

POLICY BRIEF

The need for a new binding framework to end violence against women and girls

Every Woman Treaty at a glance

Every Woman Treaty is a global coalition of more than **2,800 women's rights activists and organizations in 147 countries** advancing a global binding framework to end violence against women and girls. Through advocacy and strategic diplomacy, we work to bring world leaders to the table to develop a treaty to make the world safer for women and girls.

Our **Indrani Fellowship**, a free online program, builds the capacity of advocates to call for a treaty. Our **Emerging Leaders Council** engages youth in global advocacy.



Background and rationale

Globally, one in three women will experience intimate partner or sexual violence.¹ One in two women report that they or a woman they know have experienced violence since the Covid-19 pandemic.² **More than five women or girls are killed every hour** by someone in their own family.³ A new binding framework is needed to curb the violence. This violence is an escalating, evolving human rights crisis. Current crises — conflicts, climate change, pandemics, and misuse of technology — have increased incidents of violence, including sexual violence, forced marriage, femicides and intimate partner violence.

The need for a specific, binding global instrument on violence against women reaches back to 1991 when the Commission on the Status of Women recommended the adoption of an international instrument to explicitly address violence against women.⁴ Two UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women have called on world leaders to adopt a new instrument. In 2013, women's rights activists heard this call and created Every Woman.

¹ World Health Organization, "Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence" (News Release, March 9, 2021) <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>.

² UN Women, Measuring the Shadow Pandemic, Survey Report, p 5, <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/vaw-rga>.

³ "Five essential facts to know about femicide," UN Women, November 25, 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/11/five-essential-facts-to-know-about-femicide>.

⁴ Radhika Coomaraswamy, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (November 22, 1994) UN Doc. E/CN.4/1995/42, 7 [26].

Gaps in the current framework

The current legal frameworks on women's rights have made significant advances. However, gaps in these frameworks remain. Currently, no global instrument directly and exclusively addresses violence against women and girls. Despite the existence of regional mechanisms, including the Maputo Protocol, Belém do Pará, and Istanbul Convention, some **75 percent of the world's women lack access** to a legally binding instrument on violence against women and girls. Some international norms address specific aspects of this global problem, including human trafficking, violence in armed conflicts, or violence in the workplace. Others address how women experience specific violence due to additional disadvantages and risks from an intersectional approach, including but not limited to women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant and refugee women, stateless women, widows, and older women. With the ongoing rise in violence, there is an urgent need to respond in a comprehensive way to ensure protection, prevention, and accountability in addressing violence against women and girls internationally.

The power of a new mechanism

Effectiveness. Treaties, whether as stand-alone conventions or Optional/Additional Protocols to existing mechanisms like CEDAW, codify norms. They therefore retain a legitimacy and universality that makes them work.

Hard law. Treaties are binding to states.

Catalyzing funding. Adopting a clear text stands to attract a fresh wave of global interest in implementation funding.

Transformative. A new binding instrument will generate the momentum necessary to develop stronger frameworks for domestic plans of action. A metrics-based approach to monitoring can be a key driver in achieving strong outcomes.

Steps forward

The treaty can build on the work of the CEDAW Committee and General Recommendation No. 35 and 19. It can also draw on strong support from civil society, including a decade of extensive research and consultations with experts across the world, made up of frontline activists, survivors, medical experts, academics, human rights attorneys, legal scholars, diplomats, and policymakers.

The treaty can provide a survivor-centric approach for: law reform; training for police, judges, nurses, and doctors; prevention education; survivor services like shelters and hotline; and funding. Separately, these interventions influence various factors related to violence prevention, but when combined (and funded and monitored), the strategies work in concert to drastically lower rates of violence.

A new binding mechanism will achieve prevention, protection, and a paradigm shift away from violence and toward human thriving for women and girls, everywhere.