



CHMUN 2026

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (UNCSW)

AGENDA

Addressing the Systemic Exclusion of Women and Girls from Education and Economic Participation in Afghanistan, Examining Recent Developments Under the Taliban, And Strengthening International Efforts to Restore Access to Education, Employment, And Economic Empowerment

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Board, we are delighted to welcome you to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at CHMUN 2026. Since 1946, the UNCSW is standing as the principal global body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. As you step into the roles of your respective Member States, you are taking on an important historical duty. You are carrying the responsibility of advancing a platform that has shaped international frameworks on women's rights for almost eight decades.

The agenda at hand is "Addressing the Systemic Exclusion of Women and Girls from Education and Economic Participation in Afghanistan, Examining Recent Developments Under the Taliban, And Strengthening International Efforts to Restore Access to Education, Employment, And Economic Empowerment". Navigating this crisis requires human rights imperatives with national sovereignty, international sanctions and socio-economic realities. We expect debate rooted in thorough foreign policy research, intersectional analysis, and actionable, policy-driven solutions.

Within these walls, substantive diplomacy must always take. We value collaborative problem-solving, meaningful caucusing and constructive negotiation. True leadership in MUN is demonstrated through the ability to unite varied perspectives rather than dominating a room. Rest assured, the Executive Board is firmly committed to maintaining a safe, equitable and intellectually stimulating environment where every voice is respected and heard.

Prepare thoroughly, speak with purpose and engage with the intent to build consensus. We eagerly anticipate your finest diplomatic efforts and look forward to welcoming you to a truly transformative session.

Sincerely,

Heena Noor
Chair, UNCSW

Aaron G Sunil
Vice-Chair, UNCSW

Amith G Bhat
Moderator, UNCSW

1. Introduction to Committee

Established on June 21, 1946, under ECOSOC resolution 11(II), the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) is the principal global body dedicated to gender equality and women empowerment. As a functional commission of ECOSOC, the UNCSW promotes women's rights, documents global gender disparities and monitors

fundamental frameworks most notably the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to bridge the gap between legal rights and real world access.

The UNCSW functions as a recommendatory body. Unlike the UN Security Council, it cannot pass legally binding resolutions, issue sanctions or authorize military force. Instead, it formulates policy recommendations, declarations, and resolutions submitted to ECOSOC for adoption. Its power lies in establishing global standards and shaping policy in collaboration with Member States, UN Women and civil society.

This mandate makes the UNCSW the primary forum to address the systemic exclusion of women and girls from education and economic participation in Afghanistan. While other UN organs address macroeconomic or security concerns, the UNCSW explicitly targets gender-based exclusion. Delegates must navigate complex geopolitical realities and international sanctions to formulate actionable, gender responsive solutions that restore women's fundamental access to schooling and employment.

2. Systemic Scope of Gender Exclusion

The trajectory of gender rights in Afghanistan under the de facto Taliban authorities represents an unprecedented crisis in contemporary international human rights law. Since seizing power in August 2021, the de facto administration has implemented a continuous institutional erasure of women and girls from public life. This structural exclusion operates not through isolated, discretionary acts of bias, but through an interconnected governance architecture designed to eliminate female agency, mobility, educational access, and economic self-determination. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have characterized this environment as a state-directed system of targeted, institutionalized gender-based oppression.

A core analytical imperative for delegates in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) is the conceptualization of this crisis under the framework of "gender apartheid". International legal scholars, United Nations Special Rapporteurs, and civil society advocates increasingly argue that the situation in Afghanistan requires formal legal recognition as gender apartheid under international law. Unlike generalized gender discrimination, gender apartheid describes a state-sanctioned, institutionalized system where subjugation and segregation based on gender are embedded directly into state administration, judicial operations, and public enforcement. The de facto authorities have dismantled constitutional protections, suspended statutory guarantees against gender-based violence, dismissed all female legal personnel, and codified public restrictions through hundreds of central edicts and provincial directives. [1][2][3][4][5][6]

Quantitative indices document the empirical reality of this exclusion. According to the United Nations Women's agency report Afghanistan Gender Index, Afghan women on average realize

only 17 per cent of their full potential choices and opportunities, compared to a global average of 60.7 per cent. The index reveals that nearly eight out of every ten young Afghan women—approximately 80 per cent—are simultaneously deprived of education, formal employment, and skills training. This structural exclusion transforms Afghanistan into the only state globally where female secondary and tertiary education is explicitly illegal, stranding over 2.2 million adolescent girls outside the formal school system.

Key Gender Metric	Pre-2021 Baseline / Global Average	Post-2021 Afghan Baseline	Primary Institutional Driver
Realization of Full Agency & Potential	60.7% (Global Average)	17.0% (Afghanistan)	Central Taliban Decrees & Decreed Directives
Youth Exclusion from Jobs/Education	~20–30% (Regional Average)	~80.0% (Young Women)	Edicts banning Grade 6+ & Work Access
Secondary & Higher Education Exclusion	Substantial Parity Progress	2.2 Million Girls (100% Barred)	Edicts shutting secondary/tertiary access
Female Judicial/Legal Representation	Hundreds of Judges/Prosecutors	0.0% (Complete Purge)	Dismantling of 2004 Constitutional Courts

The second- and third-order consequences of this framework extend far beyond immediate human rights violations. The systematic removal of women from decision-making roles destabilizes the socio-economic foundation of the state. By severing female citizens from public life, the de facto authorities intentionally degrade national human capital, compromise household food security, accelerate brain drain, and dismantle the institutional mechanisms required to deliver humanitarian aid, healthcare, and primary education.

3. Historical Evolution and Legislative Erasure (1919–2025)

3.1. Historical Trajectory of Gender Reforms (1919–2021)

The history of gender rights in Afghanistan is characterized by a continuous struggle between progressive state modernization and conservative rural traditionalism. Modernization initiatives began under King Amanullah Khan (1919–1929), who outlawed child marriage, established the first formal schools for girls, and granted Afghan women voting rights in 1919—predating similar constitutional amendments in several Western democracies. Following a period of conservative pushback, modernization resumed mid-century. The 1964 and 1976 Constitutions explicitly guaranteed gender equality, culminating in the 1965 parliamentary elections where four women were elected to Parliament and two were appointed to the Senate. Despite severe regression during the first Taliban regime (1996–2001), the post-2001 era enabled significant legislative, judicial, and social reconstruction. The adoption of the 2004 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan recognized equal rights and duties for men and women under Article 22, while reserving parliamentary quotas for female representatives. A foundational pillar of this era was the enactment of the 2009 Law on the

Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW), which criminalized child marriage, forced marriage, domestic abuse, and denial of education. By 2020, thousands of female judges, prosecutors, public defenders, police officers, teachers, university professors, journalists, and civil servants actively operated within state institutions.

3.2. The Post-2021 Legislative Erasure and Jurisprudential Shift

Following the fall of Kabul on 15 August 2021, the de facto Taliban authorities systematically dismantled this constitutional and statutory infrastructure. The 2004 Constitution was suspended, the EVAW law was repealed, and oversight institutions—including the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the national parliament, and provincial councils—were abolished. The formal, statutory judicial system was replaced by an all-male legal apparatus governed by a rigid, literalist interpretation of Sharia law. Male clerics without formal legal education were appointed to judicial benches, relying primarily on unwritten oral decrees issued by the Taliban's Supreme Leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada. Every female judge, prosecutor, and defense attorney was removed from office. Thousands of legal divorce rulings previously granted to female victims of domestic abuse under the EVAW Law were retroactively annulled, forcing women back into abusive domestic situations under threat of penal sanctions.

3.3. Systematic Progression of Discriminatory Edicts

The systematic exclusion of women has been executed through a progressive timeline of central decrees and local enforcement orders:

Historical Era	Institutional Status of Women	Legal Framework	Key Rights / Restrictions
Constitutional Monarchy & Republic (1919–1978)	Progressive Institutional Inclusion	Constitutions of 1964 & 1976	Universal Suffrage (1919), Equal Legal Status, Female MPs
Islamic Republic Era (2001–2021)	Statutory Protection & Civic Integration	2004 Constitution & 2009 EVAW Law	Reserved Parliamentary Quotas, Female Legal Personnel, Public Access
De Facto Taliban Rule (2021–Present)	Institutional Erasure & Legal Subjugation	Oral Decrees & 2024 Virtue/Vice Law	Complete Ban on Education (Grade 6+), Ban on UN/NGO Employment, Mahram Rule

4. Socio-Economic Impact and Human Capital Degradation

4.1. Structural Economic Collapse and Labor Market Contraction

The total exclusion of women from formal economic participation has severely damaged an economy already suffering from banking liquidity crises, international sanctions, and reduced

foreign assistance. Excluding female labor deprives Afghanistan of vital human capital and household revenue. The UN Women Afghanistan Gender Index indicates that barring women from formal labor markets costs the national economy hundreds of millions of dollars annually, intensifying systemic poverty across urban and rural communities.

When female civil servants, educators, corporate employees, and entrepreneurs are removed from economic circulation, aggregate household purchasing power contracts. The informal economy, which previously allowed women micro-entrepreneurial space, faces continuous contraction due to mandatory mahram enforcement, commercial raids, and bans on female-operated micro-enterprises such as beauty salons and home markets.

4.2. Destruction of Human Capital and the Healthcare Crisis

The prohibition of female secondary and higher education generates a compounding long-term shock across essential social sectors, most acutely within public healthcare. Because Taliban directives prohibit male healthcare professionals from examining female patients in many provinces and restrict unescorted female access to medical facilities, the healthcare system relies entirely on a workforce of qualified female doctors, nurses, and midwives. By halting the education pipeline for female medical students and barring women from health institutes in early 2025, the de facto authorities guarantee a complete depletion of female healthcare professionals within a decade. This structural constraint directly correlates with escalating maternal and infant mortality rates, creating an operational emergency for international health agencies attempting to deliver basic care.

4.3. Intersectional Marginalization: Ethnic and Religious Minorities

The impact of these decrees is magnified for women belonging to historically marginalized ethnic and religious minorities, particularly the Shiite Hazara community, as well as Uzbek and Turkmen populations. Hazara women face double structural discrimination: institutionalized gender exclusion combined with targeted ethnic and religious persecution. In regions dominated by minority communities, de facto authorities have enforced targeted land seizures, forced conversions, evictions, and arbitrary arrests of local civic leaders. Hazara women face higher rates of checkpoint harassment, arbitrary detention for dress code infractions, and systemic exclusion from the distribution of international humanitarian aid managed by local male-dominated councils.

4.4. Socio-Psychological Crisis and Forced Domesticity

The denial of public life, mobility, and educational access has produced a widespread mental health crisis among Afghan women and girls. Human rights monitors and UN briefers report unprecedented increases in clinical depression, severe anxiety disorders, and attempted suicides among adolescent girls barred from attending school. Deprived of economic productivity and educational pathways, families increasingly turn to negative coping mechanisms. Rates of early forced child marriage have escalated sharply across urban and rural

provinces alike. Adolescent girls are frequently traded or married off to alleviate household financial distress or to secure protection against arbitrary intimidation by local de facto officials.

5. Empirical Case Studies of Resistance and Alternative Modalities

5.1. Case Study 1: Subterranean Classroom Networks and "Study Houses"

In response to the formal ban on secondary and university education, Afghan women educators, civil society leaders, and international non-governmental allies have developed subterranean, home-based educational networks. Operating out of private residences, basements, and hidden community locations, these covert classrooms operate across urban centers like Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif, as well as rural provinces including Badakhshan and Baghlan. Organizations such as Ideas Beyond Borders, working alongside local grass-roots initiatives like LEARN, fund secret networks that serve over 15,000 female students across more than 40 secure locations, employing over 50 discreet female teachers. Subterranean schools operate through decentralized "study houses" that continually rotate locations to avoid detection by Taliban morality inspectors. Class sizes are kept small—typically between 10 to 15 students—to minimize physical footprints. Lessons focus on literacy, mathematics, English language skills, practical vocational capabilities, and STEM subjects. To reduce risk, educational materials are digitized and transferred via encrypted flash drives or hidden memory cards embedded within smartphones. Educators and adult facilitators face extreme physical danger, including armed searches, arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, and torture if discovered by de facto security forces. Parents risk official interrogation and community reprisal for permitting their daughters to attend these underground spaces.

5.2. Case Study 2: Digital Learning Infrastructure and Technological Adaptation

Where physical gathering is excessively dangerous, digital technology has become a vital alternative for secondary and university-level instruction. Utilizing encrypted communication applications, virtual private networks (VPNs), and dedicated e-learning platforms, female students participate in real-time online classes conducted by diaspora professors, international educational institutions, and domestic underground tutors.

Recognizing the instability of local power grids and cellular networks, digital programs emphasize downloadable asynchronous lectures, digital textbooks, and offline study modules stored on encrypted mobile devices. However, digital solutions face persistent operational constraints. Internet penetration across Afghanistan remains low, particularly in rural regions. The high cost of mobile data, persistent electrical blackouts, lack of personal hardware (tablets/smartphones), and digital surveillance by Taliban telecommunication monitors limit

accessibility. Furthermore, digital education cannot replace the practical clinical requirements for specialized fields such as medicine and health sciences.

5.3. Case Study 3: Informal Micro-Entrepreneurship and Domestic Economic Survival

Despite comprehensive bans prohibiting women from formal employment, working for foreign aid agencies, or operating public commercial businesses, women continue to organize informal economic survival strategies. Following the mandatory closure and destruction of commercial beauty salons and public tailoring shops, female entrepreneurs transitioned operations directly into private homes. Underground tailoring, carpet weaving, handicraft production, and home-based food preparation networks have proliferated. Women utilize informal financial systems, non-monetary barter exchanges, and local female sales agents to distribute goods within immediate neighborhoods, bypassing formal market stalls where mahram rules are strictly enforced. Cross-border humanitarian micro-grants delivered through secure digital wallets and informal hawala networks enable female head-of-households to purchase raw materials, supporting basic family survival.

Modality / Case Study	Educational / Economic Reach	Primary Operational Risk	Technical / Structural Barrier
Subterranean Schools ("Study Houses")	15,000+ Students across 40+ Locations	Armed Raids, Arbitrary Arrest, Torture	Limited Physical Capacity & Geographic Footprint
Digital E-Learning Infrastructures	Urban Secondary & University Students	Telecommunications Surveillance & Interception	High Data Costs, Blackouts, Low Internet Penetration
Home-Based Micro-Enterprises	Informal Local Family Survival Units	Confiscation of Goods, Fines for Mahram Breaches	Inability to Scale, Exclusion from Formal Credit

6. International Legal Frameworks, Treaty Obligations, and Jurisdictional Accountability

6.1. UN Security Council Resolutions and Legal Mandates

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has repeatedly addressed the political, security, and human rights situation in Afghanistan through targeted resolutions, establishing formal international benchmarks for the de facto authorities. UN Security Council Resolution 2681 (2023) explicitly condemned the Taliban’s decision to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. It declared the ban an unprecedented violation of the UN Charter and international human rights law, demanding an immediate and unconditional reversal of all decrees restricting female participation in public life, education, and employment. Building upon the Independent Assessment on Afghanistan (mandated by Resolution 2679), UN Security Council Resolution 2721 (2023) requested the Secretary-

General to appoint a UN Special Envoy for Afghanistan. It emphasized that full international reintegration, diplomatic recognition, and economic normalization must remain explicitly contingent upon verified progress on human rights, specifically the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women and girls. Furthermore, the Security Council has continuously extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) through resolutions 2727, 2777, 2818, and 2822, maintaining human rights monitoring, gender analysis, and public reporting as core mandates.

6.2. Treaty Obligations and International Legal Actions

Although the Taliban operates as a de facto authority without international diplomatic recognition, the state of Afghanistan remains legally bound by the international human rights treaties it ratified prior to August 2021. Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without reservations in 2003. In an unprecedented application of international treaty law, a coalition of state parties—including Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands—formalized legal proceedings against the Taliban de facto administration. Utilizing the inter-state dispute resolution mechanism under Article 29 of CEDAW, these nations initiated formal legal actions that pave the way for referral to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for structural violations of non-discrimination mandates.

Simultaneously, the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) is actively investigating crimes committed on Afghan territory. Human rights jurists and state parties have submitted evidence urging the ICC to issue arrest warrants for senior Taliban leadership specifically for the crime against humanity of gender-based persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute.

Legal Framework / Forum	Jurisdictional Mechanism	Specific Application to Afghanistan	Current Status / Target
CEDAW Article 29	Inter-State Dispute Resolution / ICJ	Systemic violations of equal rights to work, education, and health	Formal legal demand served by CAN, DEU, NLD, AUS; pathway to ICJ
Rome Statute Art. 7(1)(h)	International Criminal Court (ICC)	Crime against humanity of gender persecution against women/girls	Active prosecutorial investigation; pending arrest warrant applications
UN Security Council	Chapter VI/VII Mandates (Res 2681/2721)	Conditional international engagement tied to human rights progress	Formal diplomatic non-recognition; UN Special Envoy framework
UN Human Rights Council	Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/59/25)	Documentation of Gender Apartheid & intersectional rights violations	Regular independent reporting & international evidence collection

7. Policy Dilemmas in International Engagement and Aid Delivery

7.1. The Diplomatic Recognition vs. Humanitarian Imperative Dilemma

The international community faces a profound operational dilemma regarding its engagement strategy toward Afghanistan. On one side, member states maintain a clear policy of non-recognition, refusing to grant the Taliban de facto authorities Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations or restore formal bilateral diplomatic missions until verified human rights benchmarks are met. Conversely, total economic isolation

8. QARMA

- How can international organizations prevent educational assistance from unintentionally exposing students, teachers, or families to retaliation?
- What policies could help transition women from informal economic activities into safer and more sustainable forms of employment?
- How should Member States balance economic pressure on the Taliban with the risk that further economic isolation could worsen conditions for Afghan women and families?
- Given the recommendatory nature of UNCSW, how can the committee ensure that its recommendations lead to measurable changes on the ground?
- How can international programmes support Afghan women economically without creating parallel systems that remain dependent on foreign aid indefinitely?