



R E S P E C T

WOMEN

Global and Regional Frameworks to end VAW



Introduction

This mini guide summarises key global and regional frameworks, initiatives and actors working to end violence against women (VAW). It is intended to provide an introductory overview for policymakers and practitioners to support them to ensure their work on VAW prevention is aligned with these commitments.

1. Global and Regional Normative Frameworks

Why are global frameworks important to VAW prevention?

International frameworks are important because they set out **internationally agreed norms and standards on VAW prevention and response**.

Decades of struggle by women's rights activists, organisations and movements has helped to raise public awareness of VAW, nationally and internationally, and to ensure that the international community **frames VAW as a human rights violation** requiring government and public action. This is important because it marks a significant shift in how VAW is perceived and treated, not as a private issue but a public matter.

International human rights frameworks set out specific **obligations on States** to protect their citizens and uphold their rights. When States become 'parties' to international frameworks or 'treaties' (by signing on to them) they must refrain from interfering with the exercise of the rights outlined in the treaties, take positive steps to protect them, and restore them when they have been violated. States also have a duty to ensure that **non-state actors** do not impede citizens in the realisation of these rights. While States have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, the **international community** also has an obligation to step in when States are unwilling or unable to meet their protective duties.

These frameworks matter because they **hold States and the international community to account** for meeting their human rights obligations on VAW. The principle of due diligence means that States can be held to account for protecting and preventing VAW, supporting women survivors of violence through high quality VAW services and access to justice, and punishing perpetrators.

These frameworks are also the backbone **for civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations and movements**, who work tirelessly to hold States to account for their national legal and policy response, ensuring laws and policies are in place and that they are implemented consistency and effectively in line with their human rights obligations.

International frameworks on VAW

There are a number of international frameworks which set out internationally agreed norms and standards in relation to VAW, some of which are legally binding. Some of the most prominent ones are set out in the table below; however other frameworks do exist that can be used to protect women against VAW.

Title	Date	Description/Significance
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International bill of rights for women established VAW not explicitly mentioned, but General Recommendations 12 & 19 clarified that states should report on VAW. Legally binding.
Vienna Declaration and Platform for Action	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed at World Conference on Human Rights Recognised elimination of VAW in public and private life as a human rights obligation
Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognised that VAW violates women's rights and fundamental freedoms Called on states and international community to act to eradicate VAW.
Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action	1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th UN World Conference listed VAW as a critical area of concern.
Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG included in SDG5 on Gender Equality 2 targets on ending violence & harmful practice

Beijing Declaration on and Platform for Action

The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** is a visionary agenda for women's rights. It is considered the most comprehensive global policy framework and progressive blueprint for action ever for advancing women's rights. It was developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995.

The Beijing Platform for Action aims to remove all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through ensuring women a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace, and in the wider national and international communities. It affirms that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice. It is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace.

The Beijing Platform for Action was adopted by 189 governments who committed to take bold action in **12 critical areas of concern** for women globally, **including violence against women**. It calls on action from governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organisations, and the private sector.

2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. To support global mobilisation on the 25th anniversary UN Women announced the convening of the **Generation Equality Forum**, co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France – a civil-society centred, multi-stakeholder gathering to foster a global conversation for urgent action and accountability for gender equality.

Sustainable Development Goals

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are a key part of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which is the shared framework for inclusive and sustainable development adopted by all United Nations Member States at a special summit in 2015.

The 17 SDGs and 169 targets seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. Eliminating gender-based violence is a priority within Agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs.

There is a dedicated goal on gender equality – Goal 5 – and gender equality is also 'mainstreamed' across all the Goals. In SDG 5 there are two dedicated **targets** to eliminating violence against women and girls and each target has two **indicators** by which progress is measured:

Target	Indicator(s)
Target 5.2: Eliminating all forms of VAWG in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.	5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
Target 5.3: Eliminating all harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.	5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	5.3.2: Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age

Regional VAW frameworks

In addition to international frameworks on human rights, **regional frameworks are important** because they can also clarify States' obligations to protect the rights of women and girls and eliminate violence and discrimination. This is particularly the case, where:

- States are not party to international instruments but are to regional ones;
- Regional legal standards provide more detailed and/or higher standards;
- Regional courts are able to investigate acts when they occur, to prosecute and punish the perpetrators, and to provide redress and relief to VAW survivors.

There are three legally binding regional frameworks in relation to VAW:

1. The **“Maputo Protocol”** in Africa.
2. The **“Convention of Belem do Para”** in the Americas.
3. The **“Istanbul Convention”** in Europe.

The **“Belém do Pará Convention”** and **“Istanbul Convention”** focus exclusively on eliminating VAW, and the Maputo Protocol is a broader women's rights treaty.

These regional frameworks and their monitoring mechanisms are important because they support the integration of international norms into domestic/national law. The lack of integration of these international norms nationally was a driving force behind the creation of legally binding treaties at the regional level.

The Asia Pacific and Middle East regions do not have pan-regional frameworks on human rights and VAW. However, a number of sub-regional bodies have focused on the improvement of human rights in the region. For example, In Southeast Asia through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Title	Date	Description/Significance
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (the “Convención of Belém do Pará”)	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted by Organisation of American States • Legally binding treaty focusing exclusively on eliminating VAW • Widely ratified, with all but two OAS member states ratifying
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the “Maputo Protocol”)	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted by African Union • Dedicated article on VAW and also references throughout • Legally binding treaty on women's rights • 13 countries yet to ratify, including 3 that have also not signed
Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting • Not legally binding.
Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the “Istanbul Convention”)	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted by Council of Europe • 2nd legally binding treaty exclusively on VAW • Signed by European Union and all EU Member States. Widely ratified, with 6 EU Member States & UK yet to ratify • Offers the possibility for accession by non-member States

This guide sets out some additional regional frameworks for Africa, Europe, Central and Latin America and Asia Pacific. These are examples only, and most regions will have additional frameworks with are relevant.

Regional frameworks - Africa

PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA (THE "MAPUTO PROTOCOL")

2003

- Adopted by African Union
- **Dedicated article on VAW** and also references throughout
- Legally binding treaty on women's rights
- 13 countries yet to ratify, including 3 that have also not signed

AFRICAN YOUTH CHARTER

2006

- Adopted by African Union
- Dedicated article on girls and young women
- Calls on States to **enact and enforce legislation** that protects girls and young women from all forms of violence, and **supports survivors**

AFRICAN UNION'S DECLARATION OF 2010-2020 AS THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE

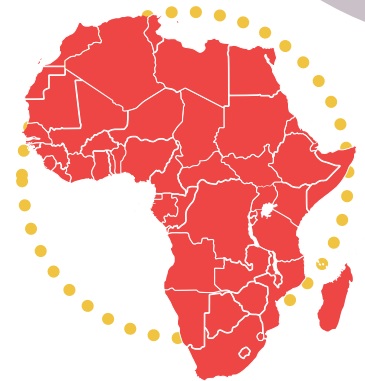
2010

- Adopted by African Union
- Milestone year
- Focused on **accelerating agreed global and regional commitments** on gender equality and women's rights

AGENDA 2063: THE AFRICA WE WANT

2015

- Adopted by African Union
- Aspires to **eliminate all forms of GBV against women and girls and harmful social practices by 2063**
- Ten Year Implementation Plans



Regional frameworks - Europe

RECOMMENDATION ON THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE

2002

- Adopted by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers
- Called on member states to draw up action plans to prevent violence and protect victims
- Not legally binding

CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

2010

- Adopted by the EU
- Guarantees people's right to dignity and equality
- Bans discrimination based on sex

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (THE "ISTANBUL CONVENTION")

EU GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2020-2025

2020-2025

- Frames Commission's work on gender equality
- Ending GBV is one of the key objectives
- Outlines plans for EU network on GBV and domestic violence prevention
- Highlights additional measures on specific forms of GBV



Regional frameworks - Central and Latin America

CHARTER OF THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES

1948

- Creates framework for OAS
- Proclaims fundamental rights of the individual without distinction to sex
- Establishes Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as main body of OAS

INTER AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

1969

- Entered into force in 1978
- Along with the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man (1948), outlines States' human rights obligations
- Contains provisions relevant to VAW
- States parties accountable to regional mechanisms
- Legally binding

INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION, PUNISHMENT AND ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (THE "CONVENCIÓN DE BELÉM DO PARÁ")

1994

- Agreed by OAS
- Legally binding treaty focusing exclusively on eliminating VAW
- Prohibits VAW, requires states to take action & prosecute perpetrators
- Builds on previous human rights frameworks
- Widely ratified by all but 2 OAS Member States

INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

1999

- Aims to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and to promote their full integration into society
- VAW not referenced by rights of women are
- Legally binding



Sub-regional frameworks - Asia-Pacific

REGIONAL CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING THE TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN FOR PROSTITUTION

2002

- Adopted by South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- Calls on States to take measures to prevent and interdict trafficking of women and children for prostitution
- Legally binding

SOCIAL CHARTER OF THE SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

2004

- Adopted by SAARC
- States Parties declared that all forms of discrimination and VAW are offences against human rights and dignity and must be prohibited
- Not legally binding

DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE ASEAN REGION

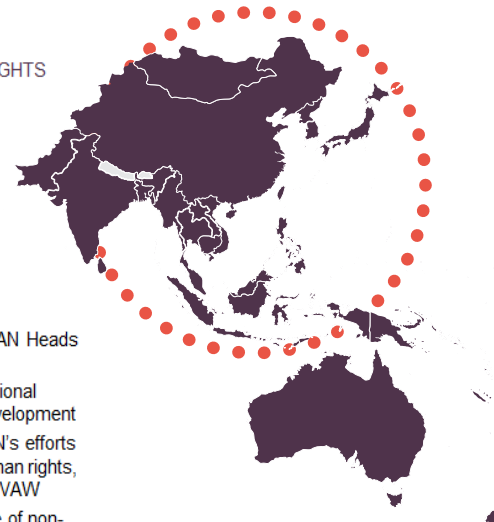
2004

- Adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting
- 8 core areas to strengthen regional efforts to tackle VAW, collectively and as individual states
- Not legally binding

ASEAN HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION

2012

- Adopted by ASEAN Heads of State
- Roadmap for regional human rights development
- Reaffirms ASEAN's efforts in promoting human rights, including ending VAW
- Upholds principle of non-discrimination
- Not legally binding



RESPECT: PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

STRENGTHENING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR VAW PREVENTION
JULY 2020

2. Global and Regional Initiatives

At global and regional levels there are numerous initiatives which are designed to prevent and respond to VAW. Below are some examples of both funding initiatives and advocacy and campaigning initiatives.

Funding Initiatives

At the **global level** there are a number of prominent funding initiatives:

- The **Spotlight initiative** is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of VAWG. Launched in 2017, the initiative prioritises prevention, protection and provision of services, alongside broader efforts to promote women's economic rights and women's participation.
- The **UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women** is the largest grant-making agency for VAWG initiatives. Established in 1996, it is managed by UN Women. The initiative focuses on preventing violence, implementing laws and policies, and improving access to vital services for survivors
- The **What Works to Prevent VAWG Programme** is funded by the UK Government and focuses solely on the prevention of VAWG. Since 2015 it has been supporting primary prevention efforts across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, that seek to understand and address the underlying causes of violence, and to stop it from occurring.
- The **Urgent Action Fund (UAF) for Women's Human Rights** is a feminist fund that protects, strengthens and sustains women and transgender human rights defenders by providing rapid response grants and supporting advocacy and alliance building. Established in 1997, UAF now has sister funds in Africa, Latin America and Asia Pacific.
- Other global funding initiatives which can be accessed for funding for VAW, include the Global Fund for Women, FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund, The Feminist Review Trust and Mama Cash.

Regionally, some of the most prominent funding initiatives include:

- The **African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)** supports local, national and regional women's organisations working towards the empowerment of African women and the promotion and realisation of their rights. Established in 2000, one of AWDF's key themes is 'Body and Health Rights' which supports interventions that prevent and respond to violence, and advancing the sexual reproductive health and rights of African women and girls.
- In Europe, the **Daphne Programme** addresses violence against women, children and young people and support survivors of violence. Launched in 1996, it has expanded into various different programmes and has supported a wide range of public and private organisations, including research institutes, schools and non-governmental organisations.
- The **Pacific Regional Ending VAW Facility Fund** was established by UN Women in 2009 and supports civil society organisations and government departments in the Pacific to scale up their efforts to end VAW in the region through the provision of grants, technical assistance and capacity building.

Advocacy and Campaigning Initiatives

At the global level there are a number of prominent advocacy and campaigning initiatives, which are focused on raising awareness of VAW and holding governments to account for their human rights commitments:

- The **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence** is an international campaign which takes place every year between 25th November and 10th December. Established in 1991 by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, the campaign is used by activists around the world as an organising strategy to call for the elimination of all forms of GBV. More than 6,000 organisations participate across 187 countries.
- **UNiTE to End Violence against Women** is a multi-year campaign aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls around the world. Launched in 2008 by the United Nations and managed by UN Women, the campaign calls on governments, civil society, women's organisations, young people, the private sector, the media and the UN to work together to end VAW.
- The **RESPECT women framework** outlines steps for a public health and human rights approach to scaling up prevention of violence against women programming. Launched in 2019 by the World Health Organisation, UN Women and other stakeholders, the framework is aimed primarily at policy-makers and sets out seven strategies they can take to improve VAW interventions and programmes, and strengthen the enabling environment.
- **Take Back the Tech!** campaign is a global call to everyone, especially women and girls, to take control of technology to end violence against women. It was initiated in 2006 by the Association for Progressive Communications and genderIT.org project.
- **#MeToo** is a movement that focuses on giving women a voice to speak out about sexual violence and end impunity for perpetrators. It began in the United States of America by women who had experienced sexual abuse and harassment, asking for others to speak out, and has since grown to be an international movement.
- **Faith and Positive Change for Children** is a global initiative that focuses on positive social and behaviour change through engaging with local faith actors and leaders on issues such as harmful traditional practices. Established in 2018, it is a partnership between UNICEF, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and Religions for Peace.
- **HeForShe** is a global movement for the advancement of gender equality. Launched in 2014 by the UN, the campaign encourages men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women for gender equality and to take action against harmful gender stereotypes.

Regionally and sub-regionally there are many advocacy and campaigning initiatives, led by women's organisations and movements and other actors including inter-governmental bodies. For example:

- In the **Horn of Africa**, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) Network developed their **#RapeisACrime** campaign to address sexual violence in conflict by raising awareness and proposing necessary recommendations to address the issue. The campaign aims to break the culture of silence and shame associated with VAW.
- In **Latin America**, Ni Una Menos (translated as Not One Less) is a feminist movement campaigning against gender-based violence against women, including femicide. Starting in Argentina in 2015 the campaign spread across Latin America through the power of online and collective activism.
- In **Europe**, the NON.NO.NEIN campaign, carried out by the European Commission, aims to share information and showcase success stories about the important work that is being done across the EU to address VAW. As well as being an awareness-raising campaign, the initiative aims to support, engage and connect all stakeholders.

3. Key Actors and Mandates

Global actors

Actor	Mandate
Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty to protect and promote women's human rights, support survivors and punish perpetrators
Citizens and civil society, including women's rights organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor governments and hold them to account Advocacy to promote and claim rights
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent expert body that monitors implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
UN bodies, including: UN Women, Commission on the Status of Women, Human Rights Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the implementation of international frameworks and treaties Can issue binding decisions requiring States to stop the violation and, where appropriate, make reparations
Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek and receive information on VAW, its causes and consequences Recommend measures to eliminate VAW Communicate with States about alleged cases of VAW
Media (print and online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge rather than perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase investment on VAW

As highlighted earlier, **governments/states** have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens and uphold their rights. However, the **international community** also has an obligation to step in when States are unwilling or unable to meet their protective duties. This includes a number of international and regional monitoring bodies working in the field of VAW. By working together they can enhance the potential of the existing global human rights legal framework to strategically and effectively address all forms of VAW at national levels. Some of the key actors in the international community include:

- The **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** (known as the CEDAW Committee). This is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At least every four years, the States parties are expected to submit a national report to the Committee, indicating the measures they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention.
- **UN bodies** (judicial and quasi-judicial) oversee the implementation of the international frameworks and treaties we saw earlier in this brief. Some of these bodies can issue binding decisions requiring States to stop the violation and, where appropriate, make reparations. A few examples of UN bodies include: Human Rights Council; UN Women; Commission on the Status of Women
- **The Special Rapporteur on VAW, its causes and consequences.** The position has existed since 1994 following calls at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. The Special Rapporteur's mandate is to:
 - Seek and receive information on VAW, its causes and consequences
 - Recommend measures to eliminate VAW, its causes and consequences
 - Communicate with States about alleged cases of VAW, its causes and consequences
 - Continue to adopt a comprehensive and universal approach to the elimination of VAW, its causes and consequences
 - Transmits urgent appeals and communications to States regarding alleged cases of violence against women
- Although not specifically mandated, the **media** has an important role to play in challenging harmful gender stereotypes which condone or perpetuate VAW and underpin inequality between women and men.
- Finally **donors** play an important role in increasing investment on VAW prevention and response.

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