

<b>Forum:</b>	SDG 5 Committee
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## Introduction

According to the report, 1 in 10 of women and girls aged 15-49, more than 1 in 10 (12.5%) were subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in the last year. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened crises that threaten women and girls around the world. As a result, the conflicts between different genders have never been more violent than during the last two years.

First and foremost, Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence and any harmful practices against women and girls in the public and private sphere. In addition, this committee pursues the increased recognition of this global issue and heightened commitment from the global community to achieve this goal. The Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by UN Member States in 2015, set a 2030 deadline for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic and various world issues, the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

In consideration of the committee, the issues are “the question of bodily autonomy of women and girls” and “the question of Gender Based Violence ”. According to UN Women, a United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, “even though 155 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 140 have legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace (World Bank 2020), challenges remain in enforcing these laws, limiting women and girls’ access to safety and justice.” Amongst a variety of reasons, the council notes that movement restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for women to leave abusive households, leading to significant increase in interpersonal and economic stress resulting in rising intimate partner violence (IPV). To be specific, as GBV (Gender Based Violence ) prevention and response services were deprioritized due to governments’ shift of their resources to COVID-19 response, women and girls were limited to access services available to them. In regards to the current situation, the assembly is dedicated to prevent violence against women and girls, focusing on early education, respectful relationships, and working with men and boys, believing that prevention is still the most cost-effective, long-term way to stop violence.

# TOPIC 1: The question of bodily autonomy of women and girls

## Definition of Key Terms

### Body

It is the physical structure of a person or an animal, including the bones, flesh, and organs (“Body.”). Comprehending this terminology as what the women and girls should be independent of will be sufficient for further debates to come.

### Autonomy

It is the ability to make decisions on one’s own, to control one’s own body, and to determine how resources will be used, without needing to consult with or ask permission from another person (“Autonomy.”). Comprehending this terminology as the control of women over their own lives, materials, access to knowledge and information, having equal say with their husbands or partners on matters affecting themselves and their families will be sufficient for further debates to come.

### Woman

It is an adult female human being (“Woman.”). Comprehending this terminology as a subject supposed to have the right to freely make decisions about her body will be sufficient for further debates to come.

### Girl

It is a young or relatively young woman (“Girl.”). Comprehending this terminology as a subject supposed to have the right to freely make decisions about her body will be sufficient for further debates to come.

## Background Information

Women all around the world are exposed to attacks, including rape, forced sterilization and genital mutilation. Furthermore, whether it's sex, health care or using contraception, majority of women in developing countries lack control over decisions affecting their bodies. “Bodily autonomy and integrity - the power to make our own choices about our own bodies - are grounded in gender equality and human

rights, and are necessary for women's empowerment and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals," noted Bjorn Andersson, UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Director. "Denying millions of people, including women and girls, their empowerment, compromises not only individual health and wellbeing but hinders the development of entire societies and countries."

### Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

According to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA)'s State of World Population report, the lack of bodily autonomy may have worsened during the coronavirus pandemic, placing record numbers of women and girls at risk of gender-based violence and harmful practices such as early marriage. According to Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director, "In essence, hundreds of millions of women and girls do not own their own bodies. Their lives are governed by others", she added, noting that the denial of bodily autonomy is a violation of women and girls' fundamental human rights. The report also noted that a woman's power to control her own body is linked to how much control she has in other spheres of her life, with higher autonomy associated with advances in health and education, income and safety.

### Issues in developing countries

Nearly half the women and adolescent girls in developing countries are denied the right to decide whether or not to have sex with their partners, use contraception, or seek healthcare, according to a new report by the United Nations. In the 57 developing countries where data was available, the report found 45 percent of women were not fully empowered to make choices over healthcare, contraception, and whether or not to have sex. There were differences across regions: While 76 percent of women in eastern and southeastern Asian make their own decisions over their bodies, the figure is less than 50 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and in central and south Asia.

### Laws, policies and education

The UN's Population Fund notes that there's a strong link between decision-making power and higher levels of education. In addition, according to the report, 71 percent of countries guarantee access to overall maternity care, 75 percent of countries legally ensure full, equal access to contraception. "It also shows that 80 per cent of countries have laws supporting sexual health and well-being, while 56 per cent of countries have laws and policies supporting comprehensive sexuality education." Furthermore, according to UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, "women with more education are more likely to make their own decisions about contraception and healthcare, and to be able to say no to sex. Comprehensive sexuality education—meaning age-appropriate, accurate information about one's reproductive health and rights—is also crucial. It helps prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and equips individuals to advocate for themselves."

## Key Issues

### Child marriage

While the prevalence of child marriage has decreased worldwide – from one in four girls married a decade ago to approximately one in five today – the practice remains widespread. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 100 million girls were expected to marry before their eighteenth birthday in the next decade. Now, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic. In regards to the bodily autonomy of women and girls, early marriage prevents girls from being sufficiently educated to be independent and responsible of their own body. The lack of realization of their own right due to early marriage will lead to increased unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

### Abortion

Research has demonstrated that denying women access to abortion triggers outcomes that reverberate throughout their lives, impacting everything from the school years they complete to how much they earn. To be specific, research shows that abortion access has not only had profound effects on women's economic and social lives but has also impacted the circumstances into which children are born. Today, nearly half of pregnancies are unintended (Finer and Zolna, 2016). About 6% of young women (ages 15-34) experience an unintended pregnancy each year (Finer, Lindberg, and Desai, 2018), and about 1.4% of women of childbearing age obtain an abortion each year (Jones, Witwer, and Jerman, 2019). At these rates, approximately one in four women will receive an abortion in their reproductive lifetimes. The fact is clear: women continue to rely on abortion access to determine their reproductive lives.

### Lack of early education

In many developed countries, the number of educated women across all levels has risen considerably, but a large number of underdeveloped nations still suffer from a lack of women in education. The lack of education leads to unrealized bodily autonomy and, as a result, these countries and people cannot be as productive as they could be, and are not only harming themselves, but also the world as a whole. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979, CEDAW) is the only legally binding treaty at the international level focusing exclusively on women's rights. It interprets and applies the right to education in a way that considers the specific needs and circumstances of women and girls. Article 10 of CEDAW is the most comprehensive provision on

women and girls' right to education in international law. It sets forth the normative content in relation to the elimination of discrimination against women and ensuring equal rights with men in the field of education, including the same quality of education, the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women and the same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants.

## Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
4 September 1995	At the United Nation's 4th World Conference on Women (1995), "women in the exercise of power and decision-making" was raised as one of the areas of concern and as such included in the Beijing Platform for Action issued by the conference.
29 April 2019	In 2019, as the most restrictive abortion law in the United States was signed by Alabama governor, Kay Ivey, demonstrators used the slogan outside of the Alabama Capitol in protest.
8 June 2018	Gender Equality Advisory Council calls for additional investments in girls' education, prevention and response to gender-based violence, gender data, and funding for women's organisations.
1 July 2021	Action Coalition Leaders and Commitment Makers gathered at the Generation Equality Forum to launch ground-breaking commitments to end gender-based violence, drive equality in technology and innovation, and to ensure economic justice and rights for women and girls everywhere.

## Possible Solutions

Despite the fact that there have been numerous endeavours to protect bodily autonomy of women and girls, the main problem lies in the lack of early education to allow women and girls to make choices about their own bodies without facing coercion or violence. Therefore, to support bodily autonomy of women and girls the countries should invest in early education of women and girls. For instance, women with more education are more likely to make their own decisions about contraception and healthcare, and to be able to say no to sex. Comprehensive sexuality education, meaning age-appropriate, accurate information about one's reproductive health and rights, is also believed to be necessary to educate little girls on their rights and responsibility of their own body. Educating girls in advance will significantly reduce unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and will equip individuals to advocate for themselves.

In addition, the countries should make investments in GBV (Gender Based Violence ) prevention and response services, which were deprioritized due to governments' shift of their resources to COVID-19 response, to allow women and girls to readily access services. Likewise, more health providers, who play a critical role in upholding the bodily autonomy of those seeking information and care, should be trained and allocated to women and girls. To be specific, well-trained health workers will be able to provide patients with medical guidelines, training on legal requirements, and specific gender-sensitivity training to actively support the bodily autonomy of patients.

However, in order for educated women and girls to settle in the society and act in the right way, social norms must also become more gender equitable. Therefore, laws that can have a significant impact on women's rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health, must be supported by the governments of the countries. Furthermore, to build a rigid structure supporting the protection of bodily autonomy of women and girls, women and girls should be able to gain opportunities for leadership roles in their community to increase their power to make decisions about their own bodies. Only when women have control over their bodies can they benefit from rights and opportunities in all other areas of their lives.

## Recommendations for Research

Although the head chair of the council has done general research on the topic for the delegates, the chair would encourage delegates to do additional research specific to their own countries to develop their understanding. Delegates could begin their research on the delegate's country's new legislation and, furthermore, past policies and actions in regards to the 'bodily autonomy of women and girls.'

Moreover, the head chair believes being prepared to discuss various world issues related to the topic in different aspects will be helpful for delegates to form their own country's stance in the debate.

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