

February 2023

Safer Now

Rapid rise in violence against women and girls demands highest level of global commitment



Jane Aeberhard-Hodges
Najla Ayoubi
Francisco J. Rivera Juaristi

Acknowledgements

The primary authors of this report are Jane Aeberhard-Hodges, Human Rights and Gender Equality Consultant (Switzerland/Australia), the Honorable Najla Ayoubi, Every Woman Chief of Coalition (Afganistan/USA) and Francisco J. Rivera Juaristi, JD, director, International Human Rights Clinic, Santa Clara University, California (Puerto Rico/USA). They were assisted by Lisa Shannon, Every Woman CEO (USA) and Michelle Hamilton, Every Woman Staff Writer (USA). A special thank you to Puja Kapai Paryani, LLM, Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong) for her review of the report. Special thanks to the following individuals for their reporting, research and editing: Madeline Cameron Wardleworth, Kirthi Jayakumar, Isabel Siebrecht and Ann Shannon.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Term	Definiton
AU	African Union
Belém do Pará Convention	The Organization of American States Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women
CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
C190	International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GR 35	General Recommendation No. 35 to CEDAW
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
ILO	International Labour Organization
Istanbul Convention	The Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
Maputo Protocol	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
Mine Ban Treaty	Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction
NGO / INGO	Non-government organization / International non-government organization
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

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Letter from Exile

Every day, I hear horrible stories from back home.

Afghan women call and tell me about the threats and brutality that have increased since the Taliban takeover. Aadela (not her real name) told me about female hospital workers who were beaten for not wearing a hijab. It's not just Afghanistan. My colleagues around the world share similar stories of rising violence against women. A friend in Pakistan talked of women who had to leave their homes due to flooding and were now in camps where rape and harassment are rampant. In Nigeria, the rise of domestic violence during Covid-19 is ongoing. A US colleague told me sexual violence in the military has skyrocketed.

Time and again, I hear the same questions: Why? Why is the world not taking action?

I have no answer for them. For 30 years, experts – from The Commission on the Status of Women, to Special Rapporteurs on violence against women, to frontline advocates – have repeatedly called for a global treaty to eliminate violence against women and girls. Why, then, in the face of the most pervasive human rights crisis on earth, are governments not making women and girls' safety a higher priority? Why – as crises such as conflict, climate change, and Covid-19 exacerbate violence against women and girls – are governments not seeking more concrete solutions?

Experts have pointed out that the current global legal framework isn't robust enough to address the scope of the problem. Advocates are told that we simply need to better implement the instruments we have. Or that the timing is not right. In such a conservative climate, where there is a backlash against women's rights, it would be too risky to negotiate such an instrument now.

The idea that there is any time other than "right now" to end violence and oppression recalls the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail":

"I have never yet engaged in a direct-action movement that was 'well timed' according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly...For years now I have heard the word 'wait.' It rings in the ear...with a piercing familiarity. This 'wait' has almost always meant 'never.'"

Today, all over the world, rates of violence against women and girls are rising, and forms of violence are spreading and metastasizing. This violence will affect the health, wealth and security of every nation for generations to come.

More still, frontline activists who step forward to protect women often become targets of the violence they are working to stop. Activists cannot continue to shoulder this burden. I know this first-hand. As the first female judge in my Afghan province, I worked to secure more rights for women and girls, following in my father's footsteps. He was a human rights activist and was shot because of our work. I held him in my arms as he died. I am now in exile, having fled my country after receiving threats on my own life. My colleagues and I, we cry, we keep trying, and we, along with the rest of the women in the world, keep paying the price.

Women and girls are dying. The activists defending them are hunted. The violence is rising. This begs a single question: Are the needs of women and girls being met under the current system? The indisputable answer is no.

Women and girls are dying. The activists defending them are hunted. The violence is rising. This begs a single question: Are the needs of women and girls being met under the current system? The indisputable answer is no. While the current system and framework has produced advances, it's not enough to outpace the rising tide of violence. Not nearly enough. Yet we continue to stop far short of adopting the most powerful tool available: a global treaty specific to eradicating violence against women and girls.

In the face of rising violence against women, it is essential that we provide women across the globe with the greatest protection we can in the form of a new binding norm. We must drop the pretense that we're doing everything we can when we are not. We must embrace the evidence of what is possible and step up to it.



Najla Ayoubi
Chief of Coalition
Every Woman Treaty



**Rise in Violence
Against Women
Demands Action**

Rise in Violence Against Women Demands Action

There has been “an unprecedented increase in all forms of gender-based violence.”¹

– UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, June 2022

Violence against women and girls has been a global crisis for far too long. At least one in three women — more than 640 million women globally — experience intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetimes, a statistic the World Health Organization describes as “devastatingly pervasive.”² Yet rather than declining, violence against women and girls is an escalating human rights crisis that is exacerbated by global crises such as Covid-19, climate change, war, and abusive uses of technology.

Covid-19 has intensified violence against women and girls

Following the outbreak of Covid-19, 80 percent of countries responding to a UN analysis reported increased calls to domestic violence helplines.³ Malaysia reported a 40 percent increase. Colombia, 79 percent. Tunisia’s rate jumped to 400 percent.⁴ Between October 2019 and September 2020, searches related to physical violence, including keywords such as “physical abuse signs,” “violent relationship,” and “cover bruises on face” increased by 47 percent in Malaysia, 63 percent in the Philippines, and 55 percent in Nepal.⁵

A 2021 report by UN Women shows the uptick in violence has continued. Employment and financial stressors, as well as food insecurity and other external factors, have a significant impact on abusers’ behaviors. UN Women reports that women are feeling less safe because of increased conflict between adults at home, increased physical violence or threats of physical violence, or because other women in the household have been hurt.⁶ Seven in 10 women believe that intimate-partner violence has increased since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic,⁷ creating, as UN Women notes, “a shadow pandemic.” One in two women report that they or a woman they know have experienced violence since the Covid-19 pandemic.⁸ Three in five women believe that sexual harassment in public spaces has worsened since the pandemic.⁹

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As the African Union pointed out, gender inequalities intensified during Covid for the poorest girls and adolescents, who faced greater risk of early and forced marriage, sexual abuse, and unintended pregnancy.¹⁰ The virus took the lives of many men, leaving women newly widowed, a social status that in many nations leaves them vulnerable to violence. As women’s rights activist Meera Khanna put it: “Without a financial plan, [a woman is] left vulnerable to a patriarchal society that stigmatizes widows and refuses them their rightful inheritance. Destitute and isolated, Covid widows are often subjected to horrific acts of physical and sexual violence, sometimes at the hands of their own family members.”¹¹

Technology has generated new forms of violence against women

In 2019, I ran for Miss Wheelchair Cameroon. To get votes, my mentor had to do a blog post about me on Facebook. I quickly received many friend requests, especially from men and boys.

Unfortunately, what I thought was an opportunity to increase my friend list and chances of winning the competition turned into a barrage of abuse and violence. I received about 50 video calls every day. Each time I answered, a naked man or boy was masturbating on camera.¹²

— Activist Lilian Dibo Eyong, Cameroon

The widespread proliferation of technology has given rise to multiple new ways for men to harm and harass women, including revenge porn (the distribution of sexually graphic images of individuals without their consent), gendered trolling (gender-based cyberbullying, insults, and threats, including threats of rape, death and stalking), and “Zoom bombing” (showing sexually explicit and racially charged material to unsuspecting participants).¹³ As the UN notes, cyberviolence can be just as damaging as physical violence.¹⁴



As many as **73%** of the world's women have been exposed to or experienced some form of online violence, making cyberviolence one of the most prevalent and widespread forms of violence against women.

In South Korea, perpetrators placed cameras in apartment windows, public restrooms, changing rooms, and other places, uploaded the videos to pornographic sites, and charged men to view them. Over 30,000 cases of spyware violence were reported between 2013 and 2018.¹⁵ In March 2022, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights highlighted this problem, noting that “women and girls around the world are increasingly the target of new forms of internet-facilitated violence, subjected to new forms of harassment, intimidation, and threats of sexual and gender-based violence.”¹⁶

As many as 73 percent of the world's women have been exposed to or experienced some form of online violence,¹⁷ making cyberviolence one of the most prevalent and widespread forms of violence against women. One in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15.¹⁸ The risk is highest among women 18 to 29 years old.¹⁹

Climate change puts women and girls at increased risk of violence

The consequences of climate change affect us all, but women and girls are particularly vulnerable to suffer gender-based violence, economic violence, physical and psychological violence as well as human trafficking, and early child and forced marriage. Often girls become currency to exchange goods so that families can survive or have a better income. This happens in some regions of my country as well as in other regions of the world. It is nothing new, just search the internet.²⁰

– Esmeralda, 15-year-old Peruvian activist speaking at the UN Human Rights Council

Climate change has led to higher temperatures, increased rainfall, prolonged droughts, hurricanes and other changes to weather patterns across the world. These severe events exacerbate the drivers of violence and create environments that enable violence against women and girls.²¹ A systematic review of studies that looked at the effect of extreme weather on gender-based violence found that violence against women and girls increases during or after extreme events due to economic instability, food insecurity, mental stress, disrupted infrastructure, existing inequality, and increased exposure to men.²² The violence takes many forms. Male farmers, vendors, and landowners force women to provide sexual services in exchange for food.²³ Communities may use force and intimidation to push women off their land.²⁴ Loss of income leaves women vulnerable to lessors who coerce them to have sex in exchange for rent.²⁵ Economic stress can increase intimate-partner violence.²⁶ The risk of being trafficked can increase by 20 to 30 percent.²⁷

Violence against women and girls increases during or after extreme weather events.

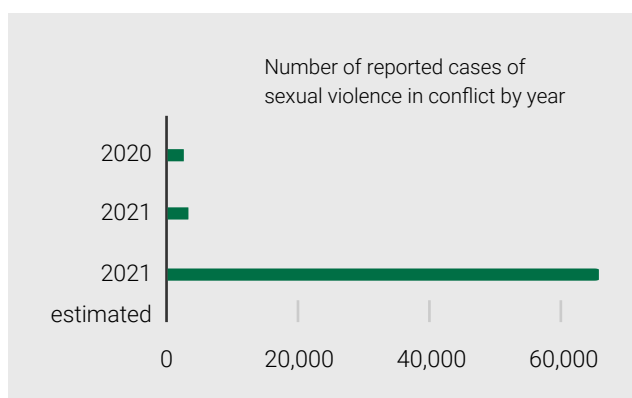
Additionally, climate events make it harder for women to access services. Helplines and shelters cannot operate or are disrupted, leaving women with nowhere to turn. If assistance is available, many women face transportation and other obstacles in reaching those services.

The rise of abuse from climate change has an especially significant toll on those living in vulnerable situations, such as poverty, armed conflict, and in refugee camps. This is particularly true for women and girls in low and middle-income countries and small island developing states. As limited natural resources grow ever more scarce, women and girls must walk farther to collect food, water, or firewood, increasing their risk of being subjected to violence. For example, women and children in Micronesia who had to walk farther to water wells during periods of drought reported an increase in rape and abuse.²⁸ In the Horn of Africa — a region facing its worst drought in 40 years — girls as young as 12 are being forced into child marriage at a frightening rate as families struggle to survive.²⁹

Armed conflict creates environments ripe for violence against women and girls

Like other forms of violence, sexual violence in wartime is on the rise. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, OHCHR began receiving reports of alleged sexual violence from the war zone. After just three months of conflict, 124 reports had come in.³⁰ A Ukrainian hotline was also receiving reports of gang rape and coercion. In a basement in the town of Bucha, Russian soldiers reportedly raped 25 women and girls. The soldiers allegedly said that “they would rape them to the point where they wouldn’t want sexual contact with any man, to prevent them from having Ukrainian children.”³¹

The situation in Ukraine is not unique. Violence, particularly sexual violence, has been used as an intentional tactic of war in nations across the globe with women and girls as the primary targets.³² Rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, torture and other forms of violence are used to terrorize and control populations. 2021 saw a significant increase in the number of reported cases of sexual violence in conflict, according to the United Nations, which verified 3,293 cases, 800 more than in 2020. The increase is likely much higher. It’s estimated that for every case that is verified, 10 to 20 cases are not documented or reported, meaning an additional 32,930 to 65,860 went unreported.³³



“Every new wave of warfare brings with it a rising tide of human tragedy, including new waves of war’s oldest, most silenced, and least-condemned crime,” said Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict during a 2022 brief to the UN Security Council.³⁴ Patten noted that the problem is exacerbated by impunity.

Violence against women is also on the rise in militaries. In mid-2022, the Australian Defense Force reported its highest level of sexual misconduct allegations in eight years and admitted they had not done enough to stop it.³⁵ In the US, the percentage of women in the military in 2021 who were sexually assaulted shot up to the highest level ever reported, according to new data by the US Department of Defense.³⁶ The data creates a bleak picture. Female servicemembers had little confidence that the military could protect them or would treat them fairly.

Displaced women face increasing risk of violence

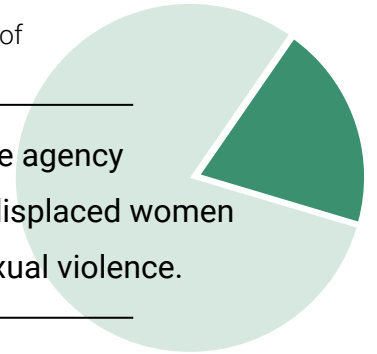
War, conflict and climate change, along with other factors like gangs and persecution, have ushered in an age of mass migration. In early 2022, the UN reported that more than 100 million people worldwide are displaced, the highest number ever on record.³⁷ Increased displacement means more women and girls are at risk of violence.

The 66th Commission on the Status of Women noted in its Agreed Conclusions that: “as a result of displacement, including forced and prolonged displacement, women and girls face specific challenges, including ... increased risk of all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.”³⁸

Women and girls make up more than 50 percent of all refugee populations,³⁹ while among the millions displaced by climate change, an estimated 80 percent are women.⁴⁰ All displaced women face a higher risk of being trafficked and exploited. In 2021, the UN refugee agency reported that 1 in 5 internally displaced women have been subjected to sexual violence.⁴¹

Camps are a particularly harsh environment for women. Stress is linked to increased incidence of intimate partner violence, and this intensifies in camp settings, leading to a myriad of abuses, including marital rape. In camps, women and girls are raped and otherwise violated by other residents, gangs, soldiers, even aid workers. The location of social and physical structures of the camp (toilets, water sources, bars, health services) can create opportunities for abuse.⁴² Often, a climate of impunity contributes to the problem. In one camp, it was commonplace for husbands, including clergy, to spend time at bars bragging to one another about the abuse and then to come home demanding sex.⁴³

In 2021, the UN refugee agency reported that 1 in 5 internally displaced women have been subjected to sexual violence.



Marginalized groups are most at risk

With increases in violence, one group is being hit particularly hard: marginalized women. Marginalized women experience higher rates and more brutal forms of violence. The preamble to an August 2022 UN General Assembly resolution recognizes the cumulative ways in which multiple forms of discrimination — such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism — overlap to expound the risk of violence.⁴⁴ For example, the incidence of maltreatment and abuse of women with disabilities is as much as ten times that of women without disabilities.⁴⁵ Women from ethnic minority backgrounds, indigenous women, migrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable to violence. In India for example, Dalit and Adivasi women and girls are often subjected to more severe or aggravated forms of sexual violence coordinated by members of the dominant castes. Perpetrators know that they are less likely to face punishment if they commit a crime against members of the Dalit community because of the longstanding normalization of caste-based discrimination and violence.⁴⁶

More examples include: Hazara women in Afghanistan, who have historically faced oppression and marginalization, are especially vulnerable to targeting today.⁴⁷ In the Americas, an OHCHR report notes that Afro-descendant and Indigenous female human rights defenders live with an extremely high risk to their lives.⁴⁸ In the US and UK, Black, Asian, Latina and mixed-race women are 34 percent more likely to be harassed in tweets than white women. Black women are 84 percent more likely than white women to be the target of abusive and harmful tweets.⁴⁹ Amnesty International reported that, like Black women and other women of color, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex women experience multiple layers of online abuse.⁵⁰

Marginalized women experience higher rates and more brutal forms of violence.



When violence against women rises, girls are at increased risk

Girls are arguably the most violated category of person globally,⁵¹ and when violence against women is on the rise — due to climate change, conflict and other factors — girls are put at an increased risk. According to UNICEF, every 10 minutes an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence.⁵² A girl's susceptibility to violence doesn't change with her environment. At school, due to fear of gender-based violence, one in four girls say they do not feel comfortable using the toilet.⁵³ At home, almost one in four adolescent girls have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband.⁵⁴ Worldwide at least 120 million girls under the age of 20 (about one in 10) have been forced to engage in sex or perform other sexual acts, although the actual figure is likely much higher.⁵⁵ Online, young girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, and they can also be the target of bullying by their peers.⁵⁶

In humanitarian settings, poor coordination between organizations focused on gender-based violence and child protection often means girls are neglected by both groups, leaving violence against this population unaddressed.⁵⁷ This is particularly worrisome given that war's most vulnerable victim is the girl child. The 2013 conflict in South Sudan, to cite but one example, made this plain. In South Sudan, women and girls were systematically targeted with rape and sexual violence, often while searching for food, travelling to a farm or garden, collecting charcoal or firewood, or while collecting their monthly rations.⁵⁸ Hundreds of thousands of women and girls as young as 12 were held in "rape camps" across Unity State.⁵⁹ In Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, babies as young as four months old have been raped.⁶⁰

Ongoing threat demands we take action

Statistics suggest the rise in violence against women will continue to worsen over time. People facing catastrophic ecological threats are estimated to increase to 3.4 billion by 2050 (from two billion in 2022), while those experiencing high or extreme water stress are estimated to double to 5.4 billion by 2040.⁶¹ This means climate change will displace more people in the decades to come, and while we cannot predict when and where conflict will arise, the chaos and pressure generated by reduced resources can exacerbate tension between states, heightening regional and global instability — resulting in an ongoing uptick in violence against women and girls. With new technology emerging, new forms of violence are also likely in our future. The result: more and more women and girls will be vulnerable to violence with each passing year. This fact necessitates that the world take action to prevent violence and protect women now.

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**The Existing
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The Existing Global Framework Is Not Enough

The UN was founded in 1945, but violence against women did not enter the international agenda until much later. Issues like sexual harassment and rape were not addressed in the early human rights instruments. Domestic violence was still regarded as a private matter.⁶² Since then, violence against women has been recognized as the most pervasive human rights

violation on earth. Today, numerous instruments reference violence against women and girls.⁶³ While those instruments have had a positive impact, they are not enough to address the rise in violence. More is needed to protect women and girls comprehensively against all forms of violence.

CEDAW alone cannot eradicate violence against women and girls because it wasn't created to solve the problem

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a groundbreaking anti-discrimination human rights treaty adopted in 1979. Known by many as an international bill of rights for women, the treaty has been instrumental in advancing women's rights around the world. Because of CEDAW, nations have enacted national laws on equality in education, employment, inheritance, safety and other areas. The importance of CEDAW cannot be overstated. However, it is limited in its ability to tackle violence against women and girls because it was designed as a broad anti-discrimination treaty, not one specific to all forms of violence against women. The convention's text includes provisions only for trafficking and forced marriage, forms of violence against women and girls recognized at the time it was adopted. As former UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Dubravka Šimonović (Croatia) wrote, there was an "endemic reluctance to address the issue of violence against women at the time the treaty was adopted."⁶⁴

CEDAW's text does not include the words "violence," "rape," "abuse," and "assault." As violence against women was acknowledged as a global crisis, the CEDAW Committee diligently worked to reconcile the omissions from the convention by introducing General Recommendation No. 12, which requires State Parties to "protect women against violence of any kind occurring within the family, at the workplace or in any other area of social life." The Committee later updated General Recommendation No. 12 with General Recommendation No. 19 and with General Recommendation No. 35 (GR 35), a strong and comprehensive document that contains specific language on State accountability, the roots of violence, and the need to strengthen national laws and change social norms.⁶⁵

More is needed to protect women and girls.

Like other areas of equality, CEDAW and its general recommendations have led to crucial progress in preventing violence against women and girls, including to the development of domestic violence laws in Türkiye, Nepal, South Africa, and the Republic of Korea, to name just a few.⁶⁶ While the CEDAW Committee and some legal scholars argue that general recommendations clarify State responsibilities under the treaty's text, and they are therefore binding, in practice nations typically view general recommendations as soft law. Soft law helps, of course. It does work to clarify responsibility and influence global norms, and often represents weighty moral value and international "pressure." The problem lies in the fact that nations typically do not view soft law as constituting binding obligations.⁶⁷ Soft law leaves a nation's commitment open to its own interpretation, rather than the unambiguous obligation of hard law, such as treaties.

We can debate the merits of soft law versus hard law forever, but the fact is that most States approach general recommendations as strictly recommendations. A treaty would make State obligations clear, specific and unequivocal.

Women and girls' safety cannot be left to each nation's interpretation of soft law. As former Special Rapporteur on violence against women Professor

Rashida Manjoo points out: "Women's rights are perceived as 'soft' issues and States respond to them by using 'soft' modalities of law-making that allow States to appear to accept such principles while minimising their legal commitments."⁶⁸ Lives are on the line.

We need to ask ourselves: Is the current framework adequately addressing the problem? Certainly, extraordinary advances have been achieved, but the current framework cannot outpace the rise in violence. The lack of a binding global instrument leaves the lives of women and girls in peril. We can debate the merits of soft law versus hard law forever, but the fact is that most States approach general recommendations as strictly recommendations. A treaty would make State obligations clear, specific and unequivocal.

CEDAW's discrimination frame obscures the fact that violence against women is itself a human rights violation

CEDAW's mandate is to end discrimination against women. To address violence against women, the CEDAW Committee fits this pervasive human rights violation within the discrimination framework. Including "violence against women" under "discrimination" presents violence against women *only* as a serious form of discrimination, rather than a human rights violation in and of itself.⁶⁹ Most feminists agree that discrimination is a root cause of violence against women. However, "discrimination" is not the most effective frame for addressing the problem. Not only does it obscure the fact that it is a human rights violation in and of itself, this approach requires creative interpretation – "jurisdictional gymnastics"⁷⁰ – to cover violence against women. It also puts the onus on the survivor to prove that the violence was rooted in discrimination, rather than a violation of a woman's right to safety. This creates barriers to accessing justice through CEDAW.

CEDAW's current reporting process lacks space and specificity to adequately address violence against women and girls

Because CEDAW wasn't created to specifically address violence against women other than trafficking and forced marriage, nations are encouraged – but not required – to report on all forms of violence against women and girls. Reports focus on CEDAW's general obligations, with violence against women and girls as one of many discriminatory issues nations may or may not address in their reports. This makes it difficult to track progress and move governments to action on violence against women and girls.

Additionally, the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations (its recommendations on next steps for nations based on the nation's cyclical report) are not able to provide sufficient space and priority to violence against women simply because there are so many other areas of discrimination that need attention. One analysis of 85 of the CEDAW Committee's recent Concluding Observations found that on average only 17.73 percent of the text was afforded to violence against women and girls.⁷¹

This is not enough to sufficiently address a problem as pervasive as violence against women and girls.

The scope of discrimination and violence against women are both so prevalent that a treaty specific to both problems is necessary to achieve gender equality and lower rates of violence.

As Helen Rubenstein, former senior counsel at Global Rights for Women, has noted: "CEDAW does not articulate detailed standards for addressing violence against women or require reporting at the necessary level of specificity."⁷² This is not the fault of the CEDAW Committee or the text itself. CEDAW does what it set out to do well: it addresses discrimination against women and girls and moves the world toward greater equality. The scope of discrimination and violence against women are

both so prevalent that a treaty specific to both problems is necessary to achieve gender equality and lower rates of violence.

“ A treaty can influence and pressurize nations to take the series of actions needed to end violence.”

– Simi Kamal, Pakistan



CEDAW’s existing individual complaints mechanism does not provide a practical avenue for justice for survivors of violence

The optional protocol to CEDAW provides an avenue for individuals, groups, and the CEDAW Committee to arbitrate a nation’s compliance with CEDAW’s obligations. This is an important process, but it’s limited. One scholar who reviewed the UN case law database for results for “domestic violence” found that of the 270 entries for all treaties, only 24 were recorded under CEDAW’s ambit, while more than 100 entries each fell under the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This demonstrates that women seeking justice in cases of violence are using complaints mechanisms other than CEDAW, which overburdens those other UN mechanisms that were not specifically designed to address violence against women. Complaints about violence against women are therefore not being addressed adequately by existing UN treaty mechanisms.

Regional frameworks only protect about 25 percent of the world’s women

Three regional treaties on violence against women — the Belém do Pará Convention in the Americas, Africa’s Maputo Protocol, and the Istanbul Convention in Europe — have been essential in moving toward a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to ending violence against women and girls. All three instruments have strengths, but their regional nature leaves a gap in women’s protection globally. Only about 25 percent of the world’s women are covered by these three mechanisms, leaving nearly 75 percent of women, the majority of whom are women of color, without protection from a treaty specific to eradicating violence against women and girls.⁷³

Nearly 75 percent of women are without protection from a treaty specific to eradicating violence against women and girls.

A new treaty would correct that, covering all women and girls. It would also build on the extraordinary foundation these three instruments have laid. International human rights law has progressively developed through each regional treaty — expanding on definitions, scope of application, rights, duties and obligations. A new convention would work to standardize protection across the globe.

Customary international law lacks specificity

CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 35 asserts that State practices "suggest that the prohibition of gender-based violence against women has evolved into a principle of customary international law."⁷⁴ Customary international law is composed of rules and policies that have been used often enough in practice that they have become agreed-upon standards. To support the idea, multiple instruments and practices are cited in GR 35's footnotes, including regional treaties on violence against women, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, resolutions of the Human Rights Council, among others.⁷⁵


It's important to note that GR 35 uses the word "suggest," a nod perhaps to the fact that customary international law is fluid and that the practices cited are rather general. There is no compendium of customary international law. What exists is often vague and lacking in specificity. Specificity is essential in order to address all aspects of a complex human rights violation like violence against women and girls. The lack of it underscores the need for a comprehensive, binding instrument.

There are other significant drawbacks to relying on customary international law rather than adopting a specialized treaty.

- **Advocacy and mobilization** – For NGOs, civil society actors, and public authorities, customary international law doesn't provide the same "hook" as a standalone instrument. The absence of a compendium leaves civil society without something to hold up, whereas a standalone instrument provides a clear, tangible and actionable advocacy tool.
- **Monitoring** – There is no monitoring body attached to a rule of customary international law that could or would safeguard a nation's compliance.
- **Clear purpose** – A treaty codifies norms in a clearer, universally acceptable way that nations understand and publicly own up to.
- **State commitment** – Nations that ratify treaties make a public commitment to at least be accountable at some level. Holding states to a standard that they have publicly agreed to is different than expecting them to voluntarily uphold a general norm that is unspecific.

A treaty is a precise and actionable instrument – characteristics that make it stronger than the general concept that violence against women is "prohibited" by customary international law. A treaty's specificity and clarity is precisely its strength. It can and should be crafted to include emergent forms of violence (such as online violence) that are costing lives today.

Holding states to a standard that they have publicly agreed to is different than expecting them to voluntarily uphold a general norm that is unspecific.



“ A global treaty demonstrating the full commitment and leadership of the community of nations is key to urgently and systematically addressing violence against women and girls all over the world.”

– Puja Kapai, Hong Kong

Efforts on violence against women are hampered by meager funding

Gender equality work, women’s rights organizations, and violence against women have historically been under-resourced.⁷⁶ From 2012 to 2017, only US\$408 million, or 0.002 percent of the total overseas development assistance was allocated annually to address violence against women.⁷⁷ That breaks down to 10 US cents per woman on earth,⁷⁸ an amount that wouldn’t buy a pack of chewing gum in most of the world. In 2019, the International Rescue Committee found that in humanitarian settings, funding for gender-based violence accounted for only 0.12 percent of all humanitarian funding, representing only one-third of the funding requested for gender-based violence.⁷⁹ In a follow-up analysis in 2021, the IRC found that the average gender-based violence funding request is only three percent of what is needed. In some cases, due to Covid, that already minimal amount was diverted to other areas.⁸⁰ Some nations have also decreased funding. In Brazil, for example, the Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos found that the budget to combat violence against women in 2022 was three times smaller compared to 2020,⁸¹ despite a spike in violence: one in every four Brazilian women over 16 years old have suffered some violence or aggression during the Covid-19 pandemic.⁸²

The situation is no better in the multilateral system. The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, who often makes the point that their mandate requires more funding, was budgeted US\$1,215,900 for her three-year period.⁸³ This is a strikingly paltry sum for an office that has been tasked with curbing the most pervasive human rights violation on earth. The average Starbucks has significantly more staff than the UN Special Rapporteur’s office.



“ Years into my women’s rights work, I learned my mother was gang raped as a child. This violence exists everywhere and affects us all. Stopping it demands the pinnacle of global commitment.”

– Lisa Shannon, USA



**The Next
Step —**

A New Treaty

The Next Step - A New Treaty

Enormous strides have been made in the international framework on violence against women. What is missing is the most powerful tool available: a comprehensive treaty specifically addressing all forms of violence against all women and girls. Faced with the intensity and horror of violence against women and girls around the world, His Excellency Ambassador Paul Empole of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the first nation to take on the role of advocating for the treaty among UN member states), stated that there is an urgent need to set up a new autonomous instrument that draws on the best elements of what the current international system offers, along with added elements presently missing.⁸⁴

Why a treaty?

Treaties work. They codify expectations on nations' duties, bringing a level of certainty that soft law and voluntary statements do not. They also create clear accountability and catalyze change.⁸⁵ As noted at the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council: "At the regional level, treaties relating to violence against women, the rights of persons with disabilities and the rights of older persons ... have driven legal and policy reform at the national level in those areas."⁸⁶ The Tobacco Treaty shifted the global norm on tobacco from the "right to smoke" to the "right to breathe clean air." At the national level, laws requiring seat belts were originally scoffed at, but once wearing seat belts was enforced and data showed that seat belts save lives, behavior changed. The same can be true for violence against women and girls.

The adoption of a new treaty would move the world closer to meeting the urgent and rising need of women and girls around the world. These include the following:

- ***Raise the alarm anew on the prevalence of violence against women and girls and bring much-needed attention to this global emergency***

Treaties have historically increased the profile of the specific issue they address. A new global mechanism would declare to the world that preventing violence against women and girls is a priority across the world and that it is do-able. A treaty would bring the issue to the forefront and work to garner support at the national level for legal reform, accountability for perpetrators, and funding.

- ***Consolidate definitions and best practices from various instruments into one comprehensive mechanism***

A single instrument on violence against women and girls would establish a global definition of violence against women and girls, in all situations, unequivocally removing ambiguity in the law that all acts of violence against women and girls in and of themselves are a violation of her human rights. A key strength in treaties includes their ability to establish global norms and expectations on an issue. A new global instrument stands to improve the quality and consistency of laws on violence against women globally, providing, as former Special Rapporteur on violence against women Professor Rashida Manjoo has said, "a more equitable pattern of access to redress for this human rights violation."⁸⁷

- **Improve implementation with a metrics-based monitoring system**

Current human rights treaties require nations to submit a report on the progress they've made since their last report. This open-ended approach allows nations to prepare a general progress report without necessarily indicating if they have implemented the interventions for which they are accountable. Reporting in this fashion makes it difficult to track progress and move governments to action.

Following the example of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Tobacco Treaty, a new treaty could implement a metrics-based reporting system – a global scorecard on violence against women that would track every State Party's reported efforts to eradicate violence against women against a set of standard benchmarks. Has the government updated its definition of rape? What percentage of police and judges have been trained on the new law? A metrics-based reporting system would make nations' responsibilities clear, and provide a timeframe for action. It would also put an accountability tool in the hands of frontline activists.

- **Likely generate an influx of new funding**

Global funding levels to address violence against women and girls have, as noted above, historically been a pittance. While new treaties do not guarantee funding, past experience demonstrates that the establishment of new treaties can drive major increases in funding. For example, a substantial contribution from Germany for the International Labour Organization as it started working on what would become the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) inspired other nations to pledge to a fund that eventually reached US\$200 million.⁸⁸ Thirty-six hours after the Mine Ban Treaty was introduced in 1997, US\$500 million had been pledged toward implementation. That funding was sustained over time; international support for mine action reached US\$673.2 million in 2017, the highest level of international support ever recorded by the Landmines Monitor.⁸⁹

A global scorecard on violence against women would track every State Party's reported efforts to eradicate violence against women against a set of standard benchmarks.

Additionally, the donor landscape for women's rights work is shifting. The Generation Equality Forum in Paris in June 2021 drew pledges from governments, firms, and philanthropies totaling more than US\$40 billion, with 30 percent allocated for gender-based violence, the highest of the six categories.⁹⁰ Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott's 2021 groundbreaking funding included a focus on women and girls.⁹¹ And in 2019, Melinda French Gates announced that she was committing US\$1 billion to promote gender equality.⁹² A treaty with a metrics-based reporting system and user-friendly, online data will allow the anti-violence movement to demonstrate progress. Progress will inspire philanthropists to further invest, creating a virtuous cycle in which initiatives are funded and violence in communities across the globe drops.

Every Woman is calling for a funding level of US\$4 billion per year. US\$4 billion represents a ten-fold increase in financial investments on violence against women and girls, from 10 cents per female on earth to one dollar.⁹³ This is on par with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which invests more than US\$4 billion per year to fight these epidemics.⁹⁴ Funds would be used to implement mandatory interventions and programming to end violence against women and girls, directed to civil society and government programming alike.

- ***Provide back-up for women's rights activists***

Activists in countries across the world are imploring their governments to protect women and girls and hold perpetrators accountable. They work relentlessly – all too frequently at great personal peril – to build or shore up a foundation for addressing violence against women. A treaty would give activists an accountability tool. Activists could point to the treaty as evidence that the whole world believes that immediate action is necessary to prevent violence against women and girls. Whether or not their country ratifies the convention, new global norms would carry reputational weight and power for activists to use as leverage.

As it now stands, individuals and small groups speaking up are inherently vulnerable, exposed, and alone. Many are harassed and targeted for their work. Attacks on advocates were so prevalent in 2018 that the UN issued a statement urging States to live up to their commitments to protect women human rights defenders.⁹⁵ With the power of an international norm behind them, activists are not only emboldened but protected; they are much more likely to make progress. Activists would also have an avenue to seek justice against threats and retaliation they experience in response to pursuing accountability for violence against women.

Additionally, adopting a specific treaty would give violence against women a more prominent profile. This would in turn increase the profiles and status of activists addressing this violence. It would increase their access to funding and make anti-violence work more prestigious.



Activists also say that a metrics-based scorecard could require detailed data about attacks on women’s rights activists. Activists could mobilize this data to push for change.

Finally, a treaty would also help activists develop constructive relationships with their government. As Leila Nazgül Seitbek (Kyrgyzstan), Founder and Chair of Freedom for Eurasia, says:

“[The treaty] will allow officials in State bodies to not see us as enemies. It would help them understand that what we’re explaining to them is nothing vile or evil. We’re trying to make our home countries safer. Not as enemies of our country, but as people who want to live safely in our homes. We are trying to help them do their jobs better (protecting women and girls from horrible acts of violence). When they stop seeing us as enemies but as collaborators, there will not be a threat from them against us, and we can, hopefully, make progress.”⁹⁷

- **Work in concert with CEDAW**

Some stakeholders suggest that a new instrument would undermine and duplicate the work of CEDAW. However, the world’s women and girls need both CEDAW and a new treaty specific to violence against women and girls, just as victims of torture needed both the general Covenant on Civil and Political Rights’ prohibition of torture and the more specific protections provided under the Convention Against Torture.

Violence against women and girls is both a by-product of and exacerbated by discrimination against women. Working to eradicate discrimination against women and to end the violence against women are not mutually exclusive. A woman or girl cannot fully realize her rights to education and employment if she is experiencing violence. Conversely, working to ensure women’s and girls’ right to education, employment, financial independence and other equality areas helps reduce her vulnerability to violence. Both treaties are essential to the lives and well-being of women and girls. CEDAW and a new treaty would and should complement and reinforce the other.

CEDAW and a new treaty would and should complement and reinforce the other.

A new specialized treaty on violence against women would allow the CEDAW Committee to focus on CEDAW’s articles on discrimination, which cover critical areas of equality, including health, education, employment and other rights. And while reporting to both the CEDAW Committee and a new entity would be asking nations to do more, women and girls are, of course, worth the effort, as the CEDAW Committee itself has shown in its encouragement of European nations to ratify the Istanbul Convention. The CEDAW Committee also encourages nations to ratify C190, the ILO’s 2019 treaty on violence and harassment in the world of work. Such recommendations openly push nations to take on further reporting, with no reticence regarding duplication or government capacity. When a new global treaty is opened for ratification and funding levels increase, funds could and should go in part to supporting the broader women’s human rights system. This includes CEDAW’s resource-constrained work, the Convention Against Torture, and other mechanisms that affect women and girls’ safety.

An additional protocol to CEDAW also provides a possible path forward

Some stakeholders suggest adding an optional protocol specific to violence against women to the CEDAW Convention⁹⁹. Optional protocols are treaties themselves, and are open to ratification by nations that are party to the main treaty. There are positive aspects to this approach: An optional protocol would place violence against women within CEDAW's hard law framework and draw its substance from General Recommendation No. 35, a strong and comprehensive set of (currently soft law) standards.

An option protocol would be a step forward. However, it has limitations:

- **Violence against women would still be viewed primarily as discrimination** – CEDAW couches violence against women in discrimination, which, as noted, does not create a legal understanding of violence against women as a human rights violation in and of itself. That also puts the onus on the survivor to prove that the violence was rooted in discrimination, rather than a violation of her right to safety, potentially limiting access to legal remedy.
- **Slow complaints procedure would likely remain in place** – It is probable that an optional protocol would rely on CEDAW's current, limited complaint procedure, where complaints can take up to eight years to be concluded.¹⁰⁰ Adopting a separate complaints mechanism streamlined to the new treaty would provide swifter access to justice for survivors.
- **A missed opportunity to move to a metrics-based monitoring mechanism** – Under an optional protocol, monitoring would likely be facilitated through the existing CEDAW system. For a new international instrument to have maximum impact, it would need a stronger cyclical reporting framework included in its text. The adoption of an objective, metrics-based, measurable reporting structure is preferable.

States are open to new treaties on violence against women and girls

Despite the suggestion that nations are experiencing treaty fatigue and are not interested in developing more international legal instruments, nations are in fact joining campaigns to develop and ratify new international frameworks on violence – for example, workplace violence, crimes against humanity (like rape and other forms of sexual violence), a second regional treaty in Africa, as well as a global treaty to end violence against women and girls.

“


Secretary Luis Almagro

We must commit to urgently advance a self-standing new global treaty to end violence against women and girls.”



The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was the first nation to announce that it would form a group of nations to advance the treaty,¹⁰¹ followed by Costa Rica. Nigeria and Colombia have also issued calls for a treaty.^{102 103} Additionally, in our meetings with representatives from 110 nations, the majority of the response was positive. Most agreed that significant gaps in the legal framework exist, that CEDAW does not fill those gaps, and that more is required. Some European nations suggested that other nations should sign the Istanbul Convention rather than create a new global convention. This is a neocolonial point of view and to date no country outside Europe has ratified the treaty. Some nations questioned whether the problem of violence against women rises to the level of commitment embodied in a treaty, a question that underscores the problem itself.

The positive responses to the campaign for a treaty on violence against women and girls and others demonstrate that the international community clearly recognizes the value of and need for more robust frameworks on a woman's right to live free from violence.

A woman with a vibrant, multi-colored headwrap (red, black, white, and orange) and glasses is speaking at a podium. She is wearing a bright pink jacket over a dark top. Her right hand is raised near her chin, and she is looking slightly to the left. The background is a dark, textured wall.

“Laws have the power to reduce violence and change norms — an outcome we’ll create globally with a treaty.”

– Eleanor Nwadinobi, Nigeria



Women and Girls Cannot Wait

Women and Girls Cannot Wait

Over the last several years, rising incidents of violence against women have spurred a demand for action around the world. Wave after wave of feminist movements are pushing for change: The global #MeToo movement; the #BringBackOurGirls campaign in Nigeria; the movement for justice for India's Daughter, to name just a few.

Alongside the movement to end violence against women and girls is the unsettling reality that progress on women's rights has been met with a backlash. Some people opposed to a new treaty argue that the backlash creates a hostile climate toward women that could lead to additional rollbacks on women's rights and freedoms. While the backlash is a frightening reality, no social movement has ever made progress by backing off and waiting. Women and girls are dying. Violence is on the rise. The message of people around the world is clear: action on violence against women must be taken now.

This message is echoed by advocates, organizations and world leaders across the globe who are specifically calling for action on a global treaty. Women's rights activists from across South Asia issued a trenchant call for a new treaty in March 2022.¹⁰⁴ Women's rights voices in the Americas, like Elina Chauvet, of the *zapatitos rojos* installation, are staunch supporters of the campaign for a new treaty.¹⁰⁵ Recently, a number of women's rights groups committed to work toward advocating for Tunisia to become "a leader in the Arab and African region to ratify this agreement."¹⁰⁶ These advocates stand alongside Nobel Peace Prize laureates who have championed the call: Jody Williams (USA 1997), Shirin Ebadi (Iran 2003), Tawakkol Karman (Yemen 2011), and Najet Zammouri, whose organization, the Tunisian League of Human Rights, was a recipient (Tunisia 2015).

Along with Costa Rica and the DRC, other world leaders support a new treaty. "Nigeria calls for collective global action through a Treaty to end all forms of violence against women and girls of all ages," said Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari during his remarks at the UN General Assembly in 2021.¹⁰⁷

At the 2022 IX Summit of the Americas, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro emphatically called for a new global treaty, stating that: "We have a responsibility to promote and protect the fundamental rights of women and girls in all their diversity ... and we must commit to urgently advance a self-standing new global treaty to end violence against women and girls."¹⁰⁸



Also at that summit, then-Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez joined the call, stating, “Today I want to make reference to the unrestricted defense of human rights, and particularly to welcome all the voices that clamor for us to adopt this international treaty to reject all forms of violence against girls and women.”¹⁰⁹

More than three decades have passed with attempts to address the crisis through stronger implementation of current instruments. But the crisis continues to grow, a fact that begs for a new solution now. As the saying goes, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. It’s time to build on the progress made under the current system by expanding that framework to include the most powerful instrument at our disposal: a global treaty. It’s time to come together to outpace the violence with a concrete, clear and actionable solution. Women and girls are waiting. They are asking that we do better. As Her Excellency Shara Duncan Villalobos, UN Ambassador, Costa Rica, says, it’s time “to take on the challenge not only for women and girls but for the whole of society.”

It’s time to come together to outpace the violence with a concrete, clear and actionable solution. Women and girls are waiting. They are asking that we do better.



“ A multilateral approach is a must and the time for a treaty is now.”

– Reem Abu Hassan,
former Minister of Social Development, Jordan

Appendices

About the campaign for a global treaty

Who we are

Every Woman is comprised of more than 2,100 women's rights advocates in 128 nations. We founded the coalition on the firm belief that to unlock human flourishing, the world must deliver lives free from violence for every woman and girl.

What we do

Every Woman advocates for a global treaty to eradicate violence against women and girls. We do this by catalyzing the leadership of frontline women's rights activists and heads of state through programs that connect activists with world leaders.

Our history

Following the call for a treaty by then UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Professor Rashida Manjoo, in 2013 a diverse group of frontline activists and legal scholars from across the globe – Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, the UK, Afghanistan, the US, Croatia and the Rosebud Indian Reservation – convened at Harvard Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy to discuss the absence of a binding norm on the elimination of violence against women and girls. The meeting led to the creation of Every Woman and the campaign for a treaty.

Inspired by grassroots-led treaty campaigns such as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Every Woman spent eight years conducting a multi-phase global consultation on the current legal framework on violence against women and girls. Our research found that the current system was not robust enough to meet the needs of women and girls. A new global, binding instrument is essential to protect women and girls from all forms of violence. Those findings were published in our first report, *Safer Sooner, toward a global binding norm to end violence against women and girls*.



Below please find details of our inclusive process and our path to realizing a treaty.

Activist Draft Treaty: Global consultation for a new global treaty on violence against women and girls

Along with an analysis of the global framework, the global consultation led to the creation of a draft of the treaty for nations to use as a point of departure. The consultation process centered on survivors' and advocates' lived experience and was underpinned by a *nothing about us without us* approach. The process included:

- 1.** Violence against women initiative and global research collaboration — Every Woman collaborated with scholars, practitioners, attorneys, country experts and frontline activists to assess what implementation and access to justice looked like on the ground. Every Woman also consulted with specialists on regional instruments, and partnered with law schools from 15 countries to analyze the need for a treaty.
- 2.** Regional expert consultations — The Every Woman Working Group, composed of 125 members from 72 countries, consulted with approximately 300 experts to understand how grassroots women experience violence and barriers to using legal remedies.
- 3.** Expert special committees — Every Woman formed 16 committees with coalition members from 50 countries. Each committee analyzed an area of violence against women and produced a memo detailing recommendations for treaty language. Committees were led by women with lived experience and expertise in their area. The Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women and girls was led by an indigenous woman. The Committee Violence Against Disabled Women and Girls was led by a woman with a disability. The Inclusive Groups Committee was led by a woman who identifies as LGBTIQ+, and so on.
- 4.** Drafting committees — A team of human rights lawyers and legal scholars then prepared a draft core platform, the basis for the Activist Draft Treaty.
- 5.** Draft core platform review — Every Woman circulated the platform to more than 5,700 individuals and organizations for feedback. Responses from activists in 92 countries were received and integrated into the draft.
- 6.** Activist Draft Treaty completed — Every Woman finalized the Activist Draft in November 2021.

The path to a treaty

Following careful analysis of previous treaty processes, Every Woman mapped a four-phase process to realizing a widely ratified and rigorously implemented global treaty.



Phase 1: Research consultation (2013 - 2021)

Frontline activists, survivors, academics, human rights attorneys, legal scholars, diplomats, and policymakers came together in a multi-phase, multi-year development process that culminated in the completion of a draft treaty to be used as a point of departure for diplomatic negotiations.

Phase 2: Public campaign (2019 - 2024)

This is the current phase. Our global network of frontline activists lead treaty advocacy at the local, national, regional and global levels, building partnerships with champion nations. This is Women, Peace and Security work in action, placing frontline activists in the halls of power to affect change. Champion nations convene others to open treaty negotiations.

Phase 3: Treaty negotiation

Diplomats and civil society stakeholders convene at conferences to negotiate the agreement's language, optimally six conferences over two years. The conferences conclude with finalized treaty text being open for signature.

Phase 4: Ratification and Implementation

Countries sign the treaty and make financial pledges toward its implementation. The treaty is then ratified through countries' domestic political processes. Meanwhile, with Every Woman's support, activists in each country work to ensure the treaty is in place and understood widely, underpinned by a global scorecard monitoring mechanism. This will hold nations accountable, even through regime changes.

Timeline and context of the call for a global treaty

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1967	UN adopts Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
1979	UN adopts Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women.
1984	UN adopts Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
1989	UN adopts Convention on the Rights of the Child.
1989	CEDAW Committee issues General Recommendation No. 12: Violence against women.
1991	The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that a framework for an international instrument explicitly addressing violence against women be developed in consultation with CEDAW. ¹¹⁰
1991	The Economic and Social Council adopts a resolution recommending the development of a framework for an international instrument that would explicitly address violence against women. ¹¹¹
1992	CEDAW issues General Recommendation No. 19: Violence against women.
1993	UN General Assembly adopts Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (the outcome of the ECOSOC resolution above).
1994	Belém do Pará Convention is adopted by the Organization of American States.
1995	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – progressive blueprint for advancing women rights – is adopted by 189 countries at the Fourth World Conference on Women. ¹¹²
1996	UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Radhika Coomaraswamy (Sri Lanka) introduces the idea of a binding norm on violence. ¹¹³
2000	UN adopts Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
2003	Maputo Protocol is adopted by the African Union.
2004	Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopts Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. ¹¹⁴

2011	Istanbul Convention is adopted by the Council of Europe.
2012	UN Women publishes Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women.
November 2012	UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Rashida Manjoo (South Africa) calls for a global treaty.
June 2013	Every Woman holds first convening at Harvard Carr Center and Center for Public Leadership.
July 2013	Every Woman Working Group forms.
2013 - 2021	Every Woman conducts eight years of research and global consultation with scholars and activists.
2014	UN Special Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo (South Africa) repeats call for a global treaty. ¹¹⁵
2015	UN Sustainable Development Goal 5.2 sets a target of eliminating violence against women by 2030.
2016	UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Dubravka Šimonović (Croatia) surveys stakeholders on the need for a comprehensive treaty on violence against women; the idea is endorsed by the majority of civil society organizations.
2017	CEDAW issues General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women.
2018	UN General Assembly adopts resolution on sexual harassment. ¹¹⁶
2019	C190 – the ILO’s treaty on ending harassment and violence in the world of work – is adopted.
2019-2022	Every Woman coalition members meet with 110 States on the need for a global treaty.
2021	Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari calls for a global treaty at the UN General Assembly; Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro calls for a global treaty.
2021	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) President Félix Tshisekedi issues a “strident call” for a global treaty at the African Union’s inaugural Men’s Conference on Positive Masculinity.
2021	Every Woman completes draft treaty.
March 2022	At <i>Resonating from South Asia to the World conference</i> , women’s rights advocates from across South Asia call on their governments to champion, adopt and implement a global framework to end violence against women.
June 2022	At the IX Summit of the Americas, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro states: “We must commit to urgently advance a self-standing new global treaty to end violence against women and girls.”

June 2022	At the IX Summit of the Americas, then-Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez issued a call for the treaty: "Today I want to make reference to the unrestricted defense of human rights, and particularly to welcome all the voices that clamor for us to adopt this international treaty to reject all forms of violence against girls and women." ¹¹⁶
July 2022	The DRC becomes the first nation to lead the campaign for a global treaty to end violence against women and girls.
September 2022	Costa Rica joins the DRC in forming a Core Group of Friends, the State-led group that champions the treaty to other nations at the UN.
October 2022	Costa Rica, the DRC and Every Woman co-host convening in Geneva on the need for a treaty. Attendees included more than 50 UN Permanent Representatives, diplomats, and international NGOs, as well as representatives of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
December 2022	League of Arab States launches the Arab Declaration to Combat All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls. ¹¹⁷

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**Thank you for your interest in
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Every Woman Treaty

3301 Burke Ave N, Suite 330
Seattle, WA 98103
United States

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