country, age group, or social status untouched. On the 25th of November 2024, during the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UN Women and the UNODC reported that as at 2023, one woman was killed every 10 minutes by their intimate partners.

Over time, femicide has spread like wildfire, and three in 10 women are killed by a stranger or in the comfort of their own home. What is most severe, however, is that a woman's safest space may also translate to her own grave.

Quantification has given insight into the tremendous increase in femicide rates globally, thus making it impossible to ignore. Keeping a record of femicide data has proven to be one of the means to check and analyse the impact it has on society, as well as the skyrocketing spread each year. Civil society groups and organisations, including the United Nations and UNODC have begun collecting data that now form important femicide statistics. However, these data are sometimes affected by: missing bodies, missing data on the circumstances of their death, selection bias, the data collector (Data collected by the Government will tell a different story than that collected by activists)⁹¹.

⁹¹ Maria Gagiulo, "Using Quantitative Data to Study Femicide: Challenges and Opportunities"




In 2017, records show that 19,000 women were killed by their intimate partners in Africa, 20,000 in Asia, 8000 in the Americas, and 3000 in Europe. In 2020, a total of 47,000 women and girls worldwide were killed by their intimate partners or other family members. In 2022, 48,800 women were victims of Intimate Partner Femicide. In 2023, this number drastically rose to 51,100 women, of which 21,000 victims were in Africa, 18500 in Asia, 8300 in the Americas, 2300 in Europe, and 300 in Oceania.

The increase in these numbers yearly, especially in Africa, shows that violence against women is greatly ignored, and hence, keeps spreading like wildfire. Below are some countries that drastically contribute to the heartwrenching femicide statistics:

4.1. India

The intentional killing of women in India is bundled up under the tag of homicide and is not called what it is, femicide. Most times, in fact, these killings go unrecorded as it is supported by grave customary practices⁹². These killings include dowry related killings, honour killings, and brutalisations that eventually lead to death by the partners and the family members of the victims. Dowry related killings make up 20 femicides a day, yet, it is not called what it is.

⁹²Johri N, “India Is Undercounting as the UN Seeks Femicide Stats”



Dr. Anvita Lakhani, an Assistant Professor of Law at the City University of Hong Kong, in a study she wrote in 2005, made mention of dowry related killings (which involved the burning of brides for their inability to pay their dowry). She stated that this practice was over 2500 years strong.

In 2012, seven years after this report, **India's National Crime Records Bureau** recorded the death of 8,233 young women who were killed for dowry related reasons. This number has risen over decades and between 2011 to 2021, it increased by 87 percent.⁹³


Chameli Yadav was killed by her live-in partner, Ajay Yadav in 2023; Nikki Yadav was strangled by her husband later in the same year, and these were recorded as homicides. In fact, it has been reported that India purposely keeps inaccurate femicide statistics.⁹⁴

According to Nishi Mitra Vom Berg, a Professor at The Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai;

Most of the different forms of violence against women in the family go unreported or underreported and invisible and when women access police intervention in cases of domestic violence, many cases of such domestic abuse are treated as non-cognizable offences.

⁹³ Kaylee Wong, *How India's Hyper-Nationalist BJP Regime Enables Its Femicide Epidemic*

⁹⁴ Nehal Johri, "India is Undercounting as the UN seeks Femicide Stats"



The laws and customary practices being an unsafe space for these women to turn to has caused private organisations to rise up and take the baton of providing psychological and social support to women who suffer from domestic abuse. This is because intimate partner femicide is mostly an offspring of domestic abuse. An example is the North East Network (NEN), UN Jugnu Clubs, as well as other Non-Governmental Organisations. The National Commission for Women in India, in its capacity, also acts as a stand-in for victims of femicide in getting their case addressed.

4.2. Nigeria

In November and December 2024, 14 cases of femicide were reported in the country. These incidents were reported in Adamawa, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi , Enugu , Jigawa, Ogun , and Plateau.⁹⁵ According to Document Women;

In November, non-intimate partner violence was the highest reported case (40 percent) followed by domestic violence (40 percent) and intimate partner violence (20 percent), while in December, domestic violence had the highest number of cases (50 percent) followed by intimate partner violence and non-intimate partner violence (25 percent). Intimate partner violence affected women whose ages were

⁹⁵ Vanessa Onyema, “Femicide In Nigeria – November And December 2024” (2025)



unknown and non-intimate partner violence and domestic violence affected women and girls as young as three days old to as old as 70 years old.⁹⁶

A major challenge faced by the Nigerian society regarding femicide is the under-reporting of cases.⁹⁷ Fear of retaliation, stigma, and the belief that nothing will be done if they report the violence often prevent victims from coming forward.

In cases of sexual assault, victims may be blamed for their assault or face public shame. This silence not only prevents authorities from taking action but also skews the data on the true scale of gender based violence (GBV) and femicide in the country. According to UN Women, one in three Nigerian women will experience some form of GBV, but the actual figure is likely much higher due to the high rate of under reporting⁹⁸.


4.3. Russia

In 2020, the word of the year in Russia being “FEMICID” is enough to accentuate the grave disruption that the intentional killing of women caused in the country. In response to the dangers posed to women, The Representative of The Russian Federation at the European Court of Human Rights, Mikhail Halperin stated that, *“The Russian state has fully complied*

⁹⁶Vanessa Onyema, “One-Year report on Femicide” (July 2023 - June 2024)

⁹⁷ UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria: A National Crisis” (2021)

⁹⁸Nathaniel Shaibu, “30% of Nigerian women face gender-based violence”



with the obligation to create a legislative framework that effectively addresses the problem of domestic violence ...”


However, this had little to no effect. In 2012, Lyubava Malysheva,⁹⁹ in reporting the statistics of femicide, stated that 135 women who were killed that year were killed by their sons, while 19 died at the hands of their grandsons. According to a report published in the same year, domestic violence was the leading cause of death in the country, with an estimated 14,000 women dying each year as a result.

There has been no improvement whatsoever as the government creates laws that cripple a woman’s ability to fight for herself in the case of domestic violence, such as the “Russian Slapping Law of 2017” which decriminalised abuse against women that did not cause death or grave injury.

To this day, the Russian Federation has not established any legislation that focuses solely on violence against women, talk less of femicide. In the country, there are only 12 women-only shelters that help victims of violence. This service inadequacy was referred to in The 2021 Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Report, where it was stated that Russia does not meet any of the standards of help systems for victim-survivors of violence set by the Council of Europe and the Istanbul Convention (IC)¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ Lyubava Malysheva, “*Femicide in Russia*” (2022)

¹⁰⁰ Myrna Dawson & Saide Mobayed Vega, *The Routledge International Handbook on Femicide and Feminicide* 1st ed.(2023)



With the poor effort or lack from the government, private individuals work together to provide safer spaces for the surviving victims of abuse and be a voice for victims of femicide. An example of such a project is femicid.net (NO TO FEMICIDE) which was created by the Women's Museum in Moscow.

4.4. Mexico

With more than 2,526 women murdered in the past three decades from 1993 to 2023, and hundreds disappeared, Ciudad Juárez remains Mexico's most dangerous city for women.¹⁰¹ Femicide in Mexico is a result of a plethora of reasons ranging from domestic violence to increased crime rate. However, impunity is revealed as a driving cause of this peril in Mexico. Government statistics reveal that approximately 10 women and girls are killed daily by intimate partners or family members. Since 2001, over 50,000 women have lost their lives, with more than 95 percent of these cases going unpunished. Moreover, a mere two percent of femicide cases result in a criminal conviction, and only one in 10 victims feels safe enough to report their abusers.

The high rate of femicide in Mexico has led to the establishment of advocacy groups such as Ni Una Menos (Not One Less) and uprisings like **Vivas Nos Queremos (We Want to Stay Alive)** movement, which have elicited global intervention.

¹⁰¹ Nathalie Minard and Ana Carmo, "Mexico: Boom in organised crime making femicide invisible" (2024).

4.5. Pakistan

In Pakistan, about 5000 women are killed every year as a result of domestic violence, alongside thousands of other women maimed or disabled. Law enforcement agents do not regard domestic violence as a crime. Therefore, they refuse to register cases brought before them. As of 2019, thousands of honour killings occurred annually in Pakistan. Data from organisations such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)¹⁰² and the Aurat Foundation¹⁰³ suggests that hundreds of women are killed each year. According to the HRCP's 2020 report, approximately **1,000 women** are killed in the name of honor every year in Pakistan. Though the total number of femicides may be higher. Pakistan is a society dominated by patriarchal values, where conventional gender roles frequently undermine the rights and independence of women. The strong adherence to honor-based cultural traditions, especially in rural areas, plays a significant role in the high incidence of femicide.¹⁰⁴

4.6. South Africa

For over 20 years, The Gender & Health Research Unit of the South African Medical Research Council conducted a study on femicide in South Africa. In doing this, the team, including Naheemah Abrahams and Colleagues analysed three national surveys. It was

¹⁰² Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) (2020). *State of Human Rights in 2020*.

¹⁰³ Aurat Foundation (2019). *Violence Against Women in Pakistan: A Statistical Overview*.

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights commission in pakistan: State of Human Rights in Pakistan



discovered in this research that while the Non-Intimate Partner Femicide (NIPF) in South Africa reduced over these years, Intimate Partner Femicide (IPF) remained the same¹⁰⁵.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), it has been estimated that 12.1 in every 100,000 women are victims of femicide in South Africa each year¹⁰⁶.

In 2020/21, records and statistics showed that three women were killed daily by their intimate partner. While IPF remained the same and even grew in some situations, conviction of perpetrators reduced drastically, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic.¹⁰⁷

Some of the victims of femicide in South Africa, specifically ones that shook the nation and caused women to rise and call for a reform include: Hannah Cornelius and Karabo Mokoena. In the latter's case, her boyfriend killed her by burning her with acid.¹⁰⁸

5. Barriers to Addressing Femicide

Femicide - the most severe manifestation of gender-based violence¹⁰⁹ - is inherently gendered and rooted in systemic discrimination, inequality, and misogyny. Cultural,


¹⁰⁵ Naheemah Abrahams: Femicide, intimate partner femicide, and non intimate partner femicide in South Africa: An analysis of 3 national surveys, 1999–2017)

¹⁰⁶ Tom Head: Femicide Rates: South Africa vs The Rest of The World

¹⁰⁷ Naemah Abrahams, Shibe Mhlongo, Bianca Dekel, Esnat Chirwa, and ors: 20 Years of Femicide Research in South Africa

¹⁰⁸ "Horrific details of Karabo Mokoena's Death Emerge" Sunday Times 14th May 2017

¹⁰⁹ UNODC, Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide): Global estimates of female intimate partner/family-related homicides in 2022, 2023



religious, and socio-economic contexts often amplify these issues, with harmful stereotypes enabling and perpetuating attitudes that justify or downplay the severity of this violence. Intimate partner femicides form an overwhelming portion of femicides recorded each year, and minority and immigrant women face heightened risks, often trapped in abusive relationships by social pressures or fears of retaliation within their homes and communities. Displaced women, especially those in humanitarian and environmental crises also face disproportionately higher risks of femicide. Across the globe, countless women and girls are unjustly killed each year. A deeper examination of these gruesome, intentional killings uncovers numerous regional and international obstacles that hinder efforts to combat femicide effectively.

Data Collection

A primary problem with addressing femicide lies in the challenges of accessing robust and comprehensive data that fully represent the extent of these killings and the identities associated with them.¹¹⁰ This is hugely affected by the inconsistencies in the conceptualization of femicide, which invariably affects the way it is documented, understood, and addressed.

¹¹⁰ Cullen P, Dawson M, Price J, Rowlands J. Intersectionality and Invisible Victims: Reflections on Data Challenges and Vicarious Trauma in Femicide, Family and Intimate Partner Homicide Research. *J Fam Violence*. 2021



A related challenge stems from the lack of uniform terminology in official statistics and facility-based homicide data. Different states use various terms to refer to these killings, ranging from ‘femicide’ to ‘gender-related killings of women and girls’ or simply ‘homicide’.¹¹¹ Many states that classify all intentional killings under the term “homicide” often fail to collect specific data on gender-related killings of women and girls by their husbands, partners, or family members. For example, the United States, despite ranking 34th in femicide records globally and accounting for 70 percent of femicides across 26 high-income countries,¹¹² does not specifically recognise femicide as a distinct form of homicide.

Additionally, many states do not gather homicide data that include the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. In states where intimate partner homicide data is available, it reveals a troubling pattern: more than eight out of ten victims are women.¹¹³

Similarly, medical practitioners often overlook documenting the relationship between the victim and perpetrator in murder cases, as guidelines for recognising and categorising intimate-partner femicide are typically absent. Although police are likely to gather the

¹¹¹ UNSA, ‘Collecting Data on Femicide’

¹¹² Firearm availability and female homicide victimization rates among 25 populous high-income countries.

¹¹³ Collecting Data on Femicide, UNSA.



most comprehensive homicide data, there remains a lack of standardised definitions or protocols for identifying intimate partner femicide.¹¹⁴

However, femicide does differ from other forms of murder because it is gender motivated - the killing of a woman or girl because she is a woman. Thus, a targeted approach that recognises its uniqueness is required for effective data collection and research. Without such efforts, the prevalence of femicide remains significantly under-reported globally, perpetuated by gaps and inaccuracies in data.


According to Diana Russell, who first used the term femicide in her testimony at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels, Belgium in 1976;

*We must realise that a lot of homicide is, in fact, femicide. We must recognise the sexual Politics of murder. Men tell us that they cannot be blamed for what a few maniacs do. Yet the very process of denying the political content of the terror helps to perpetuate it, keeps us weak, vulnerable, and fearful.*¹¹⁵

Cultural and Societal Norms

¹¹⁴ Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, Inter-American Alliance for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence (InterCambios), Medical Research Council of South Africa (MRC), and World Health Organization (WHO), *Strengthening the Understanding of Femicide: Using Research to Galvanise Action and Accountability* (Joint Femicide Conference, 2022)

¹¹⁵ Diana Russell, International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels, Belgium in 1976.



Effectively addressing femicide must involve a clear understanding of the cultural contexts that perpetuate and normalise it, posing a significant barrier to its elimination. This is because culture shapes ideas and ultimately, the behaviours that follow. It has a powerful influence on individual actions, including violence.¹¹⁶ Also, cultural foundations contribute to the normalisation of violence, making it more readily accepted by individuals and the community.


Honour killings represent one of the most pervasive forms of femicide influenced by culture. The idea of ‘honour’ as it relates to honour killings is rooted in the belief that collective harm can be justified.¹¹⁷

Legal and Institutional Challenges

Robust laws and regulations are an indispensable tool for combating femicide and other forms of violence against women. However, there exists a huge gap in the formation and implementation of laws that adequately recognize and address the nature of femicide in its nature and character, as distinct from general homicidal killings. As such, it is important to recognise femicide as a separate category of crime, in order to fully address and protect victims.

¹¹⁶ Christiana Kouta, Anita Nudelman, Anne Ryen, Femicide and Culture, *Journal of Comparative Social Work*, 2018

¹¹⁷ Katja Luparjarvi, International Accountability for Honour Killings as Human Rights Violations, *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*



Nonetheless, international law as a body of rules fails to clearly address femicide, especially in its criminalization.¹¹⁸ To date, no international law criminalises femicide. The UDHR, despite being a revolutionary instrument in the conceptualization of human rights, falls short in recognizing and protecting women from certain forms of violence that are uniquely tied to the violation of their human rights, such as dowry-related killings, prolonged abuse leading to death, intimate partner violence, coerced marriage, sexual exploitation, and rape.¹¹⁹ These forms of violence often represent or contribute to acts of femicide.


Although conventions like CEDAW recognise violence against women, it does not explicitly criminalise femicide.

VI - Conclusion

The problems of intimate partner/family member femicide have been proven to be one of the fastest traveller on the same speed as Light. It is a heart-wrenching occurrence as it reinforces the fact that the world has been made an unsafe place for women and girls. From South Africa to Russia, Nigeria, India, touching on every continent, femicide, which is bundled up under the term homicide, in order to divert attention from the evils

¹¹⁸ Alessia Nicastro, Addressing Femicide Through International Criminal Law: The Need for a Binding Legal Framework, Yale Journal of International Law

¹¹⁹ Angela Hefti, Conceptualizing Femicide as an Human Right Violation: Femicide the UN, and CEDAW, Elgar Online



perpetrated against women. The UN, as well as other international bodies, have taken it upon themselves to bring an end to this grave destruction and inhumane elimination of women. Regional bodies and stand alone organisations have also put all hands on deck in order to provide statistical information on femicide, as well as the protection of all women. Over time, many solutions, including eliminating root causes such as domestic violence and degenerative practices birthed as a result of deep-seated patriarchy, have also been suggested and actively carried out in order to bring a permanent end to Femicide.

VII - Further Research

What are the national strategies, frameworks and institutions established by Member States towards the elimination of femicide?

What cultural norms have been highlighted to influence intimate partner/family member femicide, and what has been done to combat these cultural norms?

Are the data of victims of femicide accurate or are they tainted by discrimination and other factors? If they are, what can be done to ensure accuracy in data collection?

What role can faith-based organizations play in changing cultural attitudes toward GBV?

How can international pressure be applied to countries with high femicide rates?

What are the policies regional governments have put in place to protect against intimate partner/family femicide?

How have countries' awareness programs affected the rate of intimate partner/family femicide?

What is the correlation between uneducated women and the issue of femicide? What can be said about the need for education in many countries?

What other issues cause intimate partner/family femicide and how have the international and national bodies aimed to resolve these causes?

VIII - Annotated Bibliography

European Institute for Gender Equality, *"Financial Independence and Gender Equality: Joining the Dots between Income, Wealth, and Power"* (December 10, 2024)
<<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/financial-independence-and-gender-equality-joining-dots-between-income-wealth-and-power>> accessed February 9, 2025



This publication by the European Institute for Gender Equality examines the critical relationship between financial independence and gender equality. It explores how income, wealth, and power interact to shape gender dynamics in various societal contexts. The report underscores the role that financial autonomy plays in empowering individuals, particularly women, to challenge traditional gender norms and access broader social and economic opportunities.

“Femicide, Its Causes and Recent Trends: What Do We Know?” (Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), 2021)
 <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653655/EXPO BRI\(2021\)65365EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653655/EXPO_BRI(2021)65365EN.pdf)> accessed February 9, 2025

This briefing, prepared for the European Parliament, provides a thorough overview of femicide-defined as the intentional killing of women or girls because of their gender. It explores the root causes and risk factors at individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels, such as gender inequality, legal disparities, and social discrimination. Delegates are encouraged to read it to understand the underlying drivers of femicide and the challenges in combating it, ensuring that their contributions to debate and policy proposals are informed and impactful.

UN News, “Mexico: Boom in Organised Crime Making Femicide Invisible, Local Activist Says” (UN News, December 23, 2024)
<<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/12/1157811>> accessed April 13 2025.

This article examines how rising organized crimes in Mexico diverts attention from addressing femicide. It highlights the government’s prioritisation of other crimes over gender based violence. This article supports studies on crime, governance and gender justice.

UN Women – Europe and Central Asia, “TAKE FIVE: ‘Femicide Is Fueled by Patriarchal Social Norms and Changing Minds Is of Utmost Importance’” (December 13, 2018)

<<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/12/femicide-is-fueled-by-patriarchal-social-norms-and-changing-minds-is-of-utmost-importance>> accessed February 9, 2025

This interview discusses patriarchal norms in Europe and central Asia. It stresses the need for societal mindset changes alongside legal measures. The article provides a valuable perspective for understanding systemic gender based violence. It supports research for societal reform and women’s rights.

World Bank Group- Gender Based Violence (Violence Against Women and Girls)
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls> (accessed February 9 2025)



This webpage outlines the global prevalence and impacts of violence against women and girls. It highlights the economic and social costs of gender-based violence. It is a useful source for understanding international development responses to the issue. supports research on policy interventions and social sustainability.

IX - Bibliography

Angela Me and others, *"Global Estimates of Female Intimate Partner/Family-Related Homicides in 2022"*

<https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/briefs/Femicide_brief_2023.pdf

> accessed

9 February 2025

Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

<https://femicideincanada.ca/cfoja-research/cfoja-reports/> (accessed February 9 2025)

Corradi C and European Parliament coordinator: Policy Department for External Relations,

European Institute for Gender Equality, *"Financial Independence and Gender Equality: Joining the Dots between Income, Wealth, and Power"* (December 10, 2024)

<<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/financial-independence-and-gender-equality-joining-dots-between-income-wealth-and-power>>

accessed

February 9, 2025

Femadmin, *"History of the Term Femicide - Femicide in Canada"* (December 5, 2023)

<<https://femicideincanada.ca/what-is-femicide/history/>> accessed February 7 2025

“Femicide” (*European Institute for Gender Equality*, December 10, 2024)

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1192?language_content_entity=

[n#:~:text=Killing%20of%20women%20and%20girls.and%20misogynist%20slaying%20of%20women](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1192?language_content_entity=n#:~:text=Killing%20of%20women%20and%20girls.and%20misogynist%20slaying%20of%20women)

> (accessed February 7 2025)

“Femicide, Its Causes and Recent Trends: What Do We Know?” (Trans European Policy Studies

Association (TEPSA), 2021)

<[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653655/EXPO_BRI\(2021\)65365](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653655/EXPO_BRI(2021)65365)

[_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653655/EXPO_BRI(2021)65365_EN.pdf)> accessed February 9, 2025

“Five Essential Facts to Know about Femicide | UN Women – Headquarters” (*UN Women –*

Headquarters, November 25, 2024)

<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/five-essential-facts-to-know-about-femicide>>

(accessed February 7 2025)

Gershon L, “Where Witch Hunts Began” [2022] JSTOR Daily

<<https://daily.jstor.org/where-witch-hunts-began/>> accessed February 9 2025

HumAngle Foundation, *"On the Issue of Femicide in Nigeria: Analysis and Recommendations"*

(November 23, 2024)

<https://humangle.org/on-the-issue-of-femicide-in-nigeria-an-analysis-and-recommendations/>>

accessed April 3 2025.

InterParliamentary Union-About Us <https://www.ipu.org/about-us> (accessed February 9 2025)

<https://www.unsavienna.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/20211126-Femicide%20XIII%20new%20cover.pdf>

Johri N, "India Is Undercounting as the UN Seeks Femicide Stats" *dw.com* (April 14, 2023)

<<https://www.dw.com/en/india-is-undercounting-as-the-un-seeks-femicide-stats/a-63873741>>

accessed April 14 2025

Kouta C, Rousou E, Freysteinsdóttir FJ, Boira S and Naudi M. Gender and Socio-Cultural Perspectives through Femicide Case Studies. *J Community Med Health Care*. 2017; 2(2): 1013.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323222932_Gender_and_Socio-Cultural_Perspectives_through_Femicide_Case_Studies accessed April 6 2025

Levack B. P, *"The Witch Hunts: A History of the Witch Persecution in Europe and North America"* (2015). (4th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315685526>

Luisa Ballin "How to Combat Femicide at National and International Level <https://global-geneva.com/how-to-combat-femicide-at-national-and-international-level/#:~:text=UNFPA%20and%20UN%20Women%20are%20leading%20agencies%20in,understand%20power%20imbalances%20in%20terms%20of%20gender%20relation> (accessed February 9 2025)

Lyubava Malysheva: Femicide in Russia. 2022 available at <https://www.flia.org.uk/latest-news/2022/3/14/femicide-in-russia> (accessed February 8 2025)

Me A and others, "Global Estimates of Female Intimate Partner/Family-Related Homicides in 2022" (2023) <<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/gender-related-killings-of-women-and-girls-femicide-feminicide-global-estimates-2022-en.pdf>> accessed April 15 2025.

"One Woman or Girl Is Killed Every 10 Minutes by Their Intimate Partner or Family Member UN Women –Headquarters" (UN Women – Headquarters, November 25, 2024)

<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/11/one-woman-or-girl-is-killed>

very-10-minutes-by-their-intimate-partner-or-family-member> (accessed February 7 2025)

Oxfam International, *“Ten Harmful Beliefs That Perpetuate Violence against Women and Girls”* (February 13, 2024)

<<https://www.oxfam.org/en/ten-harmful-beliefs-perpetuate-violence-against-women-and-girls>

accessed February 9 2025

Project Good for Girls, *“The Link between Education and Girls’ Risk of Abuse”* (*Project Good for Girls*, October 8, 2014)

<<https://goodforgirls.org/the-link-between-education-and-girls-risk-of-abuse-and-exploitation/#:~:text=Girls'%20low%20or%20non%2Dexistent,boys'%20education%20over%20girls>> accessed February 9, 2025

Tavares P, *“Raising Awareness to Root out Violence against Women and Girls”* (*World Bank Blogs*, March 16, 2024)

<<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/voices/raising-awareness-root-out-violence-against-women-and-girls>> accessed April 6 2025

UNODC and UN Women and others, *Femicides in 2023* (United Nations 2023)

<[https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/femicides-in-2023-global-estimates-of-](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/femicides-in-2023-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf)

[intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/femicides-in-2023-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf)> (accessed February 7 2025)

UNODC and UN Women, Global Estimates of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicide

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/femicides-in-2023-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides-en.pdf> (accessed February 8 2025)

United Nations Economic and Social Council: Vienna Declaration on Femicide

https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Sessions/CCPCJ_22/E-CN

[5-2013-NGO1/E-CN15-2013-NGO1 E.pdf](#) (accessed April 6 2025)

UN News, “Mexico: Boom in Organised Crime Making Femicide Invisible, Local Activist Says” (UN News, December 23, 2024)

<<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/12/1157811>> accessed April 13 2025.

UN Women – Europe and Central Asia, “TAKE FIVE: *Femicide Is Fueled by Patriarchal Social Norms and Changing Minds Is of Utmost Importance*” (December 13, 2018)

<<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/12/femicide-is-fueled-by-patriarchal-social-no>

[ms-and-changing-minds-is-of-utmost-importance](#)> accessed February 9, 2025

UN Women – Headquarters, “Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment”

<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

>
accessed April 3 2025.

Van der Horst, P. (2003). *Violence and Honor: The Social Context of Gender-Based Violence*. Cambridge University Press

Wong K and Wong K, "How India's Hyper-Nationalist BJP Regime Enables Its Femicide Epidemic - Berkeley Political Review" (*Berkeley Political Review - UC Berkeley's only nonpartisan political magazine*, March 25, 2024) <<https://bpr.studentorg.berkeley.edu/2024/03/16/how-indias-hyper-nationalist-bjp-regime-enables-its-femicide-epidemic/>> accessed March 4 2025.

World Bank, "Education as a Vehicle to End Violence against Women" (*World Bank Blogs*, March 16, 2024) <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/voices/education-vehicle-end-violence-against-women>> accessed March 4 2025.

World Bank Group- Gender Based Violence (Violence Against Women and Girls) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls> (accessed February 9 2025)

Alessia Nicastro, Addressing Femicide Through International Criminal Law: The Need for a Binding Legal Framework, Yale Journal of International Law, available at <https://yjil.yale.edu/posts/2025-01-26-addressing-femicide-through-international-criminal-law-the-need-for-a-binding?utm> accessed April 6 2025

World Health Organization, "Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women" <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf?sequence=1> accessed March 4 2025.

Topic Two: Women and AI Ethics: Balancing Innovation and Bias Prevention

I. Quote

“There is an urgent need to rebalance the situation for women in AI to avoid biased analyses and to build technologies that take into account the expectations and needs of all humanity”

- Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-general


II. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI), as an intelligence tool, has largely dominated the traditional working space, with its market size in 2024 being estimated at \$224.41 Billion by NextMSC¹²⁰ and being expected to grow by 19% each year (Precedence Research)¹²¹. Its ballooning growth, wide use, and beneficial contribution have called for the need to create “ethical boundaries” that ensure the responsible use of the tool to mitigate bias and protect user data. This consideration is called “AI Ethics.”

The United Nations General Assembly, in recognizing the capability of AI to largely contribute to and augment the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), called upon all Member States and stakeholders “to refrain from or cease the use of

¹²⁰ Next Move Strategy Consulting, AI Research Report 2023

¹²¹ Zoting S, “Artificial Intelligence (AI) Market Size to Reach USD 3,680.47 bN by 2034” (August 26, 2024)



artificial intelligence systems that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights.¹²²

This reiterates that people's rights, including women's, must be considered offline and online when using Artificial Intelligence tools. Under its Vision 2.0, the United Nations stated that new technologies would be used to address gender bias and inequalities associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence¹²³.

This background guide seeks to examine the specific contribution of AI and AI ethics to Women, a constituent of society who has been proven time and time again to be largely discriminated against. In doing so, it will consider and criticise the current AI bias by examining current case laws and international and regional frameworks, the implication of AI gender bias, as well as the current efforts imputed in combating such bias. This paper will also generously explore the strategies utilised in balancing innovation and preventing bias.

¹²² United Nations- Vibhu Mishra: General Assembly Adopts Landmark Decision on Artificial Intelligence

¹²³ United Nations-Our Common Agenda Policy Brief: UN 2.0 Forward-thinking culture and cutting-edge skills for better United Nations system impact


III - Definition of Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence: These are tools that have the capability to act as though they possess human intellectual capabilities. According to Carme Artigas, a Spanish Executive, politician, and business woman, primarily dedicated to the technology sector:

AI is a very important tool for democracy because it can make the knowledge of all humanity available and personalized education accessible to all... It will also be tremendously useful in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reducing poverty, tackling climate change, and solving other global challenges that humanity has had limited success in solving.

Bias in AI: This occurs when the predictions or recommendations of AI tools are discriminatory or misrepresentative of a group of people. While the successes of AI systems are tied to its ability to provide accurate results through objective and reliable data, without careful selection of data sets being fed into algorithms, AI has the capacity to exacerbate existing biases and can reinforce gender stereotypes.

Gender Equality: According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), gender equality is the concept that all men and women, girls and boys, have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realising their full potential, human rights, and dignity



and from contributing (and benefiting from) economic, social, cultural, and political development¹²⁴.


Gender Bias: This has broad and unending definitions as defining it depends solely on the persons affected. Hence, a more clear cut method of defining it would be stating examples of what could be considered gender bias. These include: Pay gap, unequal opportunities perpetuated in workplaces, stereotyping, prejudice, unequal educational opportunities, etc. The Center of Excellence Women and Science defines gender bias as “systematic biasing effects shaped by gender-related stereotyping and prejudice and influence perceptions and decisions”¹²⁵.

An algorithm: refers broadly to a set of procedures and instructions used to accomplish a task or solve a problem. They can range from simple to complex and are used across various fields.

Ethical AI: According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) principles of AI ethics, ethical AI systems include technologies that satisfy the recommendations of proportionality, safety and security, right to privacy and data protection, multi-stakeholder and adaptive governance & collaboration,

¹²⁴ Unicef- Gender Equality

¹²⁵ Centre of Excellence Women and Science: Gender Bias in Academia and Research



responsibility and accountability, transparency and explainability, human oversight and determination, sustainability, awareness and literacy, fairness and non-discrimination.

Digital Divide: This is the gap manufactured by unequal access of persons to modern telecommunication and digital mediums and tools¹²⁶. The different educational levels of persons in different spaces contribute greatly to the digital divide as certain persons may have no education on how to use the internet or digital tools.

Data sets are collections of data used to train and test machine learning models.

Fairness-aware Algorithms are

AI Governance refers to policies and frameworks that ensure ethical and safe use of AI technologies.

¹²⁶ Dr Alexander Tuzhilin: Understanding and Closing the Digital Divide


IV - International and Regional Legal Framework

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* 1948¹²⁷ is the primary framework that establishes that all people are born free in dignity and rights and prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of sex. Particularly, *Article 2* states explicitly that everyone is entitled to the freedoms set out in its provisions, ‘without distinction of any kind such as age, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status’. Similarly, *Article 7* provides for the equal protection of everyone before the law and is entitled to equal protection under the law. As such, AI systems must be created in accordance with codes of ethics that discourage the perpetration of harmful stereotypes, but instead promote the equality of all persons.

The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*¹²⁸ 1979 calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in all areas, including access to education, employment, and decision-making. *Article 10* of CEDAW provides that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of

¹²⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III)

¹²⁸ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249,




equality of men and women, the same rights. Similarly, *Article 11* provides for the elimination of discrimination against women in healthcare.

The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)*¹²⁹ restates the importance of the empowerment of women to participate in public and private life. In the field of technology, this would mean the creation of technologies that are gender-inclusive and foster women's representation.

*UN Resolution 68/220: Science, Technology, and Innovation for Development (2013)*¹³⁰ Emphasizes the role of science and technology in eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, with a focus on inclusivity. Particularly, Article 6 recognizes that full and equal access to and participation in science, technology and innovation for women of all ages is imperative for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. It emphasizes that overcoming the obstacles women and girls face in these fields demands a coordinated, holistic, inclusive, and long-term approach that spans multiple disciplines and sectors. In this context, it calls on governments to incorporate a gender perspective into their laws, policies, and programs.

¹²⁹ United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995

¹³⁰ United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 68/220: Science, Technology, and Innovation for Development*, 20 December 2013, A/RES/68/220



*UN Resolution 73/218: Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Achievement of the SDGs (2018)*¹³¹ highlights the need for inclusive policies to manage technological change and mitigate its adverse effects on marginalized groups, which in this case, are women. It calls on all stakeholders to promote women's full participation in the information society and ensure equitable access to ICTs, including emerging technologies. It reiterates the request for UN entities, including UN Women, to prioritize gender equality and empowerment in implementing and monitoring the World Summit on the Information Society action lines. Additionally, it reaffirms the commitment to ensuring women are fully included in ICT-related decision making processes.

*UN Resolution 76/189: Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development (2021)*¹³² highlights the persistent gender digital divide, noting that globally, 55 percent of men use the internet compared to 48 percent of women, with the gap even wider in least developed countries, where only 15 percent of women use the internet compared to 29 percent of men. It calls on stakeholders to ensure women's full participation in the information society and access to ICTs for development. It also urges UN entities, including UNWomen, to prioritise gender equality and women's empowerment in implementing and monitoring the World Summit on the Information

¹³¹ United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 73/218: Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 20 December 2018, A/RES/73/218,

¹³² United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 76/189: Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development*, 16 December 2021, A/RES/76/189,

Society (WSIS) outcomes, reaffirming the commitment to women's involvement in ICT-related decision-making.

V - Role of the International System

The absence of hard laws has upset the proper regulation of the utilisation of AI tools globally. Hence, the international system has taken on the role in:

1. **Creating soft laws, code of conducts, and principles that regulate the use of AI and in line, mitigate bias:** Law (in form of rules, guides, etc) is the basis on which everything operates. The international community have thus developed and are developing several initiatives that guide and govern the workings and use of AI. These initiatives in form of guidelines, Soft Laws, Principles, are backed by organisations such as UNESCO, EU, ISO, and others¹³³. Soft Laws, which include expert opinions, codes of conduct, etc are non-binding norms which lack the enforceability feature that Hard Laws possess and are thus not as effective. However, they serve as a tool that shapes behaviour in relation to artificial intelligence while also setting standardised expectations and practices. The United Nations as an International Organisation for instance, has developed an advisory body to provide suggestions and instructions that consider and address the risk of

¹³³ Wendell Wallach and Ors: Sof Law Functions in The International Governance of AI

the widespread use of AI. This body is called the United Nations High-Level Advisory Body on AI¹³⁴. The UN General Assembly in Advancing AI also adopted a landmark resolution in March 2024- Same Rights Offline and Online¹³⁵.

To ensure quality standards in relation to data protection globally, The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation was also established. Article 7 of the GDPR provides that consent must be clearly obtained from users. Users are to have clear knowledge of what they are agreeing to, and must be able to withdraw the consent whenever¹³⁶. Article 22 of the GDPR of this regulation seeks to tackle discriminations such as profiling, and unfair treatment of individuals.

2. **Giving room for dialogue with other countries on the topic of AI Ethics:** UN's High-Level Advisory Body On AI has acted as a mechanism that pools together information and recommendations in relation to aligning AI with human rights and liberties from experts in government and society all over the world. Forums like International Dialogues on AI Safety (IDAIS) have served as a platform that enables scientists, researchers, and policy makers all over the world to come together to have conversations and proffer solutions on AI-Risks (which include Biases)¹³⁷.

¹³⁴ United Nations Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies: High Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence

¹³⁵ UN News General Assembly adopts landmark resolution on artificial intelligence

¹³⁶ Article 7 EU GDPR: Conditions for Consent

¹³⁷ International Dialogue on AI Safety (IDAIS): Dialogues



3. **Creating awareness in the minds of users, diplomats, and lawmakers:** Training fellowships such as UNIDIR Women in AI Fellowship¹³⁸, UNITAR AI Training For Diplomats, etc, have served as means to create awareness and in turn empower women in their relation with AI. These fellowships aim to prevent bias and it does so by rigorously educating women on the rights in relation to AI.
4. **Making AI accessible to every person** in order to mitigate discrimination, digital divide, and non-inclusivity, as this is the objective of AI Ethics
5. **Making recommendations on AI Ethics (like the United Nations Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organisation did on the 23 November 2021 in Paris, France):** The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation has made a Recommendation on The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. In strengthening this, they developed two key methodologies including: Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM)¹³⁹ and Ethical Impact Assessment (EIA). The former seeks to ensure that countries are ready to implement AI ethically and responsibly by evaluating the gaps in technology and working to seal these gaps. The latter acts as a pillar holding up the former. While the RAM identifies the issues, EIA seeks to

¹³⁸ UNIDIR Empowering women diplomats to shape the future of AI in international security

¹³⁹ UNESCO: Readiness Assessment Methodology: A tool on the Recommendation on The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2023



solve the issue by aligning the country's values with that outlined in UNESCO's recommendation.


1. Understanding AI Bias

According to the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), AI bias refers to AI systems that produce biased results that reflect and perpetuate human biases within a society, including historical and current social inequality¹⁴⁰. According to Daniel Kahneman,

“Bias is a systematic deviation from rationality or logic in judgment, which can lead to erroneous or prejudiced decisions.”

In simple words, AI bias is the tendency to prefer something over another, often in an unfair or unjust way. AI bias arises when an algorithm delivers systematically biased results due to erroneous assumptions premised on the data used to train them, the design choices of design, and societal factors. It is important to recognise this challenge, as AI is increasingly being used in critical sectors such as healthcare systems, academia, employment, and finance, among others, and the consequences will be dire if left unchecked.

¹⁴⁰ “What Is AI Bias? Causes, Effects, and Mitigation Strategies | SAP



There are a number of ways this bias may result, one of which is bias in data. AI systems are trained on data sets, and if these data sets contain biased information about certain stereotypes or demographics, the AI will learn those biases and influence its decision-making. This applies to all forms of data, including historical data where certain groups of people, like women and people of colour, were subjugated. The AI will perpetuate this bias in its decision-making.

Another way in which this can be perpetuated is through bias in algorithms. This bias refers to the systematic and predictable errors that occur within computer systems, which lead to unfair or unequal outcomes. This happens when an algorithm favours one group or category over others, often in ways that go against its intended purpose. Bias can be introduced in a few different ways. The way an AI algorithm is designed, the data it processes, and the features it uses to make decisions can all play a role. If an algorithm is not thoroughly tested for fairness or is not properly adjusted, it may unintentionally favour certain groups over others due to biased data or assumptions made during its creation. This can lead to outcomes that are not just inaccurate but also unfair, reinforcing existing inequalities.

In hiring, algorithmic gender bias is seen to be a predominant issue.

Every day, more and more people are using Large Language Models in their work, their studies and at home. These new AI applications have the power to subtly



shape the perceptions of millions of people, so even small gender biases in their content can significantly amplify inequalities in the real world. Our Organization calls on governments to develop and enforce clear regulatory frameworks, and on private companies to carry out continuous monitoring and evaluation for systemic biases, as set out in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Intelligence artificial, adopted unanimously by our Member States in November 2021.

- Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General.

AI systems, powered by machine learning tools, often replicate biases, including gender, racial, and sexual stereotypes. Despite many documented examples of algorithmic bias negatively affecting women, there continues to be a common belief that algorithms are less biased than humans in their decision-making processes.¹⁴¹ This misconception persists even as research highlights the significant impact that biased algorithms can have on various groups. In a 2018 report, it was stated that in 2015, the system was not rating candidates in a gender-neutral way because it was built on data accumulated from CVs submitted to firms mostly from males¹⁴². The system started to penalise CVs which included the word "women". The program was edited to make it neutral to the term, but it became clear that the system could not be relied upon.

¹⁴¹ Reuters, "Amazon Scraps a Secret A.I. Recruiting Tool That Showed Bias against Women" (CNBC, October 11, 2018)

¹⁴² "Amazon scrapped 'sexist' AI tool" BBC News 10 October 2018.



2. Key instances of gender bias in AI

The issue of gender bias in AI is one which developed by virtue of the biased data being fed into the system. AI is a reflection of data it feeds on and the data is gotten from society which has a deep predominant bias against women. In light of this, certain key biases in AI will be discussed for in depth understanding of the issue of Gender bias in AI.

A study by the Berkeley Haas Center for Equity, Gender and Leadership analysed 133 AI systems across different industries and found that about 44 per cent of them showed gender bias, and 25 percent exhibited both gender and racial bias.¹⁴³ In 2018, Amazon discontinued an AI recruitment tool that favoured male resumes over that of their female counterpart.¹⁴⁴


Additionally, according to Zinnya Del Villar, the Director of Technology, Data, and Innovation at Data-Pop Alliance, “Voice assistants defaulting to female voices reinforce stereotypes that women are suited for service roles, and language models like GPT and BERT often associate jobs like “nurse” with women and “scientist” with men.”¹⁴⁵

UNESCO has noted that home-based assistants such as Amazon’s Alexa, Microsoft’s Cortana, and Apple’s Siri were given default feminine voices and were designed to have

¹⁴³ Genevieve Smith & Ishita Rustagi, “When Good Algorithms Go Sexist: Why and How to Advance AI Gender Equity (SSIR)” (March 31 2021)

¹⁴⁴ BBC News, “Amazon Scrapped ‘sexist AI’ Tool” (October 10, 2018)

¹⁴⁵ UN Women – Headquarters, “How AI Reinforces Gender Bias—and What We Can Do about It”



“submissive personalities” and stereotypically feminine attributes, such as being “helpful, intelligent, intuitive.”¹⁴⁶ However, as in the case of IBM’s Watson, which used a masculine voice while working with physicians on cancer treatment, male voices have been preferred for tasks that involved teaching and instruction, as they were perceived to be “authoritarian and assertive.”¹⁴⁷

According to Doğuç, in a recent interview with UN Women, *“Artificial intelligence mirrors the biases that are present in our society and that manifest in AI training data.”*

3. Ethical Implications Of Gender Bias In AI


Despite the seemingly significant progress in the development of AI systems, gender bias can perpetuate inequality by excluding women from opportunities and reinforcing harmful societal norms on women’s roles and responsibilities. Gender bias in AI can stem from several factors, including a lack of diversity among developers and in the datasets used for training, societal biases reflected in data, and the influence of both conscious and unconscious biases from programmers during the development process.¹⁴⁸

Thus, AI evidently reflects the societal norms and beliefs prevalent among people. A 2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI) by the United Nations Development Programme

¹⁴⁶ Da Costa PCF, “Conversing with Personal Digital Assistants: On Gender and Artificial Intelligence” (2018)

¹⁴⁷ Costa P and Ribas L, “AI Becomes Her: Discussing Gender and Artificial Intelligence” (2019)

¹⁴⁸ Nadeem, Ayesha; Abedin, Babak; and Marjanovic, Olivera, "Gender Bias in AI: A Review of Contributing Factors and Mitigating Strategies" (2020). ACIS 2020 Proceedings. 27.



(UNDP) highlighted this by revealing that nine out of 10 men and women hold fundamental biases against women.¹⁴⁹

A UNESCO study on the *Bias Against Women and Girls in Large Language Models*, which examined three popular generative AI tools, GPT-3.5, GPT-2, and Llama 2, revealed persistent biases in word associations between gender and career, as well as discrimination in generated texts provided by it¹⁵⁰. In the study, female names were associated more with ‘family’, ‘home’, and ‘marriage’, while male names were associated with words like ‘career’, ‘business’, and ‘executive’.


Perhaps the most significant effect of gender bias in AI is its potential to reinforce and amplify existing gender stereotypes. This can occur through two primary mechanisms: producing biased outputs due to skewed data or flawed algorithms and perpetuating biases by adhering to traditional gender roles in its design¹⁵¹. On the first point, an illustrative example is Amazon's recruitment machine-learning tool, which was found to favour male candidates. This bias emerged because the AI was trained on a dataset of resumes that predominantly featured men, reflecting hiring patterns over ten years.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2023. 2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI): Breaking down gender biases: Shifting social norms towards gender equality. New York

¹⁵⁰ UNESCO, Challenging systematic prejudices: an Investigation into Bias Against Women and Girls in Large Language Models

¹⁵¹ AI and Gender Equality Manuscript, Can artificial intelligence enable versus inhibit gender equality for the Sustainable Development Goals? What scientists know so far (2024)

¹⁵² Carnegie Mellon University, “Amazon Scraps Secret AI Recruiting Engine That Showed Biases Against Women - Machine Learning - CMU - Carnegie Mellon University”




Consequently, because AI is relied on for decision-making across various sectors, biases within these systems have the potential to place women at a disadvantage by opening them up to further discrimination in hiring, healthcare, lending, or wherever it is used. For example, in healthcare, where AI may be used in patient diagnosis, an AI tool was found to under-diagnose liver disease in women, missing up to 43 percent in women, compared to 23 percent in men.¹⁵³

4. Women In AI: Challenges And Opportunities

The data generated by AI is a reflection of what is contributed and imputed by experts, and, ultimately, the prevailing beliefs and norms of the society. Consequently, AI serves as a mirror of societal notions and ideals, and as gender inequality persists, it underscores the critical need for even greater representation of women in the development of these systems. When women are under-represented in data contributions and design processes, AI systems risk perpetuating bias, as the data fails to include women's perspectives and experiences, leading to a lack of inclusivity and balance. To mitigate such bias, UNESCO has advocated for a more human approach to AI as it would significantly contribute to the effective realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human rights frameworks.

¹⁵³ Ucl, “Gender Bias Revealed in AI Tools Screening for Liver Disease” (*UCL News*, July 13, 2022)



In 2022, the World Economic Forum stated that 22 percent of AI professionals are women. This is incredibly low. In the article, "Women in AI: Breaking The Glass Ceiling" by Syeda Ambreen Zafar, UNESCO reported that only 26 percent of women work in data science globally.

Additionally, women make up just 18 percent of AI researchers.¹⁵⁴ UNESCO's 2019 report titled "I'd Blush If I Could: Closing Gender Divides in Digital Skills Through Education" further proves that the field of Artificial Intelligence is indeed a ground for the perpetuation of gender biases¹⁵⁵. Such biases are said to greatly influence the data sets in general and training data sets in particular. This bias is deeply rooted in the patriarchal structure of society and how this deformity has gone on to form thoughts, opinions, and how women are viewed in different industries, and has also limited their contributions whatsoever. Thus, this has indirectly created challenges for women in AI. Such challenges may include:

- a. **Gender Bias and Unequal Opportunities:** Women's technical abilities and expertise are undermined in every society, and the field of Artificial Intelligence is not left out. In AI, because of how women are viewed, they are given less relevant work. Thus making the least contribution to artificial intelligence. These

¹⁵⁴ "Artificial Intelligence: Rooting out Bias and Stereotypes" (*UN News*, October 8, 2024)

¹⁵⁵ UNESCO- I'd Blush If I Could: Closing Gender Divides in Digital Skills Through Education



preconceived notions about women, such as the fear of their inability to balance work and “family responsibilities”, have caused unequal opportunities in the field of AI and have even made women scared to try, as “their place is in the kitchen”.

- b. **Underrepresentation:** There is little to no room for the new generation of women to work in AI, as there are no female role models in the field. This challenge may also extend to other fields, as AI is quickly becoming a significant part of society. AI is used in the application for jobs in other fields, and with fewer women in the industry, women’s ideas and thoughts are not considered. Hence, women will be underrepresented in political, economic, and social fields.
- c. **Feared Risks:** As women are not even in the centre of AI but are mostly sidelined, it is not far-fetched to believe that women’s priorities will not be reflected through AI. Thus, women within and outside the industry (users of AI output) may fear for their personal security and hence refuse to use AI.
- d. **Workplace harassment:** Women are more susceptible to workplace harassment in any field whatsoever. This case would not be different in a field infiltrated mostly by men. The fields of science and technology are known to be male dominated spaces. Hence, the rate of workplace harassment is incredibly high, and it also goes unchecked¹⁵⁶. Many women fear that this may be the case and that this would

¹⁵⁶ Ann Gibbons: Sexual Harassment is Common in Scientific Workfield



cause them to not be comfortable in their workspace, which would, in turn, affect their output, hence, they do not make an attempt to be involved in the field.

In UNESCO's review of AI principles and frameworks in 2020, five foundational values, including human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms, leaving no one behind, living in harmony, trustworthiness, and the protection of the environment, were established with a plan to implement them¹⁵⁷. Programmes like Catalyst (which analyses gender and AI in an attempt to create workplaces that work for women), Coding Rights (which convenes an intersectional feminist approach with the regulation and use of technologies), Feminist AI, The Center for Gender, Equity and Leadership (EGAL) of the Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley, have also contributed to mitigating AI Bias and thus, reducing the challenges women may face in the field. With the support of these, many women have been able to break barriers and achieve a successful career in the field of AI, regardless of the challenges. These women include:

- **Fei Fei Li** is the co-director of Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI) and the co-founder of AI4ALL, a nonprofit organization that seeks to educate the next generation of technologists, thinkers, and leaders in AI¹⁵⁸.
- **Timnit Gebru** thrived in the industry until the bias against women robbed her of her career. She is a former Google AI researcher and also a significantly noted

¹⁵⁷ UNESCO: Recommendation on The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence- Key Facts

¹⁵⁸ History Of Data Science: Fei-Fei Li: The Researcher Bringing Humanity to AI




advocate for diversity and ethics in AI. She is also the co-founder of the Black in AI affinity group. The goal of this group is to create visibility for black researchers in the field of AI.

- **Regina Barzilay**, a professor at MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL).
- **Cynthia Brezeal** is the founder and Chief Scientist of Jibo Inc., a company that develops social robots that have contributed to healthcare services.
- **Hanna Wallach** is a machine learning researcher and an advocate for diversity and inclusivity in AI research.

If these women can achieve groundbreaking positions in their careers, it is proof that there are opportunities in AI that women can benefit from. The United States, in order to provide equal opportunities in the field, has created initiatives like the **National AI Research Institutes** program, which focuses on promoting gender inclusivity. A programme similar to this is the EU's **Horizon Europe** program. This programme funds projects with the goal of bridging the gender gap in the field of technology.

5. Current Efforts In Combating AI Bias




The global community has recognized the need to combat AI bias against women and has made various efforts to achieve a future where AI has limited to no bias. However, this combat has been a slow ascent toward the goal.

The European Union High Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence produced guidelines applicable to model building. It highlighted three key areas which every machine learning models, ie Artificial Intelligence should aspire to have;¹⁵⁹ First, it must be **Lawful** respecting all applicable laws and regulations including international laws such as CEDAW and ICCPR, provisions that protect human rights against discrimination. Second it must be **Ethical**, respecting ethical principles and values such as the removal of gender bias and unequal opportunities. Third, it must be Robust that is from a technical perspective while taking into account its social environment. And in this case, the social need for equality in the global space.

The International bodies have begun the fight to attain a gender neutral understanding and space of AI. International efforts to combat AI bias have particularly focused on the need for standard-setting regulatory frameworks, and collaborative initiatives. For instance UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, the EU AI Act, and various

¹⁵⁹European Union, “Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI” (*Shaping Europe’s Digital Future*)




partnerships are key components of this effort, focusing on fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI systems.

In its fight, the UNGA enacted the resolution “Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure, and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development.” The assembly resolved to bridge the artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital divides between and within countries and promote safe, secure, and trustworthy AI systems to accelerate progress towards the full realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The UN General Assembly held its 79th session in September 2024 in its SDG media zone. The theme was “Paving New Pathways for Women in Tech.” This session brought together leaders from LinkedIn, Roblox, and UN Women to explore how AI impacts different communities, particularly women and youth, and how the global community can design safer, more inclusive digital environments.

Furthermore, the UN Women's position paper on the Global Digital Compact provided concrete recommendations to harness the speed, scale, and scope of digital



transformation for the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity,¹⁶⁰ and to trigger transformations that set countries on paths to an equitable digital future for all.

6. Strategies For Balancing Innovation With Bias Prevention

Gender stereotypes and biases are deeply rooted in society and culture and can permeate emerging technologies and systems. Hence, developing these systems must be matched with a conscious effort to mitigate and prevent the propagation of bias. A continuous and iterative approach, which prioritises improvements, is therefore essential to promoting the responsible use of AI systems to ensure gender-neutral and fair systems.

As such, a key starting point is the integration of fairness-aware algorithms capable of identifying and addressing biases in training data, ensuring that AI systems promote equity and serve all users fairly, irrespective of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status.¹⁶¹

Another strategy introduced towards the issue of balancing AI innovation and preventing bias, is the collaboration of international bodies, government systems and the private sector. The UNESCO recommendations provided for the Ethical Impact Assessment which

¹⁶⁰UN Women Headquarters, “Placing Gender Equality at the Heart of the Global Digital Compact: Taking Forward the Recommendations of the Sixty Seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women” (*UN Women – Headquarters*, March 6, 2025)

¹⁶¹ Khan, Imran & Hajjar, Leo. (2024). Navigating the Ethical Frontiers of AI: Balancing Industrial Innovation and Responsible Governance.




is aimed at helping AI project teams, in collaboration with the affected communities, to identify and assess the impacts an AI system may have. Institutions like, **Global Observatory on the Ethics of AI**, an innovative digital platform serving as a one-stop-shop for the latest analysis on the ethical development and use of AI around the world, and **Global Forum on Ethics of AI**, a high-level annual event to advance the state-of-the-art knowledge of the challenges raised by AI technologies and **AI Ethics Experts Without Borders (AIEB) network**, a flexible facility of experts for deployment in Member States on needs basis to assist in the implementation of the Recommendation and the application of the capacity-building tools, have been pivotal in the fight towards a gender neutral Artificial Intelligence.¹⁶²

Additionally, non-governmental organizations such as the **AI Now Institute at New York University** publishes annual reports, which provides one of the longest-running series of research reports about bias in AI and the private sector especially those in technology such as **Microsoft** which has released guidelines for conversational AI bots to treat people fairly called *Microsoft Fairlearn*. And **Google AI**, which has published a set of recommended practices for fairness as well as for other important AI topics have through their acts balanced the innovation and bias prevention by raising awareness and creating ethic centred AI.¹⁶³ The International and national bodies must therefore encourage such

¹⁶² UNESCO, “UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: key facts” (2023)

¹⁶³ Jake Silberg and James Manyika, “Notes from the AI frontier: Tackling bias in AI (and in humans)” (June 2019)




acts of awareness and ethic centered approach towards attaining a gender neutral AI globally.

Furthermore, the increment of women's involvement in AI would aid in attaining gender equality. For instance, the Women for AI Ethics (W4AIEthics) network, a platform for influential women leaders in industry, government, and civil society, driving transformations towards gender equality in and through AI.¹⁶⁴ The UN bodies must therefore make recommendations and resolutions towards the compulsory inclusion of women in the AI space.

VI - Conclusion

In coalition with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and in its most recent edition of the “UN Activities on AI Report”, the UN reiterated the importance of AI in achieving its sustainable development goals. In line with this and the brief points outlined above, it is no news that with the utilisation of AI tools come complications that may, in turn, complicate the achievement of set goals. Hence, there is an urgent need for AI Ethics. These principles set out in the Ethics will monitor, mitigate, and seek to completely eliminate the digital divide and bias that may arise in the utilisation of AI. Globally, persons more likely to be at the less beneficial end in the utilisation of AI, are women. Hence, the

¹⁶⁴ UNESCO, “UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: key facts” (2023)



international system in collaboration with the private sector and shareholders must ensure that the AI aligns with general ethics of technology and the human rights laws which have been enacted and ratified so as to ensure the proper use of Artificial Intelligence and a gender neutral society.

This paper has examined the concept of Artificial Intelligence and other key concepts associated with it. It has further examined the gender bias in AI, the challenges and opportunities, the current efforts towards the eradication of bias in AI and the strategies towards attaining this goal.

VII - Further Research

How does the lack of diversity in AI development teams contribute to ethical concerns, and what strategies can be implemented to foster more inclusive innovation?

To what extent should AI ethics prioritize the prevention of gender bias over other ethical considerations, such as privacy, security, or environmental sustainability?

What are the potential risks of overregulating AI innovation in efforts to prevent gender bias, and how can these risks be mitigated without compromising ethical principles?

How do power dynamics within tech organisations and the broader AI industry shape the ethical priorities surrounding women and AI?

VIII - Annotated Bibliography

Governing AI for humanity: Final report. (n.d.). United Nations.

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf (assessed December 29, 2024)

This report emphasizes the necessity of international cooperation to address AI-related risks while harnessing its transformative potentials. It proposes seven key recommendations aimed at bridging existing gaps in AI governance structures. These recommendations include establishing a globally inclusive architecture for AI oversight and encouraging governments and stakeholders to collaboratively promote the development and protection of human rights in the context of AI. Delegates are advised to use this resource as a foundational blueprint to understand the importance of global collaboration to mitigate AI concerns.

UNESCO, Artificial Intelligence and Gender Equality: Key Policies for Fairer AI (n.d.)

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388971> (accessed January 22 2025)

This publication explores the link between artificial intelligence (AI) and gender equality, and advocates for the promotion of more inclusive and equitable AI systems. It highlights how gender bias can be embedded in AI design and deployment and outlines key policy measures to address these challenges. It also provides practical recommendations for governments, tech developers, and international organisations to ensure AI technologies are developed and governed in ways that do not reinforce existing inequalities, by emphasizing a human-rights based approach.

United Nations. *Artificial Intelligence, Rooting out Biases and Stereotypes* (2024, October). UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1155446> (assessed January 22, 2025)

This UN article addresses growing concerns around bias and stereotypes in AI systems. It explores the possibility of AI systems reinforcing stereotypes, especially those related to gender and calls for stronger global frameworks to promote equitable use of AI systems and technologies.

SAP, “What Is AI Bias? Causes, Effects, and Mitigation Strategies”, available at <https://www.sap.com/resources/what-is-ai-bias> (accessed 30 April 2025).

This Article provides an in depth analysis of AI BIAS, exploring its origins, manifestations and potential solutions, identifying key sources of bias including data bias, algorithmic bias and human decision bias and discusses their real-world implication across all sectors including healthcare, law enforcement and hiring practices.

UNESCO, Challenging Systematic Prejudices: An Investigation into Bias Against Women and Girls in Large Language Models (2024), available at <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/S9ZX7IXX> (last accessed 30 April 2025).

This 2024 UNESCO report critically investigates gender bias embedded in widely used large language models (LLMs), such as GPT and LLaMA. It finds that these AI systems tend to reproduce harmful stereotypes—frequently linking women to domestic roles while depicting men in professional capacities. The report also uncovers instances of AI-generated content that reflects misogynistic or homophobic biases, raising ethical concerns about the societal impact of such technologies. It concludes with strong recommendations for inclusive AI development, including diverse data sets, transparent auditing, and the integration of human rights frameworks. This source is

crucial for understanding systemic digital bias and supports arguments for ethical reforms in AI policy.

IX - Bibliography

Abbey, J. (2023). *Artificial intelligence bias*. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/A14%20-%20Abbey%20-%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20Bias.pdf> accessed April 29, 2025

Amazon scraps a secret AI recruiting tool that showed bias against women. (2018, October 10). CNBC.

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/10/amazon-scraps-a-secret-ai-recruiting-tool-that-showed-bias-against-women.html> accessed January 15, 2025

Article 7 EU GDPR: Conditions for Consent

<https://gdpr-info.eu/art-7-gdpr/> accessed April 29, 2025

Artificial intelligence market.. Precedence Research.

<https://www.precedenceresearch.com/artificial-intelligence-market> (assessed December 29, 2024)

BBC News, "Amazon Scrapped 'sexist AI' Tool" (October 10, 2018)

<<https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-45809919>> accessed April 19 2025.

Costa P and Ribas L, “AI Becomes Her: Discussing Gender and Artificial Intelligence” (2019) 17 *Technoetic Arts* 171 <<https://doi.org/10.1386/tear.00014.1>> accessed 29 April 2025.

Da Costa PCF, “Conversing with Personal Digital Assistants: On Gender and Artificial Intelligence” (2018) 10 *Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts* 2 <<https://revistas.ucp.pt/index.php/jsta/article/view/7318>> accessed 29 April 2025

European Union, “Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI” (*Shaping Europe’s Digital Future*) <<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/ethics-guidelines-trustworthy-ai>> accessed 19 April 2025.

Genevieve Smith & Ishita Rustagi, “When Good Algorithms Go Sexist: Why and How to Advance AI Gender Equity (SSIR)” (March 31 2021) ((C) 2005-2025) <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/when_good_algorithms_go_sexist_why_and_how_to_advance_ai_gender_equity> accessed April 29 2025.

GO A, “Addressing Gender Bias to Achieve Ethical AI” (*IPI Global Observatory*, March 17, 2023) <<https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/03/gender-bias-ethical-artificial-intelligence/>> accessed April 29 2025.

Governing AI for humanity: Final report. (n.d.). *United Nations*.
https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf (assessed December 29, 2024)

Haas School of Business. (n.d.). *University of California, Berkeley*.
<https://haas.berkeley.edu/equity/> (assessed January 12, 2024)

History Of Data Science: Fei-Fei Li: The Researcher Bringing Humanity to AI
<https://www.historyofdatascience.com/fei-fei-li-the-researcher-bringing-humanity-to-ai/> (accessed April 20, 2025)

Jake Silberg and James Manyika, “Notes from the AI frontier: Tackling bias in AI (and in humans)” (June 2019) Mckinsey Research Institute; available at
<https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/artificial%20intelligence/tackling%20bias%20in%20artificial%20intelligence%20and%20in%20humans/mgi-tackling-bias-in-ai-june-2019.ashx#:~:text=The%20Partnership%20on%20AI%2C%20with,and%20Accountable%20AI%20working%20group.&text=The%20Algorithmic%20Justice%20League%2C%20founded,and%20offers%20auditing%20of%20algorithms.&text=AI4ALL%2C%20a%20nonprofit%20organization%2C%20focuses,with%20leading%20AI%20research%20universities.&text=QuantumBlack%2C%20a%20McKinsey%20company%20specializing,AI%20for%20social%20good%20workshop.&text=Jake%20Silberg%20is%20a%20fellow.at%20the%20symposium%20with%20James.>
(accessed April 20, 2025)

SAP. . *What is AI bias?* SAP Resources. <https://www.sap.com/resources/what-is-ai-bias> (assessed January 12, 2024)

Unicef- Gender Equality <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality> (accessed February 9 2025)

Scientists reveal gender bias in AI tools screening liver disease. (2022, July). *University College London (UCL) News*. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2022/jul/gender-bias-revealed-ai-tools-screening-liver-disease> (assessed January 22, 2024)

Syeda Ambreen Zafar : Women in AI- Breaking Glass Ceilings <https://scientiamag.org/women-in-ai-breaking-the-glass-ceilings/> (accessed February 9 2025)

UNESCO- I'd Blush If I Could: Closing Gender Divides in Digital Skills Through Education <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367416> (accessed February 9 2025)

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Artificial intelligence and gender equality: Key policies for fairer AI*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388971> (assessed January 22, 2025)

UNESCO: Recommendation on The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence- Key Facts <https://unesco.org.uk/resources/unesco-recommendation-on-the-ethics-of-artificial-intelligence-key-facts#:~:text=It%20establishes%20a%20set%20of%20values%20in%20>

ine.transparency%2C%20accountability%2C%20and%20the%20rule%20of%20law%20online (accessed April 20, 2025)

UN Women – Headquarters, “How AI Reinforces Gender Bias—and What We Can Do about It” (UN Women – Headquarters, February 5, 2025) <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/interview/2025/02/how-ai-reinforces-gender-bias-and-what-we-can-do-about-it#:~:text=%E2%80%9CVoice%20assistants%20defaulting%20to%20female,%22scientist%22%20with%20men.%E2%80%9D>> accessed April 29 2025.

United Nations. Artificial Intelligence, Rooting out Biases and Stereotypes (2024, October). UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1155446> (assessed January 22, 2025)

United Nations-Our Common Agenda Policy Brief: UN 2.0 Forward-thinking culture and cutting-edge skills for better United Nations system impact <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-un-2.0-en.pdf> (assessed April 20, 2025)

UN Women Headquarters, “Placing Gender Equality at the Heart of the Global Digital Compact: Taking Forward the Recommendations of the Sixty Seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women” (UN Women – Headquarters, March 6, 2025) <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/03/placing-gender-equality-at-the-heart-of-the-global-digital-compact>> accessed April 29 2025.



Women in AI: Breaking the glass ceilings. *Scientia Mag*.
<https://scientiamag.org/women-in-ai-breaking-the-glass-ceilings/> (assessed January 29, 2025)