



UN Women

Chair Letter

DEAR DELEGATES,

Welcome to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at CNYMUN 2025! As numerous issues threaten the well-being of women in the global community, we look forward to productive discussions, debate, and collaboration between delegates at the conference discussing these important issues.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:

Annika Dharwadkar is a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. This will be her fourth year of Model UN, and her second time chairing a committee. Outside of MUN, she participates in her school's Math League, and helps with her school's literary magazine. She enjoys running, for some reason, and is a third-degree black belt in karate. In her free time, she also draws and loves hanging out with her friends. She's looking forward to a great committee!

Camille Ryan is a junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School and this will be her first year chairing and third year in Model UN. Outside of school and MUN, she plays on the varsity lacrosse and track teams. She loves spending time at the lake, going to concerts, skiing, and hiking. She is super excited to meet everyone and have an amazing conference!

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

Your topics for UN Women at CNYMUN 2025 will be:

1. Increasing Access to Feminine Hygiene Products in Developing Nations
2. Methods to Combat Rape and Sexual Violence

UN Women is the UN organization delivering programmes, policies and standards that upholds women's human rights and ensures that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential. ¹ It was established to help accelerate these ideals centered around gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women primarily focuses on women leading, participating, and equally benefitting from governance systems, women's income security, the

¹ UN Women. "UN Women - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women." *UN Women*, 2024, www.unwomen.org/en.

ability to live free from all forms of violence, and have a greater impact in building sustainable peace and resilience.²

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

In CNYMUN tradition, the debate will be conducted in Harvard style, meaning delegates will not be allowed to use pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards.

To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a 1-2 page position paper via email that addresses both topics before the start of the conference. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation, and display an understanding of the topics, demonstrating research and knowledge of your organization's goals. When deciding on awards, the chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort towards research/preparation, collaborate with other delegates during committee sessions, stay within their nation's policies, and get their voice heard without being overbearing.

Furthermore, for the first time, CNYMUN is implementing a tiered structure of committees to ensure similar experience levels for all committee members. UN Women is designated as an open committee, and we would like the debate to reflect that. In turn, the Best New Delegate Award will be offered to a first-time delegate in this committee.

Please share position papers before the conference begins. To contact your chairs about any research, position papers, committee inquiries, or other questions, our emails are listed below. We also encourage you to scan our lengthy delegate preparation resources – and award structure – on www.cnymun.org. We wish you luck, and look forward to what CNYMUN 2025 will bring!

Annika Dharwadkar
25adharwadkar@fmschools.org
Camille Ryan
26cryan@fmschools.org

² UN Women. "UN Women - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women." *UN Women*, 2024, www.unwomen.org/en.

TOPIC 1: INCREASING ACCESS TO FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) is an established organization created by the UN that is essential to the safety and empowerment of women and girls all over the globe.³ For proper care and good health, women require safe access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, adequate and affordable feminine hygiene products, education on good practices, and a supportive environment. These challenges for developing countries around the world result from issues beyond basic lack of infrastructure or supplies.

On any given day, more than 300 million women worldwide menstruate, and an estimated 500 million lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM).⁴ This leads to unhygienic and unhealthy menstrual practices, further exacerbating the issue.

In many countries, specifically developing nations, there is an incredible lack of information about feminine hygiene. This unfortunate absence of education creates misconception, negative attitudes, shaming, bullying, and even gender-based violence.⁵ In numerous developing nations, such as Nepal, the concept and stigma associated with menstruation continues to be constrained by cultural taboos and discriminatory social norms, negatively affecting the physical and mental health of these women.

In western Nepal, women and girls practice a form of menstrual exile called Chhaupadi. In this practice, women are forced into designated menstrual huts in which they are shut off from the outside world and forbidden from attending school, going to social events, seeing their family, or coming home during

³ The World Bank. "Menstrual Health and Hygiene." *World Bank*, 12 May 2022, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/menstrual-health-and-hygiene.

⁴ The World Bank. "Menstrual Hygiene Management Enables Women and Girls to Reach Their Full Potential." *World Bank*, 25 May 2018, www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2018/05/25/menstrual-hygiene-management.

⁵ The World Bank. "Menstrual Health and Hygiene." *World Bank*, 12 May 2022, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/menstrual-health-and-hygiene.

this time.⁶ The majority of these huts lack toilets, mattresses, bedding, and ventilation. This practice stems from the stigma that women are unclean while menstruating and should be isolated from the people around them to prevent contamination and unclean infection. Chhaupadi is incredibly dangerous and has led to multiple deaths over the years while simultaneously putting these women at greater risk for physical and sexual abuse, snake bites, infections, and serious illness due to unsanitary and threatening conditions. As well as physical damage, this practice results in furthering discriminatory social norms and stigma around feminine hygiene. Women's mental health is also negatively impacted as these practices undermine women's overall health and worth in society. While this is only one example of cultural taboos that are associated with menstruation and feminine hygiene practices, similar practices occur all around the world.

This lack of access to feminine hygiene products in developing nations directly impacts the health of women. This has cascading effects on sexual and reproductive health, fertility, and maternal outcomes. Furthermore, this poses an increasingly high risk of developing urinary tract infections and reproductive health disorders including peritonitis B and thrush.⁷

Feminine hygiene products are a multi-billion dollar industry, which if used to its full potential, can be valuable as a source of income and boosting economic growth for nations and struggling societies. Standing in the way of this economic treasure is "the pink tax," referring to the strategy to market products labeled for women at a higher price compared to the same products marketed for men.⁸ While a pink razor and a blue razor may accomplish the same task, the

⁶ "Chhaupadi and Menstruation Taboos | ActionAid UK." *www.actionaid.org.uk*, www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/period-poverty/chhaupadi-and-menstruation-taboos#:~:text=Chhaupadi%20is%20an%20ancient%20tradition.

⁷ WHO. "Education and Provisions for Adequate Menstrual Hygiene Management at School Can Prevent Adverse Health Consequences." *www.who.int*, 27 May 2022, www.who.int/europe/news/item/27-05-2022-education-and-provisions-for-adequate-menstrual-hygiene-management-at-school-can-prevent-adverse-health-consequences.

⁸ Feingold, Spencer. "What Is the 'Pink Tax' and How Does It Hinder Women?" *World Economic Forum*, World Economic Forum, 14 July 2022, www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/what-is-the-pink-tax-and-how-does-it-hinder-women/.

pink razor may be more expensive as it is marketed “for women.” This has a negative impact on furthering access to female period and health products as it results in more expensive and therefore less affordable goods for women who are simply struggling to survive and provide for themselves and their families on a daily basis.

The inability to afford and access menstrual products, sanitation hygiene facilities, education and awareness to manage menstrual health, oftentimes referred to as “period poverty” is a parallel issue among these developing nations, notably countries like Thailand and Venezuela.⁹ In these low-income societies, roughly half of the schools lack adequate resources including water, sanitation, and hygiene services that are crucial to the safety and well-being of girls and female teachers during school.¹⁰ This can result in missed classes or even dropping out.

In Thailand, it is debated whether period products and other feminine hygiene essentials are classified as luxury or cosmetic products. While they are neither, these beliefs result in a 7% added value tax on pads and tampons.¹¹ In many instances, this results in women using 12% of their daily paychecks simply to pay for basic health necessities.¹² These women also often go dangerously long periods of time without changing tampons due to their limited amount and access to these products. This majorly increases the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome, which is a potentially life-threatening illness.

With the global pandemic of Covid-19, the concept of “period poverty” and the incredible lack of feminine

⁹ citron-admin. “Global Period Poverty: Stats, Struggles & Solutions Worldwide.” *Citron Hygiene*, 13 Oct. 2020, www.citronhygiene.com/resources/period-poverty-world-stats-solutions/.

¹⁰ “2 in 5 Schools around the World Lacked Basic Handwashing Facilities prior to COVID-19 Pandemic — UNICEF, WHO.” *Www.unicef.org*, www.unicef.org/press-releases/2-5-schools-around-world-lacked-basic-handwashing-facilities-prior-covid-19-pandemic.

¹¹ citron-admin. “Global Period Poverty: Stats, Struggles & Solutions Worldwide.” *Citron Hygiene*, 13 Oct. 2020, www.citronhygiene.com/resources/period-poverty-world-stats-solutions/.

¹² Foundation, Manushya. “Period Poverty: Can You Imagine Not Being Able to Afford Sanitary Products to Manage Your Period?” *Manushya Foundation*, 2 Sept. 2021, www.manushyafoundation.org/post/period-poverty-can-you-imagine-not-being-able-to-afford-sanitary-products-to-manage-your-period.

hygiene products and education in developing and low-income nations have been increasingly apparent. The epidemic continues to have a negative lasting impact on specifically developing nations.

In many of these countries, national economies have struggled to recover from the Covid-19 epidemic due to increased conflict. In the last 2 decades, Venezuela has suffered a severe economic crisis as a result of falling oil prices. This led to the loss in value of Venezuelan currency and therefore an increase in the cost of goods and materials. Venezuelan inflation rates have soared to over a million percent in recent years and it currently sits at 283% and the highest in the world.¹³ This hyperinflation has directly impacted affordability and access to feminine hygiene products. Period products like pads and especially tampons have become so expensive that women have begun to create makeshift products out of cloth and cardboard instead of feminine hygiene products.¹⁴ This results in a massive increase in health risks and creates a progressively dangerous practice for women.

Even amongst war and danger, the need for feminine hygiene products and education has only increased. Due to a rising need for heating, food, and lighting during this time, these aspects of basic sanitation and need are often prioritized over feminine hygiene and health. This results in women using makeshift, insanitary, or overused products in order to manage periods. In the years following the global pandemic, there has been a worldwide struggle to emerge from the trenches and begin to make progress on many of these issues, including this topic.

The committee of UN Women must fight and work to tackle these global issues in relation to unequal access to feminine hygiene products and education, and pass resolutions to better the lives of women in our global society.

¹³ World Population Review. “Inflation Rate by Country 2021.” *Worldpopulationreview.com*, 2022, worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/inflation-rate-by-country.

¹⁴ UN Women. “Period Poverty – Why Millions of Girls and Women Cannot Afford Their Periods.” *UN Women – Headquarters*, 24 May 2024, www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/05/period-poverty-why-millions-of-girls-and-women-cannot-afford-their-periods.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How may lower income and developing nations find the funds to enable women's health education and afford basic feminine hygiene products?
2. For developing nations like Venezuela with incredibly high inflation rates, how might programs be implemented to make feminine hygiene products more affordable?
3. What efforts can be made to increase access to feminine hygiene products?
4. How and what education programs might be implemented?
5. What can be done to try and decrease/eliminate cultural taboos and stigmas associated with menstruation and period health?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

Menstrual Health and Hygiene

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/menstrual-health-and-hygiene>

Period Poverty - Why Millions of Girls and Women Cannot Afford Their Periods

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/05/period-poverty-why-millions-of-girls-and-women-cannot-afford-their-periods#:~:text=In%20UN%20Women%27s%20recent%20report,they%20cannot%20access%20menstrual%20products>

Period Poverty: A Neglected Public Health Issue

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10372806/>

Period Poverty: A Global Crisis

<https://wiisglobal.org/period-poverty-a-global-crisis/>

TOPIC 2: METHODS TO COMBAT RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Rape and sexual violence against women is a pressing issue that permeates the whole world. Though sexual assault and rape can happen to anyone, women and girls face higher rates of rape.¹⁵ Globally, it is estimated that around 700 million women have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

This issue is multifaceted. Many victims of sexual violence choose not to tell anyone about the incident, which is exacerbated by the stigma against sexual assault, rape culture, and ideas of victim blaming which are normalized in our society. Sexual assault can happen in a variety of environments and can have numerous costs for victims - ranging from physical to mental or emotional. However, many steps have been made in recent years both through the internet and by relevant NGOs in a variety of countries to help reduce rape and sexual violence against women.

The first main facet of the issue of sexual violence is that most victims choose not to tell anyone. Rape is one of the most under-reported crimes, and it is estimated that 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to police.¹⁶ According to a study, an estimated 30% of sexual assault victims never tell anyone, not even their own family members¹⁷. This could be because victims don't feel safe enough to tell anyone, feel like it may make matters worse, or may not have the resources to do so. According to a study from RAINN (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network), most victims of rape on college campuses choose not to tell anyone because they believe it was a personal matter, they fear retaliation or a repeated incident, or for other various reasons.¹⁸

Another major part of this issue is the rising ideas of rape culture, which is an increasingly prevalent social

¹⁵“Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.” *RAINN*, RAINN, rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence. Accessed 8 Oct. 2024.

¹⁶“Statistics about Sexual Violence.” *NSVRC*, National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015, www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media_packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf.

¹⁷Kelly, Casey. “Study Explores Why Women Decide Not to Tell Anyone about Being Sexually Assaulted.” *PHYS.ORG*, 28 June 2021, phys.org/news/2021-06-explores-women-sexually-assaulted.html.

¹⁸“Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics.” *RAINN*, RAINN, rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence. Accessed 8 Oct. 2024.

attitude that normalizes rape, stigmatizes victims through Victim Blaming, and perpetuates objectification of women's bodies as well as misogyny. Victim Blaming is when it is assumed that only promiscuous women get raped, or that the incident which took place may be in part because of the victim's wardrobe choices.¹⁹ However this idea is incredibly false, and wardrobe choices are independent of the actions of others. Studies have found that there is no link between the way an individual behaves and the likelihood of rape.²⁰ This has been shown by many art installations²¹ that showcase the outfits of rape survivors at the time of their incidents, showing that there is no pattern and that victims may have been wearing anything. Victim Blaming marginalizes the victim further, making them less likely to come forward. Another way that rape culture in general perpetuates attitudes tolerant of sexual violence is by perpetuating the “Boys will be Boys” mentality, which builds destructive gendered stereotypes, and prevents men from being held accountable for their actions. It also tries to excuse potentially negative behaviors, blaming them on biology, instead of putting a stop to the behavior.²²

Sexual violence is prevalent in many different environments which can each potentially require different solutions. Sexual violence in the military is in particular at risk of being unreported. It was estimated that about 20,000 members in active service faced sexual violence.²³ Sexual violence can also occur in the workplace. In 2019, the US Bureau of Labor estimated that there were around 20,000 cases of workplace violence, 68% of which were

¹⁹“Sexual Misconduct: Rape Culture, Victim Blaming, And The Facts.” *Inside Southern*, Southern Connecticut State University, 2024, inside.southernct.edu/sexual-misconduct/facts.

²⁰Villines, Zawn. “Overcoming the Stigma of Sexual Assault: Know the Facts.” *GoodTherapy*, 24 May 2019, www.goodtherapy.org/blog/overcoming-stigma-of-sexual-assault-know-the-facts-0622187.

²¹“What Were You Wearing? Fashion Exhibit by Sexual Assault Survivors.” *Rise*, 4 Jan. 2023, risenow.us/impact/what-were-you-wearing/.

²²Meyer, Elizabeth J. “The Danger of ‘Boys Will Be Boys.’” *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers LLC, 2024, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/gender-and-schooling/201403/the-danger-boys-will-be-boys.

²³“Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.” *RAINN*, rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence. Accessed 8 Oct. 2024.

female.²⁴ Another place that faces immense rates of sexual violence is on college campuses, with women between the ages of 18 and 24, whether in college or not, being at higher risk of facing sexual violence than their older and younger counterparts.²⁵

One key solution to this issue is the creation of anti-rape hotlines and anonymous tip services, where victims can report these incidents without having to state their identity. This allows victims to have a way to tell someone, in a safe setting. These hotlines are often run by local organizations or local authorities.

Another key contributor to solving this issue, is supporting existing survivors of rape and sexual violence. Victims of Rape and sexual violence often face immense costs medically, legally, socially, and emotionally. The estimated cost per victim of rape is around \$122,000, for around twenty-five million victims. Victims of rape often have to pay out of pocket at hospitals, as in the US at least, only forensic exams post-assault are covered.²⁶ Another main risk of rape is sexually transmitted diseases, which can potentially be a lifelong incurable issue.

The most obvious risk of rape, is incidental pregnancy. In the US alone, almost 3 million women have experienced rape-related pregnancy.²⁷ However, these statistics both globally and for those of other ages are very difficult to estimate. A study found that for around half of the cases of rape related pregnancy, the victim opted for abortion, about 30 percent kept the infant, and around 5 percent put the child up for adoption.²⁸ Taking care of a baby as a result of unexpected pregnancy from rape is an enormous task,

²⁴Adams-Prassl, Abi, et al. *Violence Against Women at Work*, wpcdn.web.wsu.edu/cahnr/uploads/sites/5/2022/10/Violence-Against-Women-at-Work.pdf. Accessed 8 Oct. 2024.

²⁵“Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics.” *RAINN*, RAINN, rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence. Accessed 8 Oct. 2024.

²⁶“The Cost of Rape.” *PAVE*, PAVE, 2020, www.shatteringthesilence.org/blog/the-cost-of-rape#:~:text=Medical%20Care,was%20higher%E2%80%94%24%2C553%20on%20average.

²⁷“Pregnancy Resulting From Rape.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, USA.GOV, 23 Apr. 2023, www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/pregnancy-resulting-from-rape.html.

²⁸Holmes, Melisa M. “Rape-Related Pregnancy: Estimates and Descriptive Characteristics from a National Sample of Women - American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology.” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 2024, www.ajog.org/article/S0002-9378(96)70141-2/abstract.

with a ripple effect of consequences. A child takes a lot of money and resources to raise, and needs a stable household with consistent income, which can be a lot to ask. Additionally, there are the ethical questions that arise from raising a child who exists as a result of rape, in that a mother may not feel comfortable taking care of a child who is partially biologically related to their abuser.

The internet can be a great avenue for victims to share their stories, as shown by the #MeToo movement. The movement started in 2017 with Tarana Burke, who upon hearing of a sexual abuse situation that had happened to a child at the camp where she worked, felt connected by the fact that she had been in a similar situation and took to the internet to share her story. The hashtag #MeToo went viral, becoming a place where sexual abuse survivors, usually women, could share their experiences.

Many NGOs also exist to help combat this issue. Take Back the Night is a global NGO that holds rallies and protests that speak out against sexual violence. They run events in many different countries, working to keep the conversation a global one.²⁹ The Joyful Heart Foundation is another American NGO, which has a focus on reducing sexual violence, as well as empowering victims of childhood and domestic abuse.³⁰ Coalition on violence against women, (COWAV) is an African NGO based in Nairobi that works to reduce violence against women, specifically in Kenya.

Beyond the work of NGO’s there are many other proposed solutions to ending the issue of sexual violence. One way is by encouraging women and girls to take self defense classes. Though research has been in part inconclusive, some consider it to be an effective solution to combat sexual assault on an individual level.

In conclusion, reducing rape and sexual violence is a multifaceted issue with a number of existing

²⁹“Home - Take Back the Night.” *Take Back the Night | End Sexual & Domestic Violence*, Take Back The Night Foundation, 10 Oct. 2024, takebackthenight.org/.

³⁰“Joyful Heart Foundation.” *Joyfulheartfoundation.org*, 2024, www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/.

problems and solutions. Hopefully, by working together in committee, we can come to a potential solution.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How can we as a global community keep sexual violence from happening in the first place?
2. What programs would be helpful to support victims in the aftermath of sexual violence?
3. How can we ensure that voices of different backgrounds are all included in the fight against sexual assault?
4. What has your country already done to address this issue? How can these steps be implemented in a possible global solution?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

NGOs

<https://takebackthenight.org/>

<https://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/>

SDG #5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

UN Women: Ending Violence Against Women

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women#:~:text=At%20least%20155%20countries%20have.access%20to%20safety%20and%20justice.>

Most Dangerous Countries for Women:

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/most-dangerous-countries-for-women>