

The OHCHR Women's Human Rights and Gender Section (WRGUS) – conceptual framework and main priorities

The Women's Human Rights and Gender Unit (WRGU) was established in 2006. The work of the unit flows from the special role that the High Commissioner for Human Rights can play in legal standard setting with respect to the gender inequalities that exist in accessing justice.

Developing a gender sensitive administration of justice is a priority for the Unit. This involves asking, how to ensure a gender analysis of justice, what it means from a gender perspective, and whether it is a system that accurately reflects the different experiences of men and women, boys and girls. The approach adopted by WRGU is to examine justice from a women's perspective, to assess if what exists has provided justice and if not, what are the issues and how can human rights law be used to ameliorate the existing situation. This means examining formal justice mechanisms, as well as rights of access to, and enjoyment of, economic, social and cultural rights which are fundamental to the enjoyment of a diversity of civil and political rights.

The WRGU has commissioned two reports on these issues:

“The Prosecution of Sexual Violence in Conflict: the importance of human rights as a means of interpretation” by Patricia Viseur Sellers: English - Spanish

“The Protection of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in post- conflict” by Professor Christine Chinkin: English

The methodology adopted by the Unit is through legal analysis and standard setting, with the commissioning and production of position papers and guidelines on specific issues aimed at a wide audience, including the legal profession, NGOs, other UN agencies and member states. The initial focus has been on the question of the prosecution of sexual violence in the context of conflict and the commensurate economic and social rights that need to be addressed.

In order to maximize the potential of the human rights mechanisms within the UN system to actively address “gender justice”, the Unit works across the OHCHR system and the UN generally to promote the legal principles developed, including through OHCHR field offices, the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, (the Universal Periodic Review, the Special Rapporteurs and the Advisory Committee) and the Treaty Bodies.

Thematic issues are considered in the context of country engagement such as: female genital mutilation (FGM), so-called “honour” killings, forced abortion, trafficking (in cooperation with OHCHR's anti-trafficking programme), sexual exploitation and discrimination and violence against women.