



UN Women





Committee: UN Women

Topic: Combating Gender-Based Discrimination in Afghanistan and Advancing Women's Fundamental Rights.

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I. Committee Background

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, known as UN Women, is the UN organization dedicated to promoting women's rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of all women and girls. It works with governments, civil society, and women-led organizations to develop policies and programs that protect women's rights and improve their participation in society. Its main areas of work include strengthening laws and institutions, supporting women's economic opportunities, preventing gender-based violence, and promoting women's leadership in political, social, and peacebuilding processes.

UN Women was established by the United Nations General Assembly on July 2, 2010, and became operational in January 2011. Its creation strengthened international efforts to achieve gender equality and helped countries turn international agreements into practical actions. The organization promotes changes in laws, public policies, institutions, and social attitudes to reduce discrimination and improve opportunities for women and girls (UN Women, n.d.-a).

An important part of UN Women's work is supporting international standards that protect women's rights. One of the most significant agreements is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. This convention establishes commitments to eliminate discrimination against women in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. It also recognizes that





governments must take active measures to protect women's rights and promote equality (United Nations, 1979).

Another important framework is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women. It established goals to improve the lives of women and girls, focusing on education, health, poverty, violence against women, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making. This framework continues to guide governments and organizations in their efforts to achieve gender equality (United Nations, 1995).

UN Women focuses on several priority areas. Women's leadership and political participation are essential because women should have equal opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities. The organization also promotes economic empowerment by supporting access to decent employment, fair wages, financial resources, and leadership positions. These efforts are important because unequal responsibilities at home and discrimination in the workplace can limit women's opportunities to study, work, and achieve financial independence (UN Women, n.d.-a).

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence is another central priority. This type of violence includes harmful acts directed at individuals because of their gender and can affect their safety, health, dignity, and freedom. It can occur in homes, schools, workplaces, and public spaces. UN Women supports prevention programs, raises awareness, and promotes access to protection and justice for survivors. Governments, communities, and institutions must work together to address violence and ensure that women and girls can exercise their rights safely (UN Women, n.d.-a).

The organization also works on women, peace, security, and humanitarian action. During conflicts and emergencies, women and girls may face increased risks and barriers to essential services. At the same time, women contribute to peacebuilding and the recovery of their communities. UN





Women therefore promotes their participation in peace processes and decision-making, recognizing that women should have an active role in developing solutions rather than being included only as recipients of protection and assistance (UN Women, n.d.-b).

The work of UN Women is closely connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This goal includes ending discrimination and violence, eliminating harmful practices, increasing women's participation in leadership, and recognizing unpaid care work. Gender equality is also connected to education, health, employment, and economic development, making it essential for building more inclusive societies (United Nations, n.d.).

Despite international agreements and ongoing efforts, women and girls continue to face serious challenges around the world. Discriminatory laws, harmful social expectations, limited access to education, economic inequality, and gender-based violence prevent many women from exercising their fundamental rights. These challenges demonstrate the need for continued international cooperation and practical measures to turn commitments into meaningful changes.

Through its work on leadership, economic empowerment, violence prevention, and peace and security, UN Women supports efforts to address these inequalities. Governments and international organizations must continue strengthening protections for women and girls, improving access to opportunities, and ensuring that women can participate in decisions that affect their lives. Achieving gender equality requires more than international agreements; it requires consistent action to protect human rights and promote dignity, freedom, and equal opportunities for all women and girls.

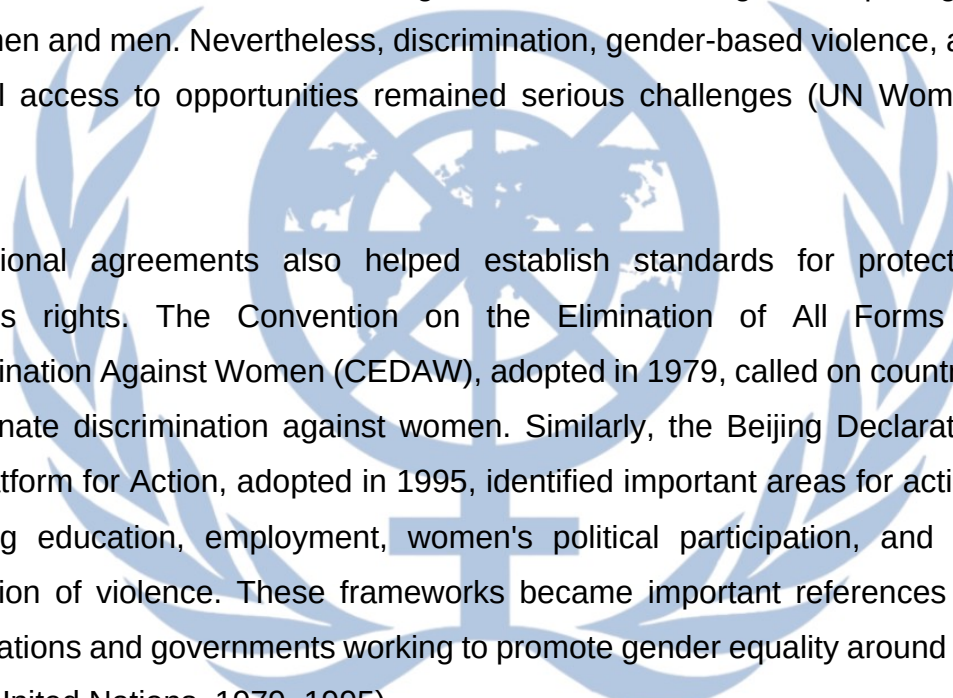




II. Topic History

The history of women's rights in Afghanistan has been marked by periods of progress and restrictions. During the twentieth century, Afghan women gained more opportunities in education, employment, and public life. In 1919, women gained the right to vote, and over time, more women began participating in professional and political activities. However, these advances were not experienced equally throughout the country, and traditional expectations and political instability continued to limit women's opportunities.

In 1996, the Taliban took control of Kabul and imposed strict rules on women and girls. Women were excluded from many jobs and public activities, while girls faced severe restrictions on education. In 2001, the Taliban government was removed from power, allowing new opportunities for women's rights. In the following years, more girls attended school, women entered universities and professional careers, and the 2004 Afghan Constitution recognized equal rights for women and men. Nevertheless, discrimination, gender-based violence, and unequal access to opportunities remained serious challenges (UN Women, 2022).



International agreements also helped establish standards for protecting women's rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, called on countries to eliminate discrimination against women. Similarly, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, identified important areas for action, including education, employment, women's political participation, and the prevention of violence. These frameworks became important references for organizations and governments working to promote gender equality around the world (United Nations, 1979, 1995).

The situation changed significantly on August 15, 2021, when the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan. New restrictions limited women's





participation in education, employment, and public life. In March 2022, girls were prevented from continuing secondary education, and in December 2022, women were prohibited from attending universities. Restrictions on women's employment and movement also increased, making it more difficult for them to support their families and participate in their communities (UN Women, 2022, 2023).

Education remains one of the most important concerns in Afghanistan. According to UNESCO (2025), Afghanistan is the only country where girls and women are prohibited from accessing education beyond the primary level. These restrictions affect their future employment opportunities, independence, and ability to contribute to society. The exclusion of women from professional and public activities also affects the country's social and economic development.

The restrictions imposed after 2021 extend beyond education. Women have faced increasing barriers to employment, freedom of movement, and participation in public spaces. In many cases, regulations requiring women to follow strict dress codes or be accompanied by a male guardian have made everyday activities more difficult. These measures limit women's independence and their ability to access essential services, including healthcare and humanitarian assistance. The growing restrictions have also reduced women's opportunities to participate in community decisions and public discussions (UN Women, 2025).

The effects of these policies reach Afghan families and the country's economy. When girls cannot continue their education, they have fewer opportunities to develop professional skills and become financially independent. Similarly, when women are prevented from working, families may lose an important source of income, and communities lose trained professionals who could contribute to education, healthcare, and other





essential services. According to UN Women's 2024 Afghanistan Gender Index, nearly eight in ten young Afghan women are excluded from education, employment, or training. This demonstrates that gender discrimination affects not only individual rights but also the country's long-term development (UN Women, 2024).

Despite these challenges, Afghan women continue to seek opportunities to learn, work, and support their communities. Some women-led organizations provide educational activities and other forms of assistance, while others advocate for women's rights and equal opportunities. International organizations have also supported initiatives to help Afghan women maintain access to education and essential services. However, these efforts face financial, political, and social obstacles, making continued international support important (UN Women, 2025).

Today, UN Women, UNESCO, and other United Nations organizations continue to document these restrictions and advocate for the protection of women's fundamental rights. Their efforts include supporting Afghan women-led organizations and calling for equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and public participation. International cooperation remains essential, as governments and organizations must continue addressing discrimination and encouraging the restoration of women's rights.

The history of Afghanistan demonstrates that progress toward gender equality can be reversed when fundamental rights are not adequately protected. It also highlights the importance of education, legal protections, economic opportunities, and women's participation in decision-making. Protecting these rights requires consistent action from national authorities and the international community to ensure that Afghan women and girls can participate in society, develop their abilities, and live with dignity and equal opportunities (UN Women, 2025; UNESCO, 2025).





Afghanistan: Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, women and girls in Afghanistan have faced increasing restrictions on their fundamental rights. Girls are prohibited from attending secondary school beyond the sixth grade, and women are excluded from universities and many areas of employment. In August 2024, the Taliban authorities introduced the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which established further restrictions affecting women's behavior and participation in public life. In December 2024, women were also prohibited from attending medical training institutions, limiting their opportunities to become healthcare professionals. These restrictions have raised concerns regarding women's access to education, healthcare, employment, and economic independence.

United States: Following the removal of the Taliban government in 2001, the United States supported programs that expanded educational opportunities and women's participation in public life in Afghanistan. After the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, the U.S. government continued to condemn restrictions imposed on Afghan women and girls. In December 2024, the U.S. Department of State

condemned the prohibition on women's medical training, warning that the decision would affect women's rights and the country's healthcare system. However, the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2021 was followed by the collapse of the former Afghan government and the return of the Taliban to power. Despite continued diplomatic pressure, restrictions on women's education and employment have not been reversed.

Pakistan: Pakistan shares a border with Afghanistan and maintains political, economic, and security relations with the country. It has participated in regional discussions and humanitarian efforts concerning Afghanistan, including matters involving Afghan refugees. However, Pakistan's repatriation campaign in 2025 raised concerns about the safety of Afghans returning to a country where women and girls face restrictions on education, employment, and access to essential services. UNHCR has emphasized the need to consider the risks faced by people returning to





Afghanistan. Protecting Afghan refugees, maintaining access to humanitarian assistance, and preventing vulnerable women and girls from being exposed to further difficulties remain important challenges.

Qatar: Qatar hosted negotiations between the United States and the Taliban that resulted in the Doha Agreement, signed on February 29, 2020. The agreement established a framework for the withdrawal of U.S. forces and included commitments related to negotiations and security. Following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Qatar continued to host diplomatic discussions concerning Afghanistan. These discussions have provided opportunities to address humanitarian concerns and communicate international demands regarding women's rights. Nevertheless, diplomatic negotiations have not resulted in the restoration of women's access to secondary education, universities, or many employment opportunities. The situation continues to raise questions about how international dialogue can encourage changes to policies restricting women's fundamental rights.

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom has repeatedly condemned restrictions imposed on Afghan women and girls and has raised concerns at the United Nations

Security Council. The British government has called for girls to regain access to education and for women to participate in public life. It has also provided humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and emphasized the importance of ensuring that aid reaches vulnerable communities. In September 2025, the United Kingdom expressed concern about the exclusion of women and girls from society and restrictions affecting female humanitarian workers. Despite these efforts, the Taliban authorities have continued enforcing policies that limit women's rights. The United Kingdom has therefore continued to support international cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic efforts aimed at improving conditions for Afghan women and girls.

IV. United Nations Action





Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) establishes international obligations to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equality. Afghanistan ratified the convention on March 5, 2003. However, restrictions imposed on Afghan women and girls, including limitations on education, employment, and participation in public life, remain serious challenges to achieving these commitments. The convention provides an important international framework for addressing gender-based discrimination in Afghanistan.

On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It calls for greater participation of women in peace negotiations, conflict prevention, decision-making, and peacebuilding. The resolution also emphasizes the protection of women and girls affected by conflict. In Afghanistan, these principles are relevant because restrictions on women's participation in public life make it more difficult for them to contribute to decisions about the country's future. The resolution supports the need to include Afghan women in discussions about peace, security, and political solutions.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), focused on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Its targets include ending discrimination, eliminating violence against women and girls, and ensuring equal opportunities for leadership and participation. The situation in Afghanistan presents major obstacles to these goals, particularly because girls face restrictions on education and women face limitations on employment and public participation. SDG 5 provides a shared international framework for measuring progress and encouraging governments and organizations to address these inequalities.

Established in 2002, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) works to support peace, human rights, humanitarian assistance, and political engagement in the country. Its mandate includes promoting human rights and equality for women and girls. In April 2023, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2681,





which condemned the Taliban authorities' decision to prohibit Afghan women from working for the United Nations and called for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and girls in Afghanistan. UNAMA also monitors the situation of human rights in the country and reports on restrictions affecting women and girls. In June 2026, the Security Council extended UNAMA's mandate until June 17, 2027, through Resolution 2822, continuing the mission's work in Afghanistan.

UN Women has developed programs to support Afghan women and girls amid increasing restrictions on their rights and opportunities. Its Afghanistan Strategic Note for 2023-2025 prioritized essential services, economic opportunities, support for women-led civil society organizations, and the inclusion of Afghan women's voices in decision-making. These efforts aim to help women maintain access to support and livelihoods while strengthening organizations that advocate for their rights. However, humanitarian and economic assistance cannot replace the need for women and girls to have access to education, employment, and full participation in society.

Although the United Nations has established international conventions, adopted resolutions, monitored human rights, and supported programs for Afghan women,

major challenges remain. Restrictions imposed by the Taliban authorities continue to limit women's access to education, employment, and public life. The United Nations has called for these restrictions to be reversed, but its ability to bring about changes depends on cooperation from the authorities and sustained international engagement. Further action requires coordinated diplomatic efforts, humanitarian assistance, accountability for human rights violations, and meaningful participation by Afghan women in decisions affecting their lives and their country's future.

V. Essential Questions

1. How can the international community encourage the Taliban authorities to restore women's and girls' fundamental rights in Afghanistan?





2. What measures can the United Nations take to help Afghan girls regain access to secondary and higher education?
3. How can UN Women and other international organizations support Afghan women who have been excluded from employment and public life?
4. How can the international community provide humanitarian assistance to Afghan women and girls while ensuring that aid reaches those who need it?
5. How can the United Nations strengthen cooperation among member states to hold the Taliban authorities accountable for restrictions on women's rights?
6. What long term strategies can help Afghan women participate in decisionmaking, economic activities, education, and the reconstruction of their country?

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