**Blue Bells Model United NATIONS**

**CONFERENCE**



**Blue Bells for World Peace**

**United Nations - Women**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**AGENDA : Addressing the issues of Intersectionality within Gender**

**Letter from the Executive Board**

Greetings Parliamentarians!

Welcome to the simulation of United Nations - Women at Blue Bells Model UN, 2019. We have envisioned this simulation to be one of the most productive and thoughtful simulation of the committee and for that vision to be actualized, the impetus falls on your shoulders to work harder, think more critically, and adapt instantly.

This guide is the **primary resource material** released by us. In this preliminary part, we have dealt with broad range of aspects including: preparatory (mandate of the committee, research suggestions, basic things relating to the committee) and Substantive (agenda specific). This part is an effort to provide all of you basic guidelines upon which you can base research. Please note that we would be releasing additional resource material on the interactive portals shortly.

Lastly, you may only treat the guides as introductory documents, which build an insight into the concepts that the agenda deals with. Beyond this, you are required to dig deep and do your own research, but more importantly, we want you to take the information you’ve researched and sit down with it to analyze the core issues there, possibly forecast what the debate on this will entail, and then form logical arguments and efficient solutions on it. Even though this is a rather usual advice, it is imperative in this committee to be followed; otherwise you will not be able to keep up with the fast-paced committee.

Feel free to contact us through e-mail, in case you have any doubts.

We wish you all the best. May the Force be with you!

Best Regards,

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**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE**

Official Website: www.unwomen.org

UN Women is the [United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/) 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](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015) 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](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation) from governance systems
* Women have [income security, decent work and economic autonomy](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment)
* All women and girls live a life free [from all forms of violence](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women)
* Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in [building sustainable peace and resilience](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security), and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and [humanitarian action](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/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.

**RESEARCH**

Proper research and preparation is essential to effectively participate in any Model United Nations conference. Without it, the educational experience offered by the conference is largely lost and the delegate’s ability to participate successfully in the debate is greatly handicapped.

Generally, there are two questions which arise:

1) What should I research?

2) How should I go about researching?

In short, the delegate needs to research the United Nations itself, the country being represented, the committee topics, the country's position on the topics, and “world opinion” on these topics.

* **The United Nations**

The delegate must be familiar with the history and organization of the UN and of his or her assigned committee. Most importantly, the delegate should be familiar with the past actions of the United Nations on the committee topics as well as the present status of those topics in the United Nations system. Sources for these research areas are quite numerous. The most useful sources are actual UN documents and UN online sources.

A good starting point is the UN website at www.un.org. There you will find links to all the committee homepages, histories, UN documents and resolutions. The online Dag Hammarskjöld Library is an excellent starting point for UN document research. The Peacekeeping Best Practices online library offers a range of indexed documents, many of which go well beyond the scope of peacekeeping operations. Specific Country Research Concurrent with United Nations research, the delegate should be researching the specific country that they have been assigned.

A delegate must know a great deal about the country in order to make informed decisions on the issues. Country research is best done in two steps:

1) Background research into the country's political, economic, and cultural systems and institutions.

2) Assimilation of this information so that the delegate can effectively act as an actual representative of the country.

**Step One: Background Research**

The first step is the most time-consuming, but it will provide the basis for both your later research and for your effectiveness as a delegate at the conference. The country research should encompass the economic and political systems of the country, the history and culture of the society, the demographics of the society, the geography of the country, the international and regional organizations the country belongs to, and the present influences the domestic situation has on the formulation of international policy. Delegates should pay particular attention to the decision-making structure within the country. It is important to understand the actual, rather than the theoretical process of political decision-making. Sources of this information are discussed later in this document. In general terms, the more you know and research about your country, the easier it will be for you to accurately formulate your country's positions relating to the topics under discussion. Items that are crucial to know include:

1. **Geography:** size and description, location, natural resources, and neighboring states and regions
2. **Demographics:** Statistics of the state’s population, population density and growth rate, life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy rate
3. **Culture:** majority and minority components, religions and their influences, language(s), and customs and traditions
4. **Economy:** type of economy, gross national product (GNP) and strength of economy, debt owed, average per capita income, major imports and exports, and trading partners
5. **Government:** type of government, leaders, political parties and opposing political faction, allies and enemies, membership of political and economic organizations, role in international politics
6. **History of state:** general history and reasons and philosophy behind present-day foreign policies.

It is important to realize that these previous examples are by no means the only items necessary to formulate correct policies. Each country has specific problems that only it deals with; these idiosyncrasies must also be accounted for during effective research on a country. Additionally, your delegation should research your country’s relationship and role in the United Nations. This should include when your country became a member, committees and organizations of which you are a member, and how much money you annually contribute to the UN. Flagship programs with the UN and any other collaborations or interactions of note (ex. peacekeeping operations, major World Bank or IMF loan programs, public health campaigns, etc.) should also be addressed, especially if it pertains to individual committee topic research.

**Step Two: Assimilation of Research**

The assimilation step of research is often the hardest thing for a delegate to accomplish. Try to put yourself in the place of someone from the country you are representing. It may seem difficult, but the more you talk about the various topic areas with your delegation, the more you will be able to understand why other countries behave the way they do. By using the knowledge gained through the background research, the delegate should be able to extrapolate how their nation might form a policy on a specific topic (even if the state’s actual policy on a topic is unknown). If this step is accomplished, a delegate, for instance, will be able to represent India and act as a representative of a developing, over-populated state desiring both stable international relations and economic growth. In this sense, an interdisciplinary approach to preparation is recommended. For example, the Commission on the Status of Women may be addressing female illiteracy; while the topic may not directly concern economic, political, or security issues, these aspects nonetheless inform how a state will approach the topic and possible solutions. A state with great political instability will bring this experience to the committee and advocate against solutions that rely too heavily on government support. If a delegate goes into the conference with concerns and attitudes of the country he or she is representing, then he or she will likely excel at the simulation.

* **Topic Research**

With background and basic United Nations research accomplished, the delegate is in a position to begin formulating a policy for his/her country on the issues to be discussed in the committee. This process involves recognizing the various factors and processes that influence decision-making within the country, and applying this knowledge to the topics at hand. Often specific information on national policy is not available and it becomes necessary to display some educated creativity.

A delegate must first note the existing policy problem areas in order to formulate the country's policy. Although the problem will be explained in the committee Background Guide, the delegate must discover the importance of the issue in his or her own country. The delegate should understand the nature and the extent to which the topic affects his or her country. He or she should also be aware of the existing policies designed to meet the problem in his or her own country, the UN, and other international organizations. It is very important to note whether a conflict exists between those policies made in the UN and those within one’s “home” countries.

If no national policy exists on the topic the delegate should look at the various groups in the country with stands on the issues. The delegate must determine the level of access and power these groups have over the government. By weighing the power and access of the different groups, a delegate can infer the probable policy decision in the country on the issue.

In some cases, if there is limited information about the country's decision-making process or of its interest groups, the delegate may only be able to determine some of the variables involved. If this occurs, he or she will have to rely on the ideology of government, power, and the role of the individual upheld by the country in order to make an educated and defensible guess about the country’s policy on that particular issue.

Another possible approach to take when information is lacking is to look at the policies of countries with similar ideologies and regional interests. For example, many African states hold similar ideological and regional interests. For example, they may hold similar positions on many issues including the question of Namibia and South Africa. This manner of inferring policy should be used carefully, however, so that errors are not made. It would, for example, be a grave error to assume that Thailand and Vietnam are always in agreement with each other simply because they are both located in the same region of the globe.

By following this process as closely as possible, a delegate will be able to formulate policy for his or her country. The delegate will also discover the complex variables that affect policy formation throughout the world.

* **World Opinion**

Once the delegates have completed the research on the United Nations, their own country, and the topics to be discussed, they must turn to the allies of their country and the various blocs. The delegate should know which countries will be supporting their position and what the position of the other blocs (groups of nations with similar interests) will be on the various problems to be discussed. He or she should also know which of these countries will be represented in the committee. It would also help to know where the different blocs will form on the issues in your committee.

**VALID SOURCE OF PROOF IN THE COMMITTEE**

Evidence or proof is from the following sources will be accepted as credible in the UNGA:

1. **State-operated News Agencies** – These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are,
	1. RIA Novosti (Russia) [http://en.rian.ru/]
	2. IRNA (Iran) [http://http://www.irna.ir/en/]
	3. BBC (United Kingdom) [http://bbc.co.uk/]
	4. Al Jazeera (Qatar) [http://www.aljazeera.com
	5. Xinhua News Agency (PR China) [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/china/]
2. **Government Reports:**These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information. Some examples are,
	1. **Government Websites** like the State Department of the United States of America [http://www.state.gov/index.htm] or the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation [http://www.eng.mil.ru/en/index.htm]
	2. **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** of various nations like India [http://www.mea.gov.in/] or People’s Republic of China [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/].
	3. **Permanent Representatives to the United Nations** Reports http://www.un.org/en/members/ (Click on any country to get the website of theOffice of its Permanent Representative.)
	4. **Multilateral Organizations** like the NATO [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm], ASEAN [http://www.aseansec.org/], OPEC [http://www.opec.org/opec\_web/en/], etc.
3. **United Nations Reports:**All UN Reports are considered are credible information or evidence for the Executive Board of the UNGA:
	1. **UN Bodies** like the UNSC [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/] or UNGA [http://www.un.org/en/ga/].
	2. **UN Affiliated Bodies** like the International Atomic Energy Agency [http://www.iaea.org/], World Bank [http://www.worldbank.org/], International Monetary Fund [http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm], International Committee of the Red Cross [http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp], etc.
	3. **Treaty Based Bodies** like the Antarctic Treaty System [http:// www.ats.aq/e/ats.htm], the International Criminal Court [http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menus/ICC]

**NOTE** — Sources like Wikipedia [http://www.wikipedia.org/], Amnesty International [http://www.amnesty.org/], Human Rights Watch [http://www.hrw.org/] or newspapers like the Guardian [http://www.guardian.co.uk/], Times of India [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/], etc. are typically not accepted as PROOF/EVIDENCE. However, they can be used for better understanding of any issue or on rare occasions, be brought up in debate if the information given in such sources is in line with the beliefs of a Government.

**Further, the** **information submitted as evidence citing reportage from sources such as specified** **in this note may be at best, treated as having significance in terms of persuasive**

**value - e.g. to cement one’s assertions, but never as binding, indisputable fact**.

**BASIC THINGS TO KNOW**

1. **Basic documents, treaties, conventions etc.**

Following is the list of documents that need to be perused by all delegates before they come to the council. Please understand that you need to know the following aspects regarding each of the mentioned documents:

* The reason why this document exists (for e.g. the Geneva Conventions were enacted to lay down the rules of war and for the treatment of all parties concerned in the wars.)
* The nature of the document and the force it carries, i.e. whether it is a treaty, a convention, a doctrine, or a universally accepted custom or norm.
* The areas where the document can be applied or has jurisdiction on (for e.g. international humanitarian law applies only to situations of armed conflict, whereas the human rights laws applies at all times of war and peace alike.)
* The contents of the document at hand. You need not memorize any articles or rules of any convention or treaty, but should know what the document has to say in various situations that -may arise in the council. The delegates must have the understanding of the following:
1. **UN Charter**

The Charter of the United Nations was signed on 26 June 1945 at San Francisco by the nations represented at the United Nations Conference on International Organization, most of them earlier allies in the Second World War. The allies began being referred to as the 'United Nations' towards the end of that war. The Charter came into force on October 24 1945. Since that time all members joining have had to declare themselves bound by both documents - though practice has demonstrated on too many occasions that that declaration has not been taken too seriously. Once again, a written constitution is one thing, actual behavior is another.

1. **International Bill of Human Rights**

The international bill of human rights lays down the foundations of the international human rights regime. It consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted in 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966) with its two Optional Protocols and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), along with its additional protocol.

The Bill influences the decisions and actions of Government, State and Non-State actors to make economic, social and cultural rights a top-priority in the formation and implementation of national, regional and international policy and law.

We would highly recommend you to go through the following videos:

* <https://youtu.be/ccXj6-sD-9Q>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDgIVseTkuE>
1. **Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or CEDAW is an international human rights treaty, which requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas, and promotes equal rights of men and women. It is the ‘pillar’ on which the equality of men and women rights is guaranteed.

It has 6 parts:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part I** | non-discrimination, sex stereotypes, and sex trafficking |
| **Part II** | outlines women's rights in the public sphere with an emphasis on political life, representation, and rights to nationality. |
| **Part III** | describes the economic and social rights of women particularly focusing on education, employment, and health |
| **Part IV** | outlines women's right to equality in marriage and family life along with the right to equality before the law |
| **Part V** | establishes the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as well as the states parties' reporting procedure |
| **Part VI** | describes the effects of the Convention on other treaties, the commitment of the states parties and the administration of the Convention |

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Feminist history can be divided into three waves. The first wave, occurring in the 19th and early 20th century, was mainly concerned with women’s right to vote. The second wave, at its height in the 1960s and 1970s, refers to the women’s liberation movement for equal legal and social rights. The third wave, beginning in the 1990s, refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to, second-wave feminism.

First-wave feminism promoted equal contract and property rights for women, opposing ownership of married women by their husbands. By the late 19th century, feminist activism was primarily focused on the right to vote. American first-wave feminism ended with passage of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919, granting women voting rights.

Second-wave feminism of the 1960s-1980s focused on issues of equality and discrimination. The second-wave slogan, “The Personal is Political,” identified women’s cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand how their personal lives reflected sexist power structures.

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, responding to perceived failures of the second wave and to the backlash against second-wave initiatives. This ideology seeks to challenge the definitions of femininity that grew out of the ideas of the second-wave, arguing that the second-wave over-emphasized experiences of upper middle-class white women. The third-wave sees women’s lives as intersectional, demonstrating how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism. It examines issues related to women’s lives on an international basis.

Feminists have long understood that gender inequality and the abuse of women’s rights goes beyond individual discrimination. Instead we have identified that there is a system of oppression based on gender and assumptions of gender roles, behaviours and norms in society which we call patriarchy. The term ‘intersectionality’ was originally coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a black US civil rights advocate and legal scholar. It was born out of her review of multiple employment discrimination-based lawsuits, in which black women’s challenges would not neatly fit within legal categories of either racism or sexism – but rather were a combination of both. However, for more than a century before Crenshaw coined the term, African American feminists’ experiences of ‘simultaneous oppressions’ or ‘interlocking oppressions’ helped explain their collective struggles against sexism, racism, slavery, segregation and class. From the 1970s, socialist feminists have also connected the oppression of women to other oppressions in society, exposing the nexus between capitalism and patriarchy and, to a lesser extent, recognising the way sexism interacted with sexuality, race or colonial status. Ehrenreich, in her 1976 article, argued that socialist feminism was really too short a term for ‘socialist internationalist antiracist, anti-heterosexist feminism’.

**WHAT IS GENDER?**

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health. It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories. Gender norms, roles and relations influence people’s susceptibility to different health conditions and diseases and affect their enjoyment of good mental, physical health and wellbeing. They also have a bearing on people’s access to and uptake of health services and on the health outcomes they experience throughout the life-course.

The terms sex and gender are commonly used interchangeably, however, it is important to understand that there is a significant difference between the implications and usage of the two terms. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), ‘gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female at a particular point in time’ Gender roles are learned behaviours that a society or community assigns to women, men, girls and boys based on their gender. Such roles tend to influence which activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived to be female and male.

More specifically, these roles influence the relationship between women, men, girls and boys. Social and cultural understanding of gender varies throughout societies and time. On the other hand, sex is biologically determined and ‘refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male’ (as defined by WHO) and these characteristics are considered as being universally similar and is constant.

**MEANING OF INTERSECTIONALITY**

Intersectionality is increasingly referred to among feminists but frequently undefined, leaving the term, open to a variety of interpretations: what it means in practice and how to put it to use is still unclear to many.
The concept of intersectionality helps us to both understand and respond to complex and multifaceted identities – describing the way that inequalities and oppression manifest themselves, but also proposing the way in which programme interventions should be shaped, and political resistance can be built. It shows us how gender inequality and patriarchy intersect with other systems of oppression and how these intersections then contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. And it highlights new forms of activism, advocacy and resistance. As a network, combatting patriarchy, gender inequality and the abuse of women’s rights remains the primary focus of our political agenda – and our particular contribution to social justice movements. But we also recognise it cannot be understood and confronted in isolation from the myriad of other discriminations and forms of oppression that women face.

Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term intersectionality has become the key analytic framework through which feminist scholars in various fields talk about the structural identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Intersectionality, also referred to as intersectional feminism, is a branch of feminism which identifies how different aspects of social and political discrimination overlap with gender. It is a qualitative analytic framework that identifies how interlocking systems of power affect those who are most marginalized in society.

Essentially, an intersectional approach reminds us of three main points:

* First, that while all women are subject to gendered discrimination in one way or another, it is not just gender but also race, socioeconomic class and other factors which shape experiences of discrimination, marginalisation and oppression.
* Second, that the particular experience of intersecting discriminations is unique, not simply the sum of different discriminations.
* Third, that as a political movement, feminism must tackle all forms of discrimination and oppression whether based on gender, race, class, and so on.

**Complex and intersecting identities:** Crenshaw argued that understanding identity requires us to see all of its facets as intertwined and co-constitutive—as intersecting— rather than as separate and independent of each other. Or, as feminist writer Hankivsky later observed: “inequities … are the outcome of intersections of different social locations, power relations and experiences.” Moreover, these intersections are dynamic, changing over time. Since Crenshaw, the approach has been developed by others to include categories in addition to gender, class and race, including: skin colour, caste, age, ethnicity, colonial experience, language, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ability, culture and geographic location, as well as status as a migrant, indigenous person, transgender person, refugee or internally displaced person, or person living with HIV/AIDS, in conflict or under foreign occupation.

In other words, notions of gender and the way a person’s gender is interpreted by others are always impacted by notions of race and the way that person’s race is interpreted. For example, a person is never received as just a woman, but how that person is racialized impacts how the person is received as a woman. So, notions of blackness, brownness, and whiteness always influence gendered experience, and there is no experience of gender that is outside of an experience of race. In addition to race, gendered experience is also shaped by age, sexuality, class, and ability; likewise, the experience of race is impacted by gender, age, class, sexuality, and ability.



Before moving forward, it is essential for us to define the key terms that will come across often through the course of this guide and your research on the agenda:

**Race-** A race is a grouping of humans based on shared physical or social qualities into categories generally viewed as distinct by society.

**Sexual Orientation-** a person's sexual identity or self-identification as bisexual, heterosexual, homosexual, pansexual, etc.: the state of being bisexual, heterosexual, homosexual, pansexual, etc.

**Gender Identity-** One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

**Nationality-** The status of belonging to a particular nation; an ethnic group forming a part of one or more political nations.

**Disability-** physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities; a disadvantage or handicap, especially one imposed or recognized by the law.

**Class-** a set or category of things having some property or attribute in common and differentiated from others by kind, type, or quality; a system of ordering society whereby people are divided into sets based on perceived social or economic status.

To further our view on the basic idea behind intersectionality, we’d have to shed light on two models of identity and while doing do, differentiate between the two to figure out which one is prevalent in our society hence empowering the practice.

An intersectional analysis of identity is distinct from single-determinant identity models and additive models of identity. A **single determinant model of identity** presumes that one aspect of identity, say, gender, dictates one’s access to or disenfranchisement from power. An example of this idea is the concept of “global sisterhood,” or the idea that all women across the globe share some basic common political interests, concerns, and needs f women in different locations did share common interests, it would make sense for them to unite on the basis of gender to fight for social changes on a global scale. Unfortunately, if the analysis of social problems stops at gender, what is missed is an attention to how various cultural contexts shaped by race, religion, and access to resources may actually place some women’s needs at cross-purposes to other women’s needs. Therefore, this approach obscures the fact that women in different social and geographic locations face different problems. Although many white, middle-class women activists of the mid-20th century US fought for freedom to work and legal parity with men, this was not the major problem for women of color or working-class white women who had already been actively participating in the US labor market as domestic workers, factory workers, and slave laborers since early US colonial settlement. Campaigns for women’s equal legal rights and access to the labor market at the international level are shaped by the experience and concerns of white American women, while women of the global south, in particular, may have more pressing concerns: access to clean water, access to adequate health care, and safety from the physical and psychological harms of living in tyrannical, war-torn, or economically impoverished nations.

In contrast to the single-determinant identity model, the **additive model of identity** simply adds together privileged and disadvantaged identities for a slightly more complex picture. For instance, a Black man may experience some advantages based on his gender, but has limited access to power based on his race. This kind of analysis is exemplified in how race and gender wage gaps are portrayed in statistical studies and popular news reports. The additive model does not take into account how our shared cultural ideas of gender are racialized and our ideas of race are gendered and that these ideas structure access to resources and power—material, political, interpersonal. contemporary white American culture exoticizes Black men and women and she points to a history of enslavement and treatment as chattel as the origin and motivator for the use of these images. In order to justify slavery, African-Americans were thought of and treated as less than human. Sexual reproduction was often forced among slaves for the financial benefit of plantation owners, but owners reframed this coercion and rape as evidence of the “natural” and uncontrollable sexuality of people from the African continent. Images of Black men and women were not completely the same, as Black men were constructed as hypersexual “bucks” with little interest in continued relationships whereas Black women were framed as hypersexual “Jezebels” that became the “matriarchs” of their families. Again, it is important to note how the context, where enslaved families were often forcefully dismantled, is often left unacknowledged and contemporary racialized constructions are assumed and framed as individual choices or traits. It is shockingly easy to see how these images are still present in contemporary media, culture, and politics, for instance, in discussions of American welfare programs. This analysis reveals how race, gender, and sexuality intersect. We cannot simply pull these identities apart because they are interconnected and mutually enforcing.

**CRENSHAW’S THEORY OF INTERSECTIONALITY**

Now that we have established what intersectionality means and what factors lead to its origin, let us now look at it from the original perspective of Kimberle Crenshaw and what she meant while writing here paper, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”.

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in a paper as a way to help explain the oppression of African-American women. Crenshaw's then somewhat academic term is now at the forefront of international conversations about racial justice, identity politics, and policing—and over the years has helped shape legal discussions. She used the term in her crucial 1989 paper for the University of Chicago Legal Forum, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In her work, Crenshaw discusses Black feminism, arguing that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in independent terms of either being black or a woman. Rather, it must include interactions between the two identities, which, she adds, should frequently reinforce one another.

In order to show that non-white women have a vastly different experience from white women due to their race and/or class and that their experiences are not easily voiced or pinpointed, Crenshaw explores two types of male violence against women: domestic violence and rape. Through her analysis of these two forms of male violence against women, Crenshaw says that the experiences of non-white women consist of a combination (or, intersection) of both racism and sexism. She says that because non-white women are present within discourses that have been designed to address either race or sex – but not both at the same time – non-white women are marginalized within both of these systems of oppression as a result.

In her work, Crenshaw identifies three aspects of intersectionality that affect the visibility of non-white women: structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality deals with how non-white women experience domestic violence and rape in a manner qualitatively different than, that of white women. Political intersectionality examines how laws and policies intended to increase equality have paradoxically decreased the visibility of violence against non-white women. Finally, representational intersectionality delves into how pop culture portrayals of non-white women can obscure their own authentic lived experiences.

For a better understanding, you can go ahead and read the original paper at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

While the theory began as an exploration of the oppression of women of color within society, today the analysis has expanded to include many more aspects of social identity. Intersectionality may also be related to the term triple oppression, which engages with similar themes. Critics have pointed out that intersectionality relies entirely on non-objective concepts such as "systems of power" which themselves lack a material reality, and therefore empirical basis for study, making it an ideological set of ideas, and not a proper sociological concept. However, there now exist data throughout the different strata of the society to back the theory up.

Below, you can see a median wage gap table from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research compiled in 2009. In reading the table, it can be seen that the gender wage gap is such that in 2009, overall, women earned 77% of what men did in the US. The table breaks down the information further to show that earnings varied not only by gender but by race as well. Thus, Hispanic or Latino women earned only 52.9% of what white men did while white women made 75%. This is certainly more descriptive than a single gender wage gap figure or a single race wage gap figure. The table is useful at pointing to potential structural explanations that may make earnings differ between groups. For instance, looking at the chart, you may immediately wonder why these gaps exist; is it a general difference of education levels, occupations, regions of residence or skill levels between groups, or is it something else, such as discrimination in hiring and promotion? What it is not useful for us to predict people’s incomes by plugging in their gender plus their race, even though it may be our instinct to do so. Individual experiences differ vastly and for a variety of reasons; there are outliers in every group. Most importantly, even if this chart helps in understanding structural reasons why incomes differ, it doesn’t provide all the answers.



After establishing what intersectionality essentially is, and having a look at the few available empirical evidences that have been generalized, let us now look at specific case studies in brief to better understand the role intersectionality plays in different facets of society and the oppression females have to face in such situations. We’ll be focusing on two specific areas namely Mental Health, and Education. However, in no case should your research be limited to these. You can expand your research on both of these areas and find out more such areas.

**INTERSECTIONALITY IN GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

Following is an excerpt from an interview that Crenshaw gave on intersectionality two decades after she coined the term “Intersectionality” to explain how it is still relevant as of today:

Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times, that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.

Some people look to intersectionality as a grand theory of everything, but that’s not my intention. If someone is trying to think about how to explain to the courts why they should not dismiss a case made by black women, just because the employer did hire blacks who were men and women who were white, well, that's what the tool was designed to do. If it works, great. If it doesn’t work, it’s not like you have to use this concept.

The other issue is that intersectionality can get used as a blanket term to mean, “Well, it’s complicated.” Sometimes, “It’s complicated” is an excuse not to do anything.

We try to take ideas and make them into hands-on tools that advocates and communities can use. Part of it is public education. We use art and other projects to show how people are experiencing intersectional harms, such as mothers of women killed by the police, or young girls expelled from school. We work directly with advocates and communities to develop ways they can better see these problems and better intervene in advocacy.

What’s most problematic about the contemporary conversation is the complete irrelevance of women of color. People talk about how constituencies, specifically working class white men, saw a terrible deterioration of their prospects and they were angry and wanted to vote for someone not part of the establishment.

If you look at women of color, especially blacks and Latinas, their economic well-being has been most impacted by deindustrialization, and by the de-funding of the public sector. So if any group had a reason to respond to scapegoat politics, you would think it might be those workers who were subject to both racialized downward pressures and gendered downward pressures. Yet they were least likely to vote for someone not of the establishment.

Why aren’t we talking about that? Why is the intersection of maleness and whiteness driving our analysis and not the intersection of being a woman and a person of color? What is going on that these women of color did not respond to xenophobia and racism? What did they have that made them say we’re better than this and we want more for our country?

Over the last couple decades in the European Union, there has been discussion regarding the intersections of social classifications and the need to acknowledge their functions. Before Crenshaw coined her definition of intersectionality, there was debate on what these societal categories were, and how they played a role in the lives of many minorities. What was once a more cut and dried categorization between gender, race, and class has turned into a multidimensional intersection of "race" including religion, sexuality, ethnicities, etc. In the EU and UK they refer to these intersections under the notion of multiple discrimination. The EU passed a non-discrimination law which addresses these multiple intersections; however, there is debate on whether the law is still proactively focusing on the proper inequalities. The European Union is not the only organization that is acknowledging this concept. People around the world are taking a new approach when identifying others identities as well as their own; although, there are still places that follow the traditional process of categorization as stated in the following quote. "The impact of patriarchy and traditional assumptions about gender and families are evident in the lives of Chinese migrant workers, sex workers and their clients in South Korea, and Indian widows, but also Ukrainian migrants and Australian men of the new global middle class."

For example, Chandra Mohanty discusses alliances between women throughout the world as intersectionality in a global context. She rejects western feminist theory, especially when it writes about global women of color and generally associated “third world women.” She argues that “third world women” are often thought of as a homogenous entity, when, in fact, their experience of oppression is informed by their geography, history, and culture.

When western feminists write about women in the global South in this way, they dismiss the inherent intersecting identities that are present in the dynamic of feminism in the global South. Mohanty questions the performance of intersectionality and relationality of power structures within the USA and colonialism and how to work across identities with this history of colonial power structures. This lack of homogeneity and intersecting identities can be seen through Feminism in India which goes over how women in India practice feminism within social structures and continuing effects of colonization that differ from that of Western and other non-Western countries.

This is elaborated on by Christine Bose who discusses a global use of intersectionality which works to remove associations of specific inequalities with specific institutions, while showing that these systems generate intersectional effects. She uses this approach to develop a framework that can analyze gender inequalities across different nations and differentiates this from an approach (the one that Mohanty was referring to) which, one, paints national-level inequalities as the same and, two, differentiates only between the global North and South. This is manifested through the intersection of global dynamics like economics, migration, or violence, with regional dynamics, like histories of the nation or gendered inequalities in education and property education.

**CONCLUSION**

Through the course of this guide we have come to understand that intersectionality isn’t a mere theory but has now evolved to one of the most essential and instrumental facet of feminism. Though the term was coined only about three decades ago it was born out of centuries of struggle and still remains pertinent to the global scenario. It in fact is embedded in the core of modern feminist political theory. The question that arises is why there is a need to discuss this on a global platform such as the United Nations Women?

The answer begins with the ambiguity in the definition of intersectionality which need clarification. Furthermore, there is a requirement to launch fact finding missions in order to concretely document the cases of discrimination to provide empirical evidence to strengthen the concept. Finally, one of the most important things that the concept of intersectionality gave birth to, is the idea that it can be used as a social justice initiative to bring about social change. Thus, it becomes absolutely necessary to come to common grounds on a subject like this and make steps toward inculcating the idea of its existence and hence, creating sensitivity in the state, laws, societies and individuals for the same.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

* What forms of identity are critical organising principles for this community/region
* (in addition to gender, consider race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, sexual
* orientation and gender identify, age, caste, ability)
* Which women, girls, men and boys are most at risk of marginalisation and why?
* What social and economic programmes are available to different groups in the
* community, and do they promote or progress a transformative agenda for
* women’s rights?
* Who does and does not have access or control over productive resources and
* why?
* Who has the lowest and the highest levels of public representation and why?
* What laws, policies and organisations limit opportunities of different groups?
* What opportunities facilitate the advancement of different groups?
* What initiatives would address the needs of marginalised or discriminated
* groups in society?
* What are the expressed needs and priorities of these marginalised group?

**Suggested links:**

* <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/reality-intersectional-factors-gender-inequality>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_mxBRNqNF4>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o>
* <https://www.thoughtco.com/intersectionality-definition-3026353>
* <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>
* <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/11/01/the-significance-of-intersectionality-for-feminist-political-theory/>

**Additional links for Research Work**

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/45e9/502eb6d9c792444ba6543d6ac5293b65dd1a.pdf

https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/reality-intersectional-factors-gender-inequality

https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/4-Intersectional-Approach-to-Labour-Discrimination.pdf

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/853f/12d2c954e2773ce4f44a60595e4b388efec5.pdf

https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/ncid-assets/ncid-documents/Ten%20Diversity%20Scholarship%20Resources/Walby%2C%20Armstrong%2C%20%26%20Strid%20(2012)%20Intersectionality-%20Multiple%20Inequalities%20in%20Social%20Theory%20.pdf

https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/ncid-assets/ncid-documents/Ten%20Diversity%20Scholarship%20Resources/Walby%2C%20Armstrong%2C%20%26%20Strid%20(2012)%20Intersectionality-%20Multiple%20Inequalities%20in%20Social%20Theory%20.pdf