



**ODM MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2024**  
**UNITED NATIONS - WOMEN**  
**STUDY GUIDE**

## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

A warm and heartfelt welcome to the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women at the ODM Model United Nations Conference, 2024.

At the very outset of the matter, it's highly essential to address the fact that such conferences serve as a reminder of the necessity and importance of dialogue and discourse on matters of global importance which seemingly have a larger impact on the very fabric of society and its institutions. Such discourses facilitate an exchange of ideas and opinion which culminate in the overall education of all those who participate in such platforms. Therefore, it is imminent that all participants recognise the fact that diversified perspectives on a singular topic can only lead to a constructive debate on any matter, hence, making it absolutely necessary for all participants to contribute in the sessions as much as possible.

Coming to the agenda for the session, in the times that we live in, the restricted approach of understanding the term "Woman" as only cis-het-women and to understand "Feminism" to only include rights of cis-het women would do a huge disservice to women at large. It is imperative to bring women from gender and sexual minorities: queer, trans and non-binary, women from racial, ethnic and religious minorities into the spectrum of discussion as well as address sexual and reproductive rights in a broader manner.

**IMPORTANT:** We would expect the committee to approach the discussion through a lens of intersectionality by including the following classes (not exhaustive) in the forum of discussion: "Trans Women, Women of Colour, Indigenous Women, Women Refugees, Queer Women, Women from Minority Sections and Minor as well as Old Women etc."

At the end, this study guide shall not be treated as a comprehensive and exhaustive list of research. The presidency has taken all efforts to attach links for further readings on the matter which can help the delegates achieve a broad understanding of the issue. The responsibility to move beyond the suggested readings and undertake additional research falls on the prospective delegates.

Sincerest Regards,

**Arya Senapati, Chairperson**

**Aastha Kar, Vice-Chairperson**

## **ABOUT UN WOMEN**

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:

- Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems
- Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy
- All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action

UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality, and in all deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a more inclusive world.

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

Over many decades, the United Nations has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Working for the empowerment and rights of women and girls globally, UN Women's main roles are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.

- To help Member States implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality, as well as promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

For many years, the United Nations faced serious challenges in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to address such challenges. In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

## **PART 1: INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO MUN PREP**

### **What should you research about?**

#### **1. The agenda as a whole – various aspects of the agenda**

**- PROBLEM STATEMENT:** The problems and issues it focussed on: at a national level (in the country allotted to you and other vulnerable countries) and at a global level (the world in general).

**- VULNERABLE GROUPS:** Identify the group of people who are affected by the problem either generally or in a specific manner.

**- ACTIONS:** The laws and policy measures taken by your nation and other nations. (National or domestic laws which your country has implemented to resolve the problems. International laws and binding instruments which deal with the problems. Laws adopted by other nations. Research about the effectiveness of the existing laws, loopholes if any and what future actions can be taken in form of laws and policies).

#### **2. Sub-agendas – various dimensions of the agenda**

For this part, you have to identify what could be the possible sub-agendas related to the whole agenda given to you for discussion. Examples of sub-agenda for our agenda can be:

- a) Combatting cyber violence against women belonging to gender and sexual minorities,
- b) Tackling trafficking, revenge-pornography and child pornography through effective measures,
- c) Creating a safe digital space for women especially young and teenage women,
- d) Awareness and education regarding safe practices while using online platforms,
- e) Actions taken by nations and future recommendations to resolve the issue of online violence against women

Now, these are only a few examples. You have to research about as many sub-topics as possible. Identify various dimensions of the issues – political, social, economic and cultural.

### **HOW TO WRITE YOUR SPEECHES?**

**General Speakers List Speech:** should ideally start with an overview of the agenda from a global perspective. Then you can talk about how it affects your nation and the positive steps taken by your nation to solve the issues at hand. Further, you can mention case studies in forms of instances of news or statistics related to the issue at hand and why they are important for discussion. Next, you can talk about the international laws and policies and conclude with proposed solutions to tackle the problems at hand for once and for all in an effective way.

**Moderate Caucus Speeches:** focus on the sub-topics. Therefore, kindly stick to the sub-topic on which you are supposed to give your speech on. Include facts, figures, laws and statistic as well as proposed solutions. You can appreciate or criticise actions or inactions of other nations and the world at large with valid justification and sources for your accusations and appreciations.

#### **General Guidelines:**

- Always stick to the point and do not go outside the mandate of the topic.
- Never make vague statements which hold no relevance to the discussion.
- Do not waste a lot of time talking about the present solutions only. Focus equally on future solutions as well.
- Do not make statements without having valid sources for backing them up. (valid sources are mentioned ahead in this document)
- Always represent the interests and foreign policy of your nation while making the speeches.
- Maintain utmost diplomatic courtesy while making the speeches.
- **DO NOT MAKE CHATGPT WRITE YOUR SPEECHES. IT WILL LEAD TO IMMEDIATE DISQUALIFICATION.**

#### **Valid Sources:**

- Reports of UN and various UN Bodies
- UN Resolutions and Committee Reports
- Reports published by National Governments, State Authorities and Ministries

- Reports published by regional bodies like European Union, SAARC, ASEAN etc.
- News Reports from Reuters, Al Jazeera, BBC and Fox News (not strictly valid but can be considered)

## **CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS CYBER VIOLENCE**

Cyber violence is defined as online behaviours that criminally or non-criminally assault, or can lead to assault, of a person's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. It can be done or experienced by an individual or group and happen online, through smartphones, during Internet games, etc. Even though cyber violence takes place online, it affects people offline and has real world implications. Some examples of cyber violence include but are not limited to:

- online harassment
- threatening
- bullying
- blackmailing
- unwanted sexting
- stalking
- hate speech
- luring
- non-consensual sharing of images
- recording & distribution of sexual assault

Cyber violence is often misunderstood and not taken as seriously as it should be. Yet, it is important to remember that cyber violence may start online, but it often ends offline with devastating consequences for the victims and their families. Threats of violence, stalking, incitement to suicide, solicitation of children for sexual purposes may all result in the victim self-harming or being physically attacked by the initial perpetrator. It is important to act in order to prevent cyber violence from happening, and to protect and bring justice to the victims.

However, most countries are struggling to recognize the different facets of the problem and to address them in domestic law. Some types of cyber violence are addressed fully or in part in international agreements, but many remain unaddressed.

### **CYBER HARASSMENT**

Cyber harassment is perhaps the broadest form of cyber violence and involves a persistent and repeated course of conduct targeted at a specific person that is designed to and that causes severe emotional distress and often the fear of physical harm.

Cyber harassment is often accomplished by a "storm of abuse". Harassers terrorize victims by threatening violence. Offenders post defamatory falsehoods to cause the victim embarrassment or worse among friends, family or co-workers. Offenders impersonate victims in online ads,

and suggest – falsely – that their victims are interested in sex with strangers. Sometimes, harassers manipulate search engines to ensure the prominence of the lies in searches of victims' names. Harassers invade victims' privacy by posting their sensitive information, such as nude images or national identity numbers. Or harassers may use technology to knock people offline. Cyber harassment in popular discourse may be described as or related to “revenge porn” or “sextortion.”

**Cyber harassment is often targeted at women and girls and termed “cyber violence against women and girls” (CVAWG or Cyber VAWG) involving:**

- Unwanted sexually explicit emails or other messages;
- Offensive advances in social media and other platforms;
- Threat of physical or sexual violence;
- Hate speech meaning language that denigrates, insults, threatens or targets an individual based on her identity (gender) and/or other traits (such as sexual orientation or disability).

Cyber harassment thus involves a range of conduct, including for example “cyberbullying” and “revenge porn”.

### **ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

Children seem to represent a primary group of victims of cyber violence, in particular with respect to online sexual violence.

While the “online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children” are not necessarily new and distinct forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, ICTs have increased the accessibility to children by persons looking to sexually abuse and exploit them. ICTs facilitate the sharing of images and videos of the sexual abuse and thus reinforce the long-lasting harmful impact of the abuse of children. ICTs also contribute to making commercial gains from sexual exploitation of children easier. ICTs however do not, in and by themselves, give rise to distinct types of sexual offences against children.

**Online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children includes the behaviour listed in articles 18 to 23 of the Lanzarote Convention and in article 9 of the Budapest Convention in an online environment or otherwise involving computer systems:**

- **Sexual abuse** (article 18), that is, “a) engaging in sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities; or b) engaging in sexual activities with a child where:
  - use is made of coercion, force or threats; or
  - abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or
  - abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence.”

- **Child prostitution** (article 19), that is, “a) recruiting a child into prostitution or causing a child to participate in prostitution; b) coercing a child into prostitution or profiting from or otherwise exploiting a child for such purposes; or c) having recourse to child prostitution.”
- **Child pornography** (article 20), that is, “a) producing child pornography; b) offering or making available child pornography; c) distributing or transmitting child pornography; d) procuring child pornography for oneself or for another person; e) possessing child pornography; f) knowingly obtaining access, through information and communication technologies, to child pornography”. “Child pornography” shall mean any material that visually depicts a child engaged in real or simulated sexually explicit conduct or any depiction of a child’s sexual organs for primarily sexual purposes.
- **Corruption of children** (article 22), that is, “the intentional causing, for sexual purposes, of a child who has not reached the age [below which it is prohibited to engage in sexual activities with a child] to witness sexual abuse or sexual activities, even without having to participate”.
- **Solicitation of children for sexual purposes** (article 23) – also called “grooming” – that is, “the intentional proposal, through information and communication technologies, of an adult to meet a child who has not reached the age set [below which it is prohibited to engage in sexual activities with a child] for the purpose of committing any of the offences established in accordance with article 18, paragraph 1.a [engaging in sexual activity with a child], or article 20, paragraph 1.a [producing child pornography], against him or her, where this proposal has been followed by material acts leading to such a meeting”.

Online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are major forms of cyber violence targeting children. It should be kept in mind, however, that children are also victims of other types of cyber violence.

### **ICT-RELATED HATE CRIME**

Cyber violence may be motivated by “a bias against the perceived personal characteristic of the victim or a perceived group membership of the victim. These groups or characteristics include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or disability.”

### **ICT-RELATED DIRECT THREATS OR ACTUAL VIOLENCE**

Cyber violence also comprises direct threats of violence or direct physical violence. Computer systems may be used in connection to murder, kidnapping, rape and other acts of sexual violence, or extortion.

Forms of direct violence include interference with medical devices causing injuries or death, or attacks against critical infrastructure by means of computers. “Swatting” is another example.

### **CYBER CRIME**

Considering the definition proposed above, some forms of cybercrime may also be considered acts of cyber violence, such as illegal access to intimate personal data, the destruction of data,



blocking access to a computer system or data, etc. This is for example captured in 18 United States Code Section 1030(a)(7) on “extortion involving computers”.

Denial of service attacks may lead to physical harm of individuals – for example, if fire emergency telephone lines are unable to accept calls or if traffic control systems or hospital services are disabled.

## **CHAPTER 2: CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

As digital technology mediates more and more of our daily lives, it is also facilitating new and heightened forms of gender-based violence. Online violence against women and girls, though not a new phenomenon, has escalated rapidly in recent years posing significant threats to women’s safety and well-being both online and off. This underscores the urgent need to protect and uphold women's rights in the digital era.

### **How prevalent is online and digital violence against women and girls?**

According to the Institute of Development Studies, between 16-58 per cent of women have experienced technology-facilitated gender-based violence. The Economist Intelligence Unit found that 38 per cent of women have had personal experiences of online violence, and 85 per cent of women who spend time online have witnessed digital violence against other women.

The most common forms of violence reported were misinformation and defamation (67 per cent), cyber harassment (66 per cent), hate speech (65 per cent), impersonation (63 per cent), hacking and stalking (63 per cent), astroturfing (a coordinated effort to concurrently share damaging content across platforms, 58 per cent), video and image-based abuse (57 per cent), doxing (55 per cent), violent threats (52 per cent), and unwanted images or sexually explicit content (43 per cent).

Data from different regions point to a universal problem. A UN Women study in the Arab States region found that 60 per cent of women internet users had been exposed to online violence. A study of five countries in sub-Saharan Africa found that 28 per cent of women had experienced online violence. A 2017 survey of women aged 18 – 55 in Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA found that 23 per cent of women reported at least one experience of online abuse or harassment.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased digital violence as women and girls moved online for work, school and social activities. In Australia, there was a 210 per cent increase in image-based abuse linked to the pandemic. Data from India, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia showed a 168 per cent increase in the volume of misogynistic online posts during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Prior to the pandemic, 38 per cent of women surveyed experienced online abuse, with 27 per cent reporting increased online abuse during the pandemic. Black and minoritised women reported higher rates: 50 per cent reported online abuse before the pandemic and 38 per cent reported an increase during COVID-19.

### **Who is at risk of online and digital gender-based violence?**

It affects women and girls in all their diversity, but certain groups are at heightened risk. Women who face multiple forms of discrimination, including women with disabilities, Black

and indigenous women and other women of colour, migrant women and LGBTIQ+ people, are all disproportionately affected.

Young women and girls, who are more likely to use tech for learning, accessing information and connecting to peers, also face increased exposure to online violence. One global study found that 58 per cent of girls and young women have experienced some form of online harassment.

Women in public life—human rights defenders, activists, journalists and lawmakers—face increased rates of violence too. UNESCO found that 73 percent of women journalists experienced online violence in the course of their work.

### **What is UN Women doing about violence in the digital age?**

Addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence is part of UN Women's broader approach to ending violence against women and girls. This includes developing and adapting laws and policies to prevent and respond to digital violence, bridging data and research gaps, adapting essential services to support survivors, and working to prevent technology-facilitated gender-based violence in the first place by transforming social norms and engaging men and boys.

The 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) acknowledged the critical role of technology and innovation in achieving gender equality and pushed for more investments to reduce the gender digital gap, inclusive innovation environments, and safe, gender-responsive technology and innovation.

UN Women is also addressing the issue through Generation Equality by scaling up prevention programming, boosting survivor services, providing support to feminist organizations and more.

### **What more needs to happen to eliminate violence in the digital world?**

1. **Enhance cooperation** between governments, the technology sector, women's rights organizations and civil society to strengthen policies.
2. **Address data gaps** to increase understanding about the drivers of violence and the profiles of perpetrators and to inform prevention and response efforts.
3. **Develop and implement laws and regulations** with the participation of survivors and women's organizations.
4. **Develop standards of accountability** for Internet intermediaries and technology sector to enhance transparency and accountability on digital violence and the use of data.
5. **Integrate digital citizenship and ethical use of digital tools** into school curricula to foster positive social norms online and off, sensitize young people—especially young men and boys—caregivers, and educators to ethical and responsible online behaviour.
6. **Strengthen collective action** of public and private sector entities and women's rights organizations.
7. **Empower women and girls to participate and lead** in the technology sector to inform the design and use of safe digital tools and spaces free of violence.

8. Ensure that public and private sector entities **prioritize the prevention and elimination** of digital violence, through human rights-based design approaches and adequate investments.

[Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence> ]

### **Categories of women at higher risk?**

**Note: Focus your research around these vulnerable groups**

1. Women who are a part of public life like politicians, celebrities, famous personalities etc.
2. Queer, Trans and Lesbian Women or Women belonging to gender and sexual minority groups.
3. Women of particularly marginalised ethnic, racial and religious groups.
4. Women journalists and correspondents.
5. Women rights activists
6. Younger women

## **CHAPTER 3: UNWOMEN SUGGESTIONS TO COUNTER CYBER VIOLENCE FACED BY WOMEN**

### **LAWS AND REGULATION**

#### **eSafety Commissioner**

Australia eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is Australia's independent regulator and educator for online safety – the first of its kind in the world. eSafety exercises its regulatory powers under the Online Safety Act 2015 within a holistic framework that comprises three pillars: Prevention, Protection, and Proactive and Systemic Change. Australia's eSafety Commissioner delivers innovative mechanisms for online spaces, including through a new reporting scheme for adult cyber abuse, which gives adult victims of serious and harmful online abuse somewhere to turn to when online platforms fail to act. The powers of the Commissioner have recently been enhanced to address violence across all platforms, including video gaming platforms, dating websites and private messaging apps.

#### **The 'Olimpia Law' Mexico**

Mexico is one of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with the highest number of legal reforms since 2021 to incorporate online forms of VAWG such as intimate image abuse into existing laws on violence against women. The Olimpia Law (named after Olimpia Coral Melo who was a victim of intimate image abuse in 2011) has been important in recognizing the gravity of online VAWG at the national level which has led to reform of the penal code to incorporate new crime types and has laid the foundations for the coordination and implementation of actions to prevent, respond and eliminate online VAWG in Mexico. To date this has resulted in 35 legal reforms across 28 local legislatures to include different forms of

online violence and abuse in their principal laws on ending VAWG. This includes criminalization of sextortion, threats, cyber harassment, sexual harassment, and non-consensual image sharing.

## **PREVENTION AND RESPONSE**

### **The FTX: Safety Reboot'**

Civil society organizations have been leading innovative approaches to safe online spaces including 'The FTX: Safety Reboot', which is a digital security training curriculum for trainers who work with women's rights and sexual rights activists. Modules include 'Embedding Digital Safety in Storytelling', which addresses digital identifiability and metadata considerations for activists.

### **StopNCII.org**

The UK Revenge Porn Helpline (RPH) was established in 2015 and helps prevent individuals from becoming victims of non-consensual intimate image abuse. Since its creation, the RPH has supported thousands of victims, with an over 90% removal rate, successfully removing over 200,000 individual non-consensual intimate images from the internet. More recently, RPH has partnered with Meta to launch StopNCII.org, a free tool using innovative technology to support victims and potential victims of non-consensual intimate image abuse by creating a digital fingerprint of an image that can then be proactively detected and removed by participating platforms and tech companies to prevent the sharing of specific images. Perspective API' Jigsaw, a Google subsidiary, is undertaking research and developing products to reduce online abuse and toxicity, including a tool called 'Perspective API' which uses machine learning models to identify abusive comments. The tool can provide 'real time' content moderation, help moderators more easily review comments, and help readers to filter out 'toxic' language.

### **Access Now Digital Security**

Access Now's Digital Security Helpline provides technical assistance to civil society groups and activists, media personnel and human rights defenders, including rapid-response emergency assistance for digital security incidents.

### **Korea's Digital Sex Crime Victim Support Center**

Korea's Digital Sex Crime Victim Support Center offers comprehensive support and protection to victims of digital sex crimes. In addition to counseling, referrals for legal aid and medical care, one of the services provided is digital content deletion as well as investigative cooperation with foreign IT companies. Efforts are also being focused on technological solutions such as pre-emptive deletion support which detects digital violence in advance of its occurrence.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

### **Big Data and early warning systems**

The International Center for Journalists in partnership with computer scientists from the University of Sheffield and the Centre for Freedom of the Media is developing an early warning system to help detect, predict, and ultimately prevent violence against women journalists. Big data will be harnessed to identify key attack indicators and other metrics signaling escalation

of online violence against women journalists derived from five new ‘big data’ case studies focused on women in India, Lebanon, Malta, Mexico and South Africa. The initiative will explore the two-way trajectory between online and offline attacks before developing open-source digital tools to detect, monitor and alert key responders to high-risk cases.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

The Generation Equality Forum, convened by UN Women is a multi stakeholder initiative which has galvanized governments, international organizations, civil society, philanthropies, youth, and the private sector to launch a 5-year Global Acceleration Plan to achieve irreversible progress towards gender equality through 6 thematic Action Coalitions. The Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality focuses on preventing and eliminating online and tech-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination as part of its roadmap. To this end, Finland and Iceland have jointly committed to advocating for the integration of online gender-based violence in relevant international fora, processes and instruments. Four of the world’s largest tech companies have jointly committed, in partnership with the Web Foundation, to building better ways for women to curate their safety online and implement stronger reporting mechanisms. Many partners also committed to advocate to protect feminist movements and women human rights defenders, amplify voices and experiences of girls and adolescents or to push for action on the issue of the unlawful sharing of intimate images.

## **SOLUTIONS WHICH MEMBER STATES OF UN-WOMEN CAN ADOPT?**

- Recognize online and technology facilitated VAWG as a human rights violation and include it in laws to criminalize and prohibit all forms of violence in digital contexts and strengthen capacities of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute crimes effectively.
- Address data gaps and regularly collect data on online and technology facilitated VAWG and invest in evidence and knowledge of what works in eliminating VAWG in digital contexts.
- Invest in long-term comprehensive approaches to transform the harmful behaviours, social norms and toxic masculinities that drive VAWG in digital contexts as well as increasing investments in prevention to transform gender stereotypes and social norms at the broader societal level including through the empowerment of women and girls, addressing unequal gendered power relations, and community engagement.
- Integrate content on violence against women and girls in digital contexts into education as a prevention strategy and develop standards for inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy educational spaces both online and offline.
- Strengthen cooperation with the technology sector, women’s rights organizations, civil society and national and regional human rights mechanisms to strengthen measures and policies to provide swift and effective remedies to online VAWG including greater accountability of perpetrators.
- Enhance access to specialized survivor-centred support and protection for victim-survivors of online and ICT facilitated VAWG through strengthening capacities of

service providers to respond to the unique nature of online and technology facilitated VAWG.

- Increase flexible and long-term funding to civil society and women's rights organizations to inform decision making and policy on online VAWG and play a lead role in developing, designing and implementing effective prevention and response measures.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE EDVAW PLATFORM MECHANISMS AND THE DIGITAL DIMENSION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

This section provides a short description of the respective mandates that make up the EDVAW Platform and the relevant set of legal standards which they monitor, focusing on their relevance to online and technology-facilitated violence against women. It also offers an overview of terminology and initiatives taken by these international and regional women's rights mechanisms to research, raise awareness or promote improved responses to digital violence against women through their country-specific or thematic monitoring work.

### **A. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was established in 1982 to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It is composed of twenty-three independent experts who review the national implementation of the Convention and issue 'concluding observations' measuring national progress. CEDAW may also receive individual communications about claims of violations of women's rights and initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations. CEDAW also adopts General Recommendations which, although not formally legally binding, are authoritative statements on the content of legal duties assumed by states parties that clarify approaches to interpreting treaty provisions. In 1992, CEDAW adopted its General Recommendation no. 19 on violence against women, which was updated in 2017 with the adoption of General Recommendation no. 35 on gender-based violence against women.

CEDAW prohibits discrimination against women, understood as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex'. The General Recommendation no. 35 clarifies that 'gender-based violence against women' is a form of discrimination within the scope of the Convention. Gender-based violence is defined as 'violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately' and, as such, is a violation of their human rights.

CEDAW emphasises the importance of an intersectional understanding of gender-based violence, providing in General Recommendation no. 35 an extensive list of differing characteristics and identities that affect experiences of violence and discrimination. CEDAW

uses a range of terms when examining the digital dimension of violence against women. While the Committee had referred to the digital dimension of violence against women in state reports in 2016, it was the General Recommendation no. 35 that clearly established online and technology-facilitated violence as a new form of gender-based violence against women that is within the scope of the CEDAW. General Recommendation no. 35 refers to violence against women as taking a ‘continuum of multiple, interrelated and recurring forms, in a range of settings, from private to public, including technology-mediated settings’. The text also refers to “forms of violence occurring online and in other digital environments.

CEDAW has also integrated the digital dimension into its other General Recommendations including No. 33 (2015) on women’s access to justice where it recognized the important role of digital spaces and ICT for women’s empowerment and No. 36 (2017) which focused on how girls are affected by cyberbullying. In its most recent country reports, including Morocco, Ecuador, Sweden and Denmark, CEDAW has welcomed the introduction of legal reforms targeting online and technology-facilitated violence.

### **B. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences (the UN Special Rapporteur)**

In 1994, the UN created the role of Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences (Human Rights Council, 1994), who is mandated to seek and receive information on violence against women from governments, treaty bodies, specialised agencies, other human rights bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, including women’s organisations, and to respond effectively to such information. The UN Special Rapporteur also recommends measures at the local, national, regional and international levels to eliminate all forms of violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences (Human Rights Council, 2019). This work is carried out through country visits, annual reports including thematic reports, consultations with civil society and other national, regional and international bodies.

The digital dimension of gender-based violence was first addressed in 2006 by the Secretary-General in his in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (UN General Assembly, 2006), in which he noted that more inquiry about the use of ICTs was needed so that emerging forms of violence could be recognised and better addressed. In its resolution 20/8, the Human Rights Council clearly stated that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. Overall, the UN human rights regime notes that at the normative level the “interaction between technology and women’s human rights standards is marked by the recognition of the principle that human rights protected offline should also be protected online” (Human Rights Council, 2016).

In 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur produced a landmark report analysing online violence and violence facilitated by ICTs against women and girls from a human rights perspective. It sets a framework for examining the impact of emerging technologies on violence against women, including prevention, protection, prosecution and redress for such violence, and sets out recommendations for action from the UN, states and internet intermediaries. This report has been drawn on in the UN Special Rapporteur’s evaluation and monitoring role, including in country and thematic reports, providing the foundation for subsequent UN activities and other

national and regional work in this field. Noting the variety of terminology, the UN Special Rapporteur refers to “ICT-facilitated violence against women” as the most inclusive term, but mainly uses “online violence against women” as a more user-friendly expression, while still referring to “cyberviolence” and “technology-facilitated violence” as alternatives (Human Rights Council, 2018).

The UN Special Rapporteur adopts a definition of online and technology-facilitated violence against women that extends to “any act of gender-based violence against women that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or fully by the use of ICT, such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms or email, against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately” (Human Rights Council, 2018). The UN Special Rapporteur has also noted the importance of not seeking to define and catalogue all forms of online and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls due to the rapid development of digital technology and spaces, including through AI, which will inevitably give rise to new manifestations of such violence. The digital dimension of violence against women is included in the UN Special Rapporteur reports of country visits. For instance, in 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur’s report on Australia welcomed the work undertaken to address online violence against women and children, by undertaking legal reform and expanding the role of a public agency, the eSafety Commission, to tackle it.

## **CHAPTER 5: READING MATERIALS**

- <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/10/accelerating-efforts-to-tackle-online-and-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls>
- <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence>
- <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/blog/cyberviolence-disempowers-women-and-girls-and-threatens-their-fundamental-rights>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/edvaw/online-and-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls>
- <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641160?ln=en>

**NOTE: The study guide is merely suggestive and not exhaustive in any manner. It is only to give direction to your research and should not be treated as your entire research material in any manner. All the best for your preparations. Hoping to have a productive learning experience.**