

Hilton 2023 Chair Letter

UN Women - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Committee Overview

Empowering Female Farmers in Developing Countries

Lack of Access to Affordable Childcare

Effect on AIDS on Women in Africa

Breast Ironing in Cameroon

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION:

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions are not to be written until the date of the conference itself. Additionally, it is highly suggested that every delegate write at least one position paper on a topic, as doing so will be necessary to be considered for an award. Position papers must be submitted by the start of the first day of committee.

All delegates are expected to come to the first day of the conference with a working knowledge of all or most of the topics, as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. As United Nations Women, it is imperative that delegates keep in mind that their purpose is to promote and protect the rights of women around the world without infringing upon national sovereignty. Above all, remember that Model UN is not a competition, so get to researching and try to have fun!

ABOUT US:

Sarah Colelli

Hello delegates! My name is Sarah Colelli and this is my first time chairing and my third year in Model UN. I am currently a Junior at Webster Schroeder High School where I play golf as well as the flute. I enjoy reading, listening to music, and playing with my Golden Retriever. I'm very excited for an enjoyable and productive committee! Don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Clara with any questions or concerns.

Email: secolelli@gmail.com

Clara Milosevic

Hello delegates! My name is Clara Milosevic, and I am a junior at Brighton High School, where I am an avid member of my school paper and speech team. This is my third year of Model UN and my second time chairing. In my free time, I enjoy listening to music, watching Netflix, and reading. I am excited to meet you all and have a fun committee together. Please don't hesitate to contact one of us with any questions or concerns!

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Topic 1: Empowering Female Farmers in Developing Countries

As populations continue to rise, developing countries have encountered increased challenges in feeding their population. Farming is a popular occupation in developing countries and depended on by everyone for food. Female farmers, in particular, make up a large portion of farmers as they harvest food for their families and communities.

Unfortunately, access to land rights and economic benefits are extremely low compared to a male farmer. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, female farmers make up less than 15% of landholders. Inaccessibility to land rights are caused by harmful cultural beliefs, patriarchal systems, and insufficient legal rights to property ownership in select countries.

Failure to provide documents of land ownership causes female farmers to not benefit from higher pay that could further help them support their families. Due to cultural norms in some developing countries, female farmers can not sell their produce without their husband or permission from a male. Moreover, stigma surrounding women and their duty are also incredibly prevalent in rural communities.

Lack of access to credit and capital investment for female farmers makes it hard for them to improve their businesses. According to *National Geographic* they are less likely to buy advanced farming products that could potentially raise their profits. It was also reported that women who run farms grow 20-30% less produce than a farm run by a man.



The UN has made some breakthroughs in helping women gain land rights and learn business skills. There are also many organizations working to fight for female farmers and their rights to land, such as the Uganda Land Alliance. Nevertheless, many women still do not have documents of land ownership or a supportive cultural environment to truly be empowered.

How can the UN help female farmers obtain land ownership without infringing upon a country's national sovereignty? How should cultural stigmas surrounding women owning land be addressed? How can the UN help female farmers yield more produce and increase the confidence of female farmers?

“The Gender Gap in Land Rights”

<https://www.fao.org/3/i8796en/i8796en.pdf>

“Empowering female farmers to feed the world”

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/partner-content-empowering-female-farmers>

“Invisible Farmers: Why recognizing and supporting women farmers is key to food and nutrition security”

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/invisible-farmers-why-recognizing-and-supporting-women-farmers-key-food-and>

Topic 2: Lack of Access to Affordable Childcare

Parents or guardians of young children face many challenges, especially in terms of childcare. This care, which has typically been expensive, can be out of reach for parents without the financial ability to afford it. Without affordable childcare options, such as daycares, a parent (often the mother) must leave their work to take care of their children.

According to the *Washington Center for Equitable Growth*, most families with young children spend around ten percent of their incomes on childcare. However, families living in poverty spend thirty percent of their incomes on childcare. The most viable solution to childcare then becomes a “stay at home mother,” which prevents women from advancing in their career, as well as limiting the amount of women in the workforce.



Being held back from these career opportunities leads to fewer women in places of power in corporations and businesses. *The New York Times* reported that employers expect women with children to be less productive workers, and that while unmarried women earn 96 cents for every dollar a man earns, married mothers earn 76 cents. This disparity is known as the “motherhood penalty.”

The “motherhood penalty” results from women having responsibilities to take care of their children, which causes them to leave work early or take more sick days. Employers can perceive these actions as the mothers being “distracted.”

Additionally, since the COVID-19 pandemic, access to affordable childcare has dramatically reduced. Many childcare facilities were closed either temporarily or permanently during the pandemic for health concerns. When this occurred, many were left without childcare options. Small businesses struggled to stay open during the pandemic, and some never reopened after the first waves of the coronavirus. In many countries, such as Japan, there is a decrease in individuals going into childcare fields, leaving fewer workers in the field. With fewer childcare venues open and the already high prices of childcare, many families were left with few options to care for their children and still have enough income to support themselves.

The UN has recognized the issue posed by unaffordable childcare and has presented potential solutions to the issue. However, the obstacle of unaffordable childcare remains at large today. It is necessary that more change be made in order to solve this problem and help the women that are being hindered by it.

How can the UN work towards increasing families’ access to affordable childcare? What measures can be taken to help women with children remain in the workforce? How can the UN work to increase equitable labor towards childcare between men and women without infringing on national sovereignty?

“COVID-19 Impact on Childcare”

<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/reports/covid-19-impact-childcare>

“The Motherhood Penalty vs. the Fatherhood Bonus”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/07/upshot/a-child-helps-your-career-if-youre-a-man.html>

“Addressing the need for affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education for all in the United States”

<https://equitablegrowth.org/addressing-the-need-for-affordable-high-quality-early-childhood-care-and-education-for-all-in-the-united-states/>

“The Center for American Progress: The Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce”

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>

“Child care facilities struggle amid worker shortage and high staff turnover”

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/26/national/child-care-struggles/>

Topic 3: Effect of AIDS on Women in Africa

Women in Africa are at a high risk of contracting AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency syndrome), which is a deadly syndrome that cannot be cured. AIDS is a later stage of the HIV infection (Human immunodeficiency virus), at which point the body’s immune system is badly ravaged by the disease. When an individual has AIDS, their immune system is no longer able to fight off common illnesses and life expectancy dramatically decreases.

While AIDS is extremely deadly, if HIV is found and treated, medicine can be taken to prevent the progression of the disease. However, in impoverished nations in Africa, medication and treatment for HIV can be difficult to find and unaffordable. Additionally, women who contract the disease can be discriminated against within their communities, making women more hesitant to find and receive care.



Health care facilities can also refuse to provide women infected with HIV with information regarding prevention and treatment. In some instances, healthcare facilities could even provide women with purposefully incorrect information regarding HIV, as contracting the virus is seen as a woman failing to uphold the moral traditions of her society. Gender inequality in lower socioeconomic regions oftentimes means that women do not receive the proper education on sexually transmitted diseases and safe sex. This lack of information leaves women more susceptible to being exposed to a disease that they will struggle to find treatment for.

Due to hierarchical gender inequality in parts of Africa, women are left financially dependent on men, and thus left without the resources to seek medical care on their own. Women who are dependent on

their husbands or partners can be fearful of retribution if they suggest the use of condoms during sexual activity or other forms of safe sex. Additionally, without financial independence, women lack the resources needed to obtain continuous medicine to prevent the progression of HIV.

Physiologically, women are at a higher risk of contracting HIV than men, due to the structure of the reproductive organs. Paired with this, young women who need money and resources can often be forced into sexual situations known as “transactional sex” with older men in exchange for these resources. The older men can spread HIV to the multiple women that they have sexual relationships with, spreading HIV to the young women forced into such situations by their poverty and economic needs.

The UN has worked to help women who have contracted HIV and determine the causes of the high infection rates in Africa. Although some of the causes for the high infection rate of HIV have been determined, such as transactional sex, the issue continues to persist today and it is necessary to address this topic.

How can the UN work towards increasing the ability of women in Africa to receive treatment and education regarding HIV and AIDS? What measures can be taken to reduce the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS in African communities? How can the UN help women in Africa who have HIV and prevent its contraction without infringing on national sovereignty?

“The face of AIDS in Africa”

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/october-2004/women-face-aids-africa>

“Women’s Health”

<https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/womens-health>

“Women and HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa”

<https://aidsrestherapy.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1742-6405-10-30>

“What Are HIV and AIDS?”

<https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/what-are-hiv-and-aids/>

Topic 4: Breast Ironing in Cameroon

For many young Cameroonian girls ranging from 9 to 15 years old, breast ironing is a common experience. Normally performed by a mother or grandmother, the objective is to flatten a girl’s breast, therefore making her less desirable for an early marriage or any intimate relationship. The abusers hope that by flattening breasts, a girl will focus more of her attention on school and diminish the risks of early pregnancy or rape.

Breast ironing is performed when hot flattening tools are repeatedly massaged on a girl's breast. The ironing is extremely painful and traumatic; however, for an abuser, the ironing is done to protect their loved one. This positive view of such an abusive practice has made breast ironing endure and become labeled by the *UN Population Fund* as one of the five under-reported stories relating to gender-based violence.



Breast Ironing stems from the strong patriarchal norms ingrained in Cameroonian society. In Cameroon, a woman's innocence, virginity, and inferior role to a man, is considered extremely important. Unfortunately, these cultural norms only make young girls and women feel less confident and empowered.

The short term outcome of breast ironing is that young girls experience dissymmetry in their breasts, infections, and tissue damage. Moreover, the practice lowers a girl's self esteem and increases the risk of the girls developing depression and anxiety. Their insufficient amount of confidence then transfers into adulthood and makes women with ironed breasts prefer to be inside and away from the public eye.

As this issue hurts thousands of young girls, the UN has increasingly discussed how to solve the problem without infringing on national sovereignty. UN Women, in specific, have urged that there be more educational programs to raise awareness about the issue. However, much work is still needed, given that Cameroon has no official law against the practice, and girls continue to be abused daily.

In what immediate ways can the UN work to end breast ironing without infringing on national sovereignty? How can the UN help in changing harmful cultural norms existing in Cameroon? How can the UN help victims of breast ironing?

“Breast Ironing Fact Sheet”:

<https://aho.org/fact-sheets/breast-ironing-fact-sheet/>

“Breast ironing: A brief overview of an underreported harmful practice”:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8005301/>

“The Victims of Cameroon's Horrific Breast Ironing Tradition”

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/4wbqdj/cameroon-tradition-flattening-chests-876>