



ArcMUN

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

UN WOMEN

Intersectionality: When Overlapping Identities Amplify Discrimination

Study Guide

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1. Welcoming letter

Honorable delegates,

It is our sincere pleasure to welcome you to ArcMUN 2025! We are honored to be chairing this year's UN Women committee, a council of vital importance for the United Nations. The topic of our discussion will be **"Intersectionality; When Overlapping Identities Amplify Discrimination"** and we will analyze the causes, the factors and ultimately the results of this situation.

The aim of this study guide is to provide you with basic information and terminology regarding the topic, as well as important decisions and actions already taken. Building up on those resources, you are asked to think critically and conduct your own research in accordance with the points that are to be addressed and your country's national policy.

We hope that you will examine and do your own research on our topic, so you can participate and discuss appropriately with the other delegates, in order to live the ArcMUN experience to the fullest!

Feel free to contact us for any questions you might have throughout your research.

We are looking forward to meeting all of you!

Yours Chairs,

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2. Introduction to the committee

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

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

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

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

3. Definition of Key Terms

Intersectionality: “[Intersectionality is] basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality, or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.” – Kimberlè Crenshaw

Feminism: is a political stance and commitment to change the political position of women and promote gender equality, based on the thesis that women are subjugated because of their gendered body, i.e., sex.

Racism: is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others.

Sexism: is linked to beliefs around the fundamental nature of women and men and the roles they should play in society. Sexist assumptions about women and men, which manifest themselves as gender stereotypes, can rank one gender as superior to another. Such hierarchical thinking can be conscious and hostile, or it can be unconscious, manifesting itself as unconscious bias. Sexism can touch everyone, but women are particularly affected.

4. Introduction to the topic

From the day of her birth, a woman is faced with a social crisis which obliges her to have different roles and identities. From the status of being a daughter, mother, worker, wife to characteristics such as skin color, origin, religion, sexuality, etc. , all the above contribute to how the psyche of women in today's society will be shaped. At the same time, it reveals all the obstacles and stereotypes that she will have to face along her journey, due to the diversity of her identities.

The term intersectionality therefore precisely expresses these further challenges that a woman will be forced to experience due to her above-mentioned particularities, e.g., a black woman may experience discrimination differently from a white woman or a black man due to the combined effects of both racism and sexism.

5. Points to be addressed

This section of the study guide contains important questions about our topic that could be useful for both your personal studying and for a constructing debate throughout the committee works.

- What are the roles of women in different societies?
- How do these roles lead to the oppression of women, by third parties?
- How do multiple identities affect women themselves both psychologically and practically?
- What steps should society and individuals take to help combat stereotypes?
- What differences can be identified in the treatment of women with common traits in developed and underdeveloped countries?
- What benefits can a government derive from the marginalization of women?
- In which ways can the media participate (for example through campaigns and movements) in this global aspect?
- How spiritual people and international organizations can be a part of the solution?

6. Actions already taken

Nowadays, intersectionality seems to be a major factor of racism and inequality. Despite the actions and donations that the International Organizations and volunteers around the world have taken, we can all realize that they are not enough. In this context, more specialized actions that had been taken will be displayed below:

“Young feminists in Kenya engaging in political and influencing spaces”

Amongst these, Polycom became members of a key policy space – the Gender Technical working group. Through this platform, one of the champions contributed directly to review the 2015 National Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy. The confidence of the girls to enter these spaces and advocate for their rights has helped to challenge social norms that typically prevent young women and girls from representing themselves in policy making spaces. The voices of young women and girls from the Kibera informal settlement now have greater visibility in the movement.

Our partner Young Women’s Leadership Institute (YWLI) led trainings and community conversations with young feminists with support from Her Voice Fund (HVF). Together they explored leadership, sexual health and their right to access services and in turn, how their issues can be raised in policy and budget processes. The training and conversations strengthened young feminists’ ability to participate and lead and supported them to gain access to several policy spaces.

Through HVF, YWLI also held feminist leadership development sessions and convenings, created online spaces, as well as facilitated girl-led discussions about issues that affect them. They also led a discussion on a Ministry of Health policy document on teenage pregnancy.

“The roots of intersectionality go deeper than 1989”

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989, but people had been experiencing its impacts long before. Consider the story of Ida B. Wells-Barnett. She was a journalist and activist in both the suffrage and civil rights movements. As a Black woman, she was fully aware of how having multiple identities affected her

experience in the world. When she began a campaign to elect the first Black alderman in Illinois, some Black men protested the involvement of women. Around that same time, Wells-Barnett also faced opposition from southern women in the National American Woman Suffrage Association. These women were white supremacists, but because they represented a powerful bloc, NAWSA would not publicly denounce their beliefs. Through experiences like these, Wells-Barnett faced both gender and racial discrimination.

“Actions Already taken (UN Women)”

In Ethiopia, although an established and recognized organization had developed an in-depth gender assessment with some disability-sensitive dimension, it turned out only six men and one boy with disabilities had participated in activities. The study mentioned the general perception people hold on disability, exclusion, and stigma, and how women and girls with disabilities faced obstacles to marriage or lacked companionship. Bridging the Gap-II (BtG-II) has supported this organization in designing adequate terms of reference and activities for the given project, to strengthen the inclusion of women with disabilities, presenting them as active members of society.

In Sudan, one of the localities in North Kordofan did not let any representative of women with disabilities participate in the trainings because the community belonged to an ethnic minority which does not allow women to participate in public activities. To minimize the impact of social and gender biases, BtG-II has organized trainings and consultative workshops in Sudan for government officials, OPDs and other stakeholders on inclusion of disability rights and a gender perspective in legal and policy frameworks, together with awareness-raising sessions to change the negative attitudes and social norms towards women and girls with disabilities.

In Burkina Faso, thanks to a training about menstruation and the preparation of suitable sanitary napkins, women with disabilities felt free to talk about the management of their periods and were then able to make their own reusable sanitary napkins, a subject which was previously seen as taboo.

7. Conclusion

As a result of the given study guide, it is easy to realize that a woman has a multifaceted personality due to the peculiar experiences she encounters because of owing to the diversity of her multiple identities. The mental fortitude they are forced to show in their daily lives increases in proportion to the number of their traits. Therefore, we ourselves, regardless of gender, must first act to ensure that no woman, ever again, will be forced to hide a part of herself and is equally proud of her uniqueness.

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