



SRMUN Charlotte 2017
Assessing the Challenges and Opportunities of Globalism in the 21st Century
March 30 – April 1, 2017
unicefeb_charlotte@srmun.org

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to SRMUN Charlotte 2017 and more specifically, the United Nations Children’s Fund Executive Board (UNICEF-EB). My name is Jordin Dickerson and I will be serving as your Director. I previously served on SRMUN staff in SRMUN Atlanta 2016 as an Assistant Director in the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees Executive Committee. I have a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, and I will be attending law school in the fall. Our committee’s Assistant Director will be Susan French. This is Susan’s third time on staff. She has previously served as Assistant Director of both the General Assembly Plenary and the General Assembly Fourth Committee at SRMUN Charlotte 2015 and 2016, respectively. Susan holds a Bachelor of Applied Science in Homeland Security and is currently pursuing her Master of Social Work at the University of Southern California.

UNICEF-EB is a committee that is committed to the safety, education, health, and equality of all children. The Executive Board serves as UNICEF’s governing body and approves the agency’s projects, campaigns, activities, policies, and budgets. UNICEF’s overarching vision consists of protecting children’s rights and providing opportunities for children to reach their full potential, and it is with that in mind that the Executive Board operates.

By focusing on the mission of the UNICEF-EB and the SRMUN Charlotte 2017 theme of “*Assessing the Challenges and Opportunities of Globalism in the 21st Century*,” we have developed the following topics for the delegates to discuss come conference:

- I. Ending Discrimination Against Children with Disabilities
- II. Protecting the Rights of Children During Armed Conflict

The background guide should serve as an introduction to the topics at hand. It is designed to give a broad overview of the topics and should not be a delegate’s only resource. Delegates should utilize other resources during the research and position paper writing process. Position papers should demonstrate a deep understanding of the topics and provide a basis for the topic discussion at the conference. Position papers should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State’s position, policies and recommendations on each of the two topics. For more detailed information about formatting and how to write position papers, delegates can visit www.srmun.org. **All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, March 10, 2017, by 11:59 p.m. EST via the SRMUN website.**

Susan and I look forward to meeting you all and having a successful, productive conference. We wish you the best of luck in your conference preparations and please feel free to reach out to Director-General Michael Oleaga, Susan, or myself if you have any questions.

Jordin Dickerson
Director
UNICEFEB_charlotte@srmun.org

Susan French
Assistant Director
UNICEFEB_charlotte@srmun.org

Michael Oleaga
Director-General
DG_charlotte@srmun.org

The History of the United Nations International Children's Fund – Executive Board

In 1946, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) passed Resolution 57(I), which created the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).¹ UNICEF was established after World War II, in response to the European refugees from the war.² In 1950, A/RES/417(V) expanded the scope to include all children, specifically those in developing and post-conflict Member States.³ After much success of the ad hoc committee in promoting sustainable long-term economic growth especially within the goals of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization, A/RES/802(VIII) made UNICEF a permanent part of the UN.⁴ The resolution also officially changed the name of the agency to United Nations Children's Fund, however, it did maintain the "UNICEF" title.⁵ UNICEF's mission was more clearly defined under the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the 1990 Convention of the Rights of Children; today, these two documents serve as the foundational guidelines of UNICEF and its respective bodies.⁶

UNICEF has a governing body known as the Executive Board (EB). Since 1994, the UNICEF-EB has been represented by 36 Member States. The board members consist of delegates from eight African States, seven Asian States, four Eastern European States, five Latin American and Caribbean States, and 12 Western European States.⁷ Each EB Member State holds an elected and rotational three-year term and is elected by members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁸ Membership to the EB is then ratified by the UNGA.⁹ The EB is led by the Bureau, which is made up of five officers representing each of the regional blocs. One member of the Bureau acts as president while the remaining four act as Vice Presidents.¹⁰ As the EB president manages the sessions, an important element about the board is that all of the decision-making votes are by consensus vote.¹¹ The Bureau members are elected by the EB each year with the presidency rotating among the five regional blocs.¹² As an act of courtesy, the officers who serve on the Bureau are not permanent members of the Security Council (SC).¹³

The EB adopted UNICEF's mission statement that includes "to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential."¹⁴ The EB meets three times a year, holding two regular sessions, the first in January/February and the second in September, along with one annual session in May/June, at the UN Headquarters in New York.¹⁵ The first regular session usually focuses on the proposed budget and work plan for the calendar year, while the second session acts as a review of the items set forth

¹ "The UNICEF Executive Board: An Informal Guide 2016," The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Executive_Board-An_Informal_Guide-2016-EN-8Jan2016.pdf (accessed June 8, 2016).

² A/RES/57(1). *Establishment of an International Children's Emergency Fund*. United Nations. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/033/08/IMG/NR003308.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed June 8, 2016).

³ A/RES/417(V). *GA Resolution 417 (V) Continuing the Needs of Children: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*. United Nations. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/060/15/IMG/NR006015.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed June 10, 2016).

⁴ A/RES/802(VIII). *GA Resolution 802 (VIII) United Children's Fund*. United Nations. <https://documents-ddsny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/086/67/IMG/NR008667.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed June 8, 2016).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "1959 Convention of the Rights of Children," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/1959-Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf> (accessed July 4, 2016).

⁷ "About," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/> (accessed July 4, 2016).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Bureau: Executive Board," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_13225.html (accessed July 7, 2016).

¹¹ "The UNICEF Executive Board: An Informal Guide," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Executive_Board-An_Informal_Guide-2014-ENGLISH.pdf (accessed June 8, 2016).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "UNICEF's Mission Statement," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html (accessed July 4, 2016).

¹⁵ "About," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/> (accessed July 4, 2016).

at the beginning of the year.¹⁶ The annual meeting of the Board focuses on policy and programme issues as well as preparing the annual report.¹⁷ The EB also holds joint annual meetings with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP), and WHO to collectively facilitate shared goals among their various organizations.¹⁸ As the executive office of UNICEF, the EB works to provide intergovernmental support to UNICEF and act as the liaison between other UN bodies and UNICEF.¹⁹

The primary function of the EB is an administrative management role in all matters that are specifically related to children.²⁰ Through the EB's administrative position, it works to further the protection of children by establishing and reviewing UNICEF policies and programs as well as overseeing all "financial plans and budgets."²¹ The EB provides oversight to UNICEF and annually reports back to the UNGA and ECOSOC committees.²² The EB further oversees the operational functions of UNICEF that address issues such as providing emergency relief, health care, nutritional and educational services across the world.²³ Examples of these roles include projects such as providing childhood vaccinations to those without medical care, addressing policy issues that strengthen childhood protection standards, and emergency responses to natural disasters such as the Nepal earthquake.²⁴

UNICEF is supported entirely by voluntary funds and heavily relies on donations received from over six million donors from National Committees.²⁵ Currently, there are 34 National Committees that fundraise within the private sector, support children's rights and "secure worldwide visibility for children threatened by poverty, disasters, armed conflict, abuse, and exploitation."²⁶ These committees are located within the Member States and work in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) to help fund UNICEF projects. Funding from National Committees makes up about one-third of the funding received by UNICEF.²⁷ The remaining two-thirds comes from donations from Member States and NGOs.²⁸ Furthermore, funds are raised through partnerships of larger corporations and fundraising campaigns such as UNICEF greeting cards; Check Out for Children, which allows guests to add a donation to their hotel bill; Change for Good, which allows international travelers to donate their leftover currency; and Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF.²⁹ UNICEF is financially responsible to the GA; the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) review all reports.³⁰

The current focus of UNICEF emphasizes social inclusion, humanitarian efforts, child protection, health, and education.³¹ UNICEF is steered by the 2014-2017 adopted Strategic Plan, which focuses on human rights and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³² The new Strategic Plan also allows for the creation of a peer review group of experts, and the collaboration with NGOs on international and regional priorities.³³ The SDGs guide the

¹⁶ "The UNICEF Executive Board: An Informal Guide 2016," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Executive_Board-An_Informal_Guide-2016-EN-8Jan2016.pdf (accessed July 04, 2016).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Structure and Contact Information: How UNICEF Works," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/> (accessed June 10, 2016).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ "What We Do," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/whatwedo/> (accessed June 13, 2016).

²⁴ "International Developmental Projects," UNICEF, <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/cpo.nsf/fWebProjListEn?ReadForm&profile=UNICEF> (accessed June 4, 2016).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "UNICEF National Committees," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/index_natcoms.html (accessed July 4, 2016).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "The UNICEF Executive Board: An Informal Guide – 2016," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Executive_Board-An_Informal_Guide-2016-EN-8Jan2016.pdf (accessed June 11, 2016).

³¹ "Strategic Plan 2014-2017," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/strategicplan/> (accessed June 9, 2016).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

new strategic plan adopted by the UNICEF-EB. The SDGs are a new set of goals that challenge the shortcomings in the previous Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs), addressing critical issues such as poverty, education, equality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, child mortality, global partnership and environmental sustainability.³⁴

UNICEF has evolved over the years and has become the agency of authority on child and youth issues and continues to serve under the original directive. UNICEF was created with a distinct purpose to “work with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child’s path.”³⁵ War, conflict, and natural disasters put millions of children and youth at risk each year. While advances have been made throughout the years, there is still much room for improvement and advancement.

The current Member States of the 2017 UNICEF Executive Board are:

ANDORRA, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, AUSTRALIA, BANGLADESH, BELARUS, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, BOTSWANA, BURKINA FASO, CAMEROON, CHINA, COLOMBIA, CUBA, DENMARK, EL SALVADOR, ERITREA, ESTONIA, ETHIOPIA, FINLAND, INDIA, IRAN, ITALY, JAPAN, LIBYA, LUXEMBOURG, NEPAL, NETHERLANDS, PANAMA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SIERRA LEONE, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and ZAMBIA.

³⁴ “Millennium Development Goals 2015,” United Nations, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (accessed July 4, 2016).

³⁵ “About UNICEF,” UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_introduction.html (accessed July 4, 2016).

I: Ending Discrimination against Children with Disabilities

“A world that recognizes the rights of the disabled, ensures that people with disabilities can be productive members of their communities and nations, and provides an inclusive and accessible environment, is a world that will benefit all of us -- with or without disabilities.”

- Ban Ki-Moon, former UN Secretary-General³⁶

Introduction

Disability does not discriminate on age, sex, gender, or socioeconomic status and affects all populations across the globe. The term “disability” is often an umbrella term, but the World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability as “...impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.”³⁷ The World Bank estimates that there are currently over one billion people, or 15 percent of the population, who are disabled.³⁸ Of these one billion, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) speculates that 93 million are children, but that number could be much higher.³⁹ These figures could be higher because some may not have access to medical care, and, therefore, go without the care and support that they need.⁴⁰

Disability affects not only those with the mental, physical, sensory, or learning deficits, but also their families.⁴¹ Households with a disabled child often face additional hardships in areas such as employment, education, social, and economic status, as well as strife within the familial unit.⁴² Often, these children are faced with discrimination and denied opportunities; UNICEF works to protect and help children overcome these obstacles.⁴³ Disabilities often times set the stage for discrimination against children and their families, resulting in societal outcasts within their own communities.

Children with disabilities are among some of the most at-risk youth in the international community, often battling depression and low self-esteem.⁴⁴ Children with disabilities are just like any other child. They have the same hopes, dreams, and aspirations as those without disabilities.⁴⁵ They want to grow up and be afforded the same opportunities as other children.⁴⁶

Current Situation

Disabilities cover a wide range of aspects and possibilities for discrimination. While the terms “disabled persons” and “disabilities” are often used, they are generalized terms that cover a wide and diverse range of situations. Some of the most vulnerable individuals in society are children, especially children with one or more disabilities.⁴⁷ This

³⁶ “Break Barriers Open Doors Press Release,” The United Nations,

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/disability/pdf/pressrelease.pdf> (accessed August 5, 2016).

³⁷ “Health Topics: Disabilities,” The World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/> (accessed August 5, 2016).

³⁸ “Disability Overview,” The World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability/overview> (accessed August 5, 2016).

³⁹ “Disabilities,” UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/disabilities> (accessed August 5, 2016).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “United Nations Commitment to Advancement of the Status of Persons with Disabilities,” The United Nations,

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disun.htm> (accessed August 5, 2016).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *The State of the World’s Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*. UNICEF.

http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/SOWC_2013_75.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Children and Young People with Disabilities Fact Sheet,” UNICEF, 2013,

http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Factsheet_A5_Web_NEW.pdf (accessed October 31, 2016).

intersection creates a dangerous situation for the infringement of basic human rights as cited in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), such as the rights to physical safety and education.⁴⁸ Through the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), there has been a thematic shift from focusing on one's status, to focusing on one's health.⁴⁹ This has been the attempt to place disabilities into the mainstream.⁵⁰

Children with disabilities are often trapped in the circle of poverty due to stigma; children with disabilities are less likely to be enrolled in school when compared to their peers without disabilities.⁵¹ Children with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed. Member States with stronger social welfare programs, such as the Republic of Korea and Canada, have relatively lower rates of unemployment (30 percent and 25 percent respectively) compared to developing Member States with less developed social welfare programs such as India (74 percent physical/94 percent mentally disabled).⁵² Poverty and disability are intrinsically linked and can lead to a vicious cycle.⁵³ Besides economic discrimination, children are also extremely at risk for physical abuse and harm with four times the likelihood of being victims of violence.⁵⁴ As children already have a limited voice in society, those with disabilities are even more at risk as they are "four times more likely to experience violence than non-disabled children."⁵⁵ This violence stems from the lack of social, economic, and political rights children with disabilities have, as they are easy to take advantage of due to their lack of power in society.

Agencies like UNICEF and the International Labour Office (ILO) work to address disparities between education and the workforce globally. The ILO specifically focuses on "women workers, persons with disabilities and those in remote rural communities"⁵⁶ Both of these have worked diligently alongside agencies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD currently has 35 Member State and works closely with "emerging" economies such as those found in People's Republic of China, India, and Brazil, as well as those who have "developing" economies found in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.⁵⁷ In the totality of efforts through agencies such as these, furthering access to education, health care, inclusion, and socialization are necessary steps that need to be fulfilled in order to produce a functioning society at the very basic level, which begins with education.

Education is a basic human right, yet many children are denied access to or are unable to receive a quality education.⁵⁸ Education provides the basic building blocks of healthy families, ending poverty, and increasing gender equality, all of which lead to a global sustainable future.⁵⁹ In schools, special needs children are often mistreated, picked on and bullied by their peers, often furthering their social exclusion.⁶⁰

A survey of 51 Member States, that ranged from developing to already developed, revealed that "51 percent of males with disabilities completed primary school," versus the "61 percent of those without disabilities," and further, "only 42 percent of females with disabilities completed primary school" compared to the "53 percent without disabilities."⁶¹ Often times, these children are put into special schools that may not place an emphasis on academics,

⁴⁸ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," United Nations, http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Disabilities: Introduction," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/index_65841.html (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁵¹ *A Post-2015 World Fit for Children*. UNICEF. 2014. http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Disabilities_2pager_indicators_SDGs.pdf (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁵² "Employment with Persons with Disabilities," The United Nations, <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/employmentfs.pdf> (accessed November 4, 2016)

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Violence against adults and children with disabilities," WHO, 2012, (accessed November 4, 2016).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Employment for Social Justice and a Fair Globalization*. ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_140945.pdf (accessed November 6, 2016).

⁵⁷ "Members and Partners," OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/about/membersandpartners/> (accessed November 6, 2016).

⁵⁸ "Education," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_59826.html (accessed September 10, 2016).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*. UNICEF. http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/SOWC_2013_75.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

rather these schools, to an extent, foster the stigmatism attached to disabilities.⁶² This affects the overall viability of a Member States workforce.⁶³ The impact of social stigmas and lack of education are still not accurate.

In a 2007 global study, 70 percent of families of children with disabilities in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland often felt that their communities were unsupportive of them, and further, there was an absence of connection with their community altogether.⁶⁴ In the same study, Madagascar showed that 48 percent of their population believed that a disability was contagious, which simply is not true.⁶⁵ A different study in 2009 looked at the Vietnamese city Da Nang, and while many reported tolerance for children with disabilities, having anyone with a disability within public view on holidays, such as Tet – the lunar year – was considered a “detriment to good fortune.”⁶⁶ By embracing children with disabilities, society promotes not only inclusion, but further fosters community participation and lessens societal stigmas.⁶⁷

Gender and Disability

It is also important to remember that disabilities intersect with gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and other identities that increase stigma can heighten discrimination.⁶⁸ One example of intersectional discrimination is evident in gender bias, as women and girls are more likely to suffer from dual discrimination due to their gender and their disability.⁶⁹ Girls are less likely to be provided medical care or diagnosed with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder based on cultural views of proper expressions of femininity and masculinity.⁷⁰ Furthermore, even when girls are provided medical care, they still face many risks to sexual, physical, verbal, and economic abuse as most persons of power in the medical field are staffed by males, and these abuses are more likely to happen in very patriarchal societies.⁷¹ By decreasing preexisting gender stereotypes, the medical industry can help diagnose and treat girls more effectively.⁷²

In patriarchal societies, families and the medical industry often view girls as less valuable based on cultural and religious views on hierarchical gender roles.⁷³ Girls are also more likely to become disabled throughout their lives as a result of poor working conditions and a lack of medical care.⁷⁴ By decreasing commonly held gender bias, and by creating gendered spaces in the medical industry through female empowerment and the physical existence of female centric care, girls may receive proper medical care, which can help stop the cycle of poverty.⁷⁵ Disabled girls not only suffer from gender bias in receiving medical care, but also direct violence such as sexual assault,

⁶² *World Report on Disability*. UNICEF. http://www.unicef.org/protection/World_report_on_disability_eng.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

⁶³ *Employment for Social Justice and a Fair Globalization*. ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_140945.pdf (accessed November 6, 2016).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*. UNICEF. http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/SOWC_2013_75.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Guide on How to Integrate Disability and Gender Assessments,” USAID, 2010 https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/Guide_How_Integrate_Disability_Gender_Assessments_2010.pdf (accessed September 5, 2016)

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Hines, Elesia; Riley Child Development Center; Indiana LEND. *Rates of Autism Spectrum Diagnosis by Age and Gender*. <http://www.aucd.org/docs/EHinesRatesofASDDiagnosisbyGenderandAge.pdf> (accessed November 4, 2016).

⁷¹ “Gender biases and discrimination: a review of health care interpersonal interactions,” WHO, http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/gender_biases_and_discrimination_wgkn_2007.pdf (accessed November 4, 2016).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Children and Young People with Disabilities Fact Sheet,” UNICEF, 2013, http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Factsheet_A5_Web_NEW.pdf (accessed November 4, 2016).

⁷⁵ “Gender biases and discrimination: a review of health care interpersonal interactions,” WHO, http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/gender_biases_and_discrimination_wgkn_2007.pdf (accessed November 4, 2016).

abuse, forced sterilization, forced abortions, HIV exposure, and emotional and physical abuse.⁷⁶ With further research on disability in developing Member States and an examination of the role gender plays in disability, there may be advancement in the rights of girls with disabilities.⁷⁷

Girls with disabilities suffer from extreme exclusion from education, as the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) estimates that less than one percent of girls globally are literate.⁷⁸ Girls who are disabled are omitted from education, based on existing gender bias on educating girls in some Member States, but also due to their disability both in terms of access to educational facilities and a lack of disability inclusive education.⁷⁹ When addressing educational reforms to include disabled children, international organizations and Member States must consider whether the education reforms will treat disabled boys and girls equally in terms of shelter, access, education received, and resources provided.

Actions Taken by the UN

Protecting children's rights, including those with disabilities, is the building block of the UN and UNICEF.⁸⁰ The 1959 Universal Declaration of Human Rights has long served as a reminder and template for the UN and its committees to promote "dignity, equity, and inalienable rights of all members of the human family," and to further stand for "freedom, justice, and peace."⁸¹ UNICEF, further guided by the 1989 UNCRC, A/RES/44/25, promotes equality and inclusion for all children.⁸² Article 23 of the UNCRC recognizes the rights of children with disabilities to have "special care and support," with the ultimate goal of them living full, independent lives, just as any other child would do.⁸³

Since 1970, the UN has progressively taken a more proactive position rather than a primarily reactive role.⁸⁴ The UN has done much to further the rights of those with disabilities within the global community.⁸⁵ In 1975, A/RES/3447 (XXX) addressed the rights of those with physical and mental disabilities in the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons.⁸⁶ One example of this was the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), designated on 3 December since 1992.⁸⁷ UNICEF hopes that bringing attention to disabled persons on this day will further promote inclusion, well-being, and support amongst the international community.⁸⁸

In 2001, the WHO established a universal language on disabilities in hopes of reducing stigmatism and increasing awareness throughout Member States.⁸⁹ In the ICF, there are three levels of disability: impairments, limitation, and reduced participation. Impairments can include mental and physical functioning, such as loss of vision, hearing, limbs, or memory.⁹⁰ Activity limitation involves difficulty in problem solving, seeing, hearing, and moving.⁹¹ Participation restriction refers to how an individual can be limited in interacting in daily life, ranging from engaging

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Advancing Women and Girls with Disabilities," USAID, 2010, (accessed November 4, 2016).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Who We Are," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/about> (accessed September 10, 2016).

⁸¹ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf (accessed August 5, 2016).

⁸² *Convention on the Rights of a Child*. UNICEF. http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html (accessed August 5, 2016).

⁸³ "CRC Rights Overview," The UN, http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf (accessed August 6, 2016).

⁸⁴ "United Nations Commitment to Advancement of the Status of Persons with Disabilities," The UN, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disun.htm> (accessed September 03, 2016).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons*. OHCHR. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/RightsOfDisabledPersons.aspx> (accessed August 6, 2016).

⁸⁷ "International Day of persons with disabilities," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/disabilities/index_66783.html (accessed August 5, 2016).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ "International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health," WHO, <http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/> (accessed September 03, 2016).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

in social behaviors to obtaining services.⁹² With each condition, there is a need for an intersectional look on how the condition impairs, limits activities, and limits participation. For example, in the case of spinal injury: the *impairment* is paralysis, the *limitation* could be the inability to use public transportation, and thus the *reduced participation* in education.⁹³

Case Study: Serbia

In the southeastern European Member State of Serbia, children with disabilities often face abuse, lack of access to education, and neglect through existing stigmas and the pressures to institutionalize disabled children.⁹⁴ With a strong cultural view of disabled children and individuals being burdens on their families, especially disabled girls, and a lack of inclusive services to disabled children, many families will choose to institutionalize their children at a young age.⁹⁵ Institutionalization has shown harmful stunting of intellectual and emotional growth, which only further exacerbates their disabilities.⁹⁶ The stunting of growth is caused by a lack of inclusive education for children in institutions, limited contact with their families and other non-disabled children, neglect within the institutions, and gender based abuse.⁹⁷ While there has been a positive trend of decreasing the institutionalization of children by 66 percent between 2000 and 2013, the situation remains troubling.⁹⁸

One of the largest barriers to inclusion is a deep stigma towards disabled children from both common people and professionals.⁹⁹ This stigma can translate into families traveling far to have disabled children attend special education classes, or even day care programs.¹⁰⁰ According to the Serbian Ministry of Labor, “70 percent of children in residential care are not enrolled in formal education” and of those that do receive education are not getting the same quality education as non-disabled children.¹⁰¹ Children who are segregated from the mainstream education population have their development stunted from a lack of socialization and resources.¹⁰² This lack of quality inclusive education traps disabled children inside institutions or makes them at risk to exploitation from the outside world especially young women through sex trafficking.¹⁰³ Disabled girls in Serbia are often at a greater risk of gender based violence than their male counterparts inside institutions due to male patients assaulting female patients of whom they are often kept in large common areas together unsupervised by neglectful staff. The staffs of these residential facilities do not see their patients as having sexuality and thus do not think that patients can sexually assault each other.¹⁰⁴

Serbia has tried to reduce the role of institutions in the treatment and care of their disabled child population through the passing of new legislation.¹⁰⁵ Some of the new legislation includes making it unlawful to institutionalize children younger than three years unless in extreme situations and providing new programs and resources to children living with disabilities.¹⁰⁶ While these laws and programs are a promising first step, individuals and institutions

⁹² “Disability Overview,” The Center for Disease and Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html#ref> (accessed September 03, 2016).

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *Women and Girls with Disabilities in Serbia*. Disability Rights International Mental Disability Rights Initiative, Serbia (MDRI-Serbia). 2013. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/DGD/2013_Submissions/DRI_MDRI_Serbia.doc. (accessed September 4, 2016).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ “Child Rights in Serbia,” UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/panels/Childrights%20in%20Serbia.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2016).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *Facts and Figures: Serbia*. Opening Doors. 2015. <http://www.openingdoors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Facts-and-figures-Serbia-2015.pdf> (accessed September 5, 2016).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “Women and Girls with Disabilities in Serbia,” OHCHR, 2013, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/DGD/2013_Submissions/DRI_MDRI_Serbia.doc. (accessed September 4, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

continue to ignore the new laws in favor of preexisting stigmas.¹⁰⁷ While UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Advancement through an inclusive education initiative focused on girls, the Roma, and the disabled there is still work to be done to ensure there is better oversight protecting the rights to children in disabilities.¹⁰⁸ A reexamination of programs, an enforcement of civil rights, and continued funding of community based support instead of large residential institutions can help children with disabilities in Serbia become more integrated into society.

Conclusion

Protecting the rights of these children is a necessary action from the international community. Remembering the founding principles of the UN can serve as a driving force when addressing this enormous issue that faces so many of the children all over the world. In addition to using a universalized common language on disabilities, Member States can begin to reevaluate their existing laws and societal practices to promote inclusion of children with disabilities into society. If, globally, children with disabilities are not addressed outside of a theoretical framework, then the international community is further promoting exclusion of these children and adolescents.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, with an increased universal understanding of children with disabilities negative stigmatism will be lessened along with discrimination.¹¹⁰ These are important issues to consider when discussing this topic.

Speaking up globally, the UN can begin to give these overlooked children a voice and help promote inclusion. Promoting gender equality, addressing childhood deprivations, granting equal access to quality education and being a voice for the often unseen, can offer these children hope and allow them to chase their dreams and be equals and not “less than.” Furthering the agenda of organizations such as the OECD, ILO, and NGOs by supporting their efforts, both financially and logistically. Planning education in rural areas and trainings for those with disabilities that are still able to work, along with closing the gender gap, can help promote inclusion and address the disparage that most of these individuals face.

Guided by the UNCRC and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Member States can address the needs of children with disabilities. Further considering UNICEF’s 2013 State of the World’s Children report recommendation that “little will change in the lives of children with disabilities until attitudes among communities, professionals, media and governments begin to change.”¹¹¹ If the international community is able to embrace and strive for this inclusion and attitudinal change globally, children with disabilities can begin to celebrate and live their lives from behind the shadows and have a voice in their respective Member States.

Committee Directive

When discussing this topic, keep in mind that children are the focus of this committee. Creating equal access and inclusion for all children, especially those with disabilities will be challenging. What technological advances can be used to assist the furthering of children’s rights, specifically those with disabilities? Keep in mind, that some of the Member States may not have access to technology, and if they do it may be limited. Further, how can Member States combat societal stigmas against those with disabilities? When addressing challenges faced by those with disabilities how can Member States promote inclusion? How can UNICEF and the UN close the socioeconomic gaps when looking at Member States with lower GDPs? How can Member States close the gap between gender discrimination and viable employment? Lack of quality data impacts the advancement of acknowledgement and services for those with disabilities, how can this be addressed globally, given special consideration to developing Member States? Lastly, how can advocacy, inclusion, and policies be overhauled to address this overlooked population? While debating this topic, keep in mind that financial constraints are often a concern, not only for Member States, but also NGOs and governmental agencies that provide relief and services to varying populations.

¹⁰⁷ “Child Rights in Serbia,” UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/panels/Child%20rights%20in%20Serbia.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ “Serbia: Inclusive Education,” UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/serbia/activities_29425.html (accessed November 4, 2016)

¹⁰⁹ *The State of the World’s Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*. UNICEF. http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/SOWC_2013_75.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

II: Protecting the Rights of Children During Armed Conflict

"There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace."

*- Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General*¹¹²

Introduction

The 1990 United Nations (UN) Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) defined a child as: "Every human being below of the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."¹¹³ The CRC also ensures that children have the right to healthcare, safety, development, and education.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, these rights are often violated by the escalation and presence of armed conflict.¹¹⁵ Hundreds of thousands of children are exploited as child soldiers due to armed conflict.¹¹⁶ A child soldier, as defined by the UN Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, is "any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters spies, or for sexual purposes."¹¹⁷ Military groups may force children into fighting or abduct them and in some cases children join these militant groups to escape poverty.¹¹⁸

Armed conflict also destroys infrastructure and disrupts a safe environment that is crucial for a child's survival and development. One in four, or 24 million, children living in a conflict zone are not attending school.¹¹⁹ Children who are not in schools are more at risk of being exploited as child soldiers.¹²⁰ Children living in conflict zones may also have difficulty accessing adequate healthcare resulting in decreasing vaccination rates and the increase in cases of preventable diseases such as polio and measles.¹²¹ Clean drinkable water may also be difficult for children to obtain and they are often forced to drink contaminated water.¹²²

Perhaps the most significant result of armed conflict is the displacement of people. Children currently make up over half of the world's refugees.¹²³ There are more than 28 million children who have fled their homes due to violence or lack of security.¹²⁴ In the last five years, 15 different conflicts have either started or reignited, resulting in a 77 percent increase in the number of children under the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) mandate.¹²⁵ It is common that child refugees will be separated from parts of, and sometimes their entire families, which leaves them extremely susceptible to exploitation, violence, and abuse.

¹¹² *The State of the World's Children 2000*. United Nations Children's Fund. United Nations. 2000. (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹¹³ *Convention on the Rights of a Child*. United Nations General Assembly. November 20, 1989. (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁶ "Child Recruitment and Use," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁹ "Conflict Has Forced 24 Million Children out of School, UNICEF Says," Time Magazine, <http://time.com/4176695/unicef-conflict-children-education-school/>, (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹²⁰ "Child Soldiers," War Child, <http://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/child-soldiers>, (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹²¹ "Healthcare in Danger: Children Suffer the Most," International Committee of the Red Cross, <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/interview/2012/health-care-in-danger-interview-2012-06-01.htm> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹²² "Children Cannot Survive or Thrive Without Clean Water," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/wash/index_child_cannot_survive.html, (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹²³ "Nearly 50 Million Children Are Refugees or Migrants, says UNICEF," CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/07/world/unicef-report-on-child-refugees-and-migrants> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹²⁴ *Ibid*.

¹²⁵ "Child Refugee Numbers Have Soared, According to new UNICEF report," World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/09/the-number-of-child-refugees-around-the-world-has-risen-rapidly-finds-new-unicef-report/> (accessed September 8, 2016).

History

In 1959, the UN adopted the Declaration of the Rights of a Child.¹²⁶ It was the first UN document that dealt specifically defining children's rights.¹²⁷ It was followed by the CRC, which is the most widely ratified treaty dealing with human rights in the international community. All but two Member States have ratified the treaty. The CRC treaty guaranteed children the right to education, healthcare, safety, and required governments to take action to ensure these rights were not violated.¹²⁸ This was followed by the creation of the Optional Protocols for the CRC that were entered into force in 2002.¹²⁹ These new protocols included raising the minimum age to compulsory participate in armed groups from 15 to 18 and to raise it to over 15 years old for voluntary participation.¹³⁰ An overwhelming majority of Member States ratified the Optional Protocols, however many of the Member States who have not are those where this issue is at its largest.¹³¹

In 1996, the UN received the Machel Report on "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" from Mozambique's former Minister of Education Graca Machel.¹³² The report covered topics such as child soldier recruitment, child refugees, gender-based violence, landmines, nutrition, and education.¹³³ It also provided recommendations for the UN and Member State governments to prevent the victimization of children in armed conflict.¹³⁴ This prompted the UN General Assembly (GA) to pass A/RES/51/77, which urged all Member States who had not done so to sign the CRC and recommended that the Secretary-General create a special office that dealt specifically with children in armed conflict.¹³⁵

In April 1997, UNICEF passed the Cape Town Principles, which were adopted at the Symposium on the Prevention of Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa. This document raised the minimum age of children participating in armed forces to 18 and urged Member States to ratify the optional protocol of the UNCRC.¹³⁶ It also established a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) that had jurisdiction over the illegal recruitment of children.¹³⁷ In addition, it advocated for the access to education, including secondary education to all children including refugee and internally displaced children.¹³⁸

Current Situation

Armed conflict often leads to the exploitation of children and their rights as people. Since 2016, there are over 250,000 child soldiers that are utilized by both government and rebel forces.¹³⁹ Upwards of 40 percent of those children are girls who are sexually abused as sex slaves for soldiers but boys can also be victims of sexual violence.¹⁴⁰ Children are especially vulnerable to military recruitment due to their young age and inability to resist

¹²⁶ "Our History," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_history.html (accessed November 4, 2016).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ "Guide to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict," United Nations Children's Fund, https://www.unicef.org/protection/option_protocol_conflict.pdf (accessed November 28, 2016).

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Ratification Status of the Optional Protocols," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/mandate/country-status-2/> (accessed November 18, 2016).

¹³² "The Machel Reports," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/mandate/the-machel-reports/> (accessed November 4, 2016).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ "Cape Town Principles and Best Practices," United Nations Children's Fund, [http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles(1).pdf) (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "Child Soldiers," War Child, <http://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/child-soldiers> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

or even understand their position.¹⁴¹ More specifically, children are less likely to demand better living or work conditions and they are often easier to manipulate.¹⁴² Children who are living in combat zones with little access to education or are separated from their families are more likely to become child soldiers.¹⁴³ Child soldiers are not limited to combat work; they can also work as cooks, messengers, porters, and spies.¹⁴⁴

There are over 28 million child refugees in the world that have been displaced by armed conflict.¹⁴⁵ Of those child refugees, 45 percent originate from Syria or Afghanistan.¹⁴⁶ There are a significant number of child refugees stemming from the conflicts in East Africa such as the ones in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹⁴⁷ The number of unaccompanied refugee children has tripled since 2014. In 2015 alone, more than 100,000 unaccompanied refugee children filed for asylum in over 70 Member States.¹⁴⁸ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum defined unaccompanied children as, "A person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is, attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so."¹⁴⁹ These children are often left to survive on their own and are extremely susceptible to exploitation.¹⁵⁰

There are over 40 million children that are out of school due to armed conflict.¹⁵¹ One in four children who live in a conflict zone are not attending school.¹⁵² Education provides children with self-empowerment, confidence, and is vital in a child's development. Schools also provide children with lifesaving information about disease protection and sanitation.¹⁵³ Unfortunately, armed conflict disrupts children's education and ability to attend school. There are a variety of reasons that prevent children from being able to achieve access to education. Those living directly in conflict zones may have had their schools destroyed, damaged, or abandoned during the fighting. Children who have fled their homes may not even have access to a school to get in education.¹⁵⁴ War also affects the economic standing of families so children may have to work to support their families leaving them unable to attend school.¹⁵⁵

Case Studies

Afghanistan

As conflict continues to rage on in Afghanistan, children continue to be disproportionately affected. Child casualties rose 14 percent from 2014 to 2015, resulting in the highest number recorded since the Monitoring and Recording Mechanism was established in 2009.¹⁵⁶ The UN has verified 1,306 incidents that have resulted in 2,828 child

¹⁴¹ "Facts About Child Soldiers," Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/12/03/facts-about-child-soldiers> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁴² "Trafficking Children," United Nations Global Initiative to Fighting Human Trafficking, <http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/about/trafficking-of-children.html> (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "Nearly 50 Million Children Are Refugees or Migrants, says UNICEF," CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/07/world/unicef-report-on-child-refugees-and-migrants/> (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ "Child Refugee Numbers Have Soared, According to New UNICEF Report," World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/09/the-number-of-child-refugees-around-the-world-has-risen-rapidly-finds-new-unicef-report/> (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ "Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁵⁰ "What We Do," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-we-do/> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁵¹ "Access to Education," War Child, <http://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/access-education> (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁵² "One in Four Children in Conflict Zones are out of School" UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/media/media_89782.html (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ "Afghanistan," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict,

casualties.¹⁵⁷ Essentially, one in four civilian casualties was a child in 2015.¹⁵⁸ Of these casualties, 42 percent were associated with armed groups like the Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and 23 percent were associated with the Afghani state military or pro-government groups.¹⁵⁹

The number of children recruited by into fighting forces more than doubled between 2014 and 2015.¹⁶⁰ The majority of these children were recruited by armed non-governmental groups like the Taliban.¹⁶¹ A few cases, however, involved children being recruited by government armed forces and police groups.¹⁶² The Taliban routinely recruits children for suicide attacks and combat positions.¹⁶³ The number of children abducted has tripled since 2014 and 75 percent of those children were abducted by the Taliban.¹⁶⁴

Schools continue to be utilized by armed groups to incite violence. There were 132 UN verified cases of attacks on schools in 2015, 109 of which were attributed to armed, non-governmental groups.¹⁶⁵ Because of the emergence of ISIL in the eastern portion of the Member State, 69 schools had to close due to the threat resulting in 48,751 children being unable to attend a place of learning.¹⁶⁶

Syria

As the Syrian Civil War enters the fifth year, its devastating effects continue to be felt by millions of children. More than 80 percent of Syrian children have been harmed since the conflict began.¹⁶⁷ Since the conflict began, 306,000 Syrian children have been born directly into refugee status and one in three Syrian children have been born.¹⁶⁸ In other words, there are a significant number of children who have only known conflict their entire lives.¹⁶⁹ There has also been a sharp increase in the number of unaccompanied child refugees because of the Syrian conflict. Now more than ever, children are crossing the Syrian border, alone, in hopes of finding a safer, more stable life. Over 15,000 Syrian child refugees have crossed the border unaccompanied.¹⁷⁰

Prior to the war, Syria had one of the highest literacy rates in the world, but now there are 2.8 million Syrian children out of school.¹⁷¹ Another million Syrian children are at risk for dropping out of school.¹⁷² In the areas that have faced the most destruction, school attendance rates have dropped to below 30 percent.¹⁷³ Twenty-five percent, of schools in Syria have been damaged, destroyed, or used for other purposes like shelters.¹⁷⁴ UNICEF recorded 80 attacks on schools that resulted in the deaths of 160 children in 2014.¹⁷⁵

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries-caac/afghanistan/> (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ “Afghanistan,” Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries-caac/afghanistan/> (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ “Afghanistan,” Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries-caac/afghanistan/> (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ “Syrian Children Under Siege,” United Nations Children’s Fund, <https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees/syria-crisis> (accessed August 4, 2016).

¹⁶⁸ “1 in 3 Syrian Children Has Grown up Knowing Only Crisis as Conflict Reaches 5 Year Point,” United Nations Children’s Fund, http://www.unicef.org/media/media_90453.html (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² “Schools Under Attack in Syria,” Protecting Education, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/final-education-under-attack_sturkey-briefing-paper_2015-09-03.pdf (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

The Syrian conflict has also threatened children's health and sanitation. Polio has reappeared in Syria after a 14-year absence due to the lack of vaccinations given to children since the war started.¹⁷⁶ A number of other preventable diseases have reappeared in Syria as well including measles.¹⁷⁷ Prior to 2011, Syria's vaccination rate was 99 percent but with the onset of the war, the number now sits at 52 percent.¹⁷⁸ This adversely affects children, particularly young children, who are missing out on lifesaving vaccinations.

Actions Taken by the UN

In February 2007, UNICEF passed the Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment or Use by Armed Forces or Armed Groups as well as the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.¹⁷⁹ These comprehensive documents work to protect children from being recruited into and exploited by armed groups as well support their reintegration into civilian life.¹⁸⁰ They address the specific situation of young girls that have been recruited by armed groups, refugee children, release and reintegration of children back into society, as well as the process for seeking justice and the applicable civil proceedings.¹⁸¹

In 2016, UNICEF continued the Humanitarian Action for Children, which aimed to help 43 million children in 63 Member States that reside in conflict prone regions.¹⁸² The action plan focused on areas like healthcare, education, protection, nutrition, and sanitation.¹⁸³ The action plan has had great success in past years. For instance, in 2015 this program provided help to four million children with gaining access to education and 22.6 million people access to clean drinking water.¹⁸⁴ While this action plan has proven immensely successful, UNICEF has faced a funding gap of USD 10 million that is preventing the program being adequately prepared to reach its goals.¹⁸⁵

Save the Children, a non-governmental organization (NGO), has been working tirelessly to provide aid to the child refugee plight and protect their fundamental rights.¹⁸⁶ Save the Children works in a number of Member States around the world focusing on other Member States that are receiving a large influx of child refugees as well as those Member States from which the children are fleeing.¹⁸⁷ The organization provides children with food, water, clothing, blankets, and hygiene products.¹⁸⁸ Save the Children has successfully set up child-friendly save spaces that allow children to play without fear for their safety.¹⁸⁹ For example, one of these child friendly spaces was set up in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan and has helped thousands of children.¹⁹⁰ Save the Children also works with child refugees by offering or referring them to psychiatric care that is, in many cases, so desperately needed.¹⁹¹

In 2000, the UNGA adopted the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.¹⁹² This protocol requires states to take measures to ensure that children under the age of 18 stay out of the involvement of

¹⁷⁶ "1 in 3 Syrian Children Has Grown up Knowing Only Crisis as Conflict Reaches 5 Year Point," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/media/media_90453.html (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ "Paris Principles and Paris Commitments," United Nations Children's Fund, https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58012.html (accessed August 3, 2016).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² "Humanitarian Action for Children: 2016," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/HAC_2016_Overview_ENG.pdf (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ "Results for Children," Save the Children, http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.9284701/k.9353/Annual_Report.htm (accessed September 8, 2016).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² "Advancing the CRC," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_protocols.html (accessed November 4, 2016).

armed conflict and that Member States must raise the minimum age of child recruitment from 15 to an unspecified age.¹⁹³ The UNICEF Executive Board has worked tirelessly to get all Member States to ratify this protocol.¹⁹⁴ In 2010, to mark the 10th anniversary of the protocol, the Executive Board began a campaign to get all Member States to ratify the documents.¹⁹⁵ Currently, two-thirds of the world's Member States have ratified the protocols.¹⁹⁶ Total and complete international support of the protocol remains a high priority of the Executive Board.¹⁹⁷

In 2015, the UNICEF Executive Board raised the cap on Emergency Programme Funding to USD 75 million a year in hopes to be able to assist all Member States that are experiencing humanitarian crisis.¹⁹⁸ At their first meeting in 2016, the authorized the creation on seven new programs centered in Member States such as Syria, Iraq, and Ethiopia.¹⁹⁹ The Executive Board, as well as UNICEF, as a whole is working towards integrating humanitarian and development systems that are aimed particularly at children.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

Armed conflict has severely impacted the lives of millions of children. It inhibits their access to education and adequate healthcare and increases the likelihood of their exploitation. Children are uprooted from their homes and separated from their families and these children face a greater risk of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Literacy rates and school attendance declines leaving children behind in school which can have a drastic effect on them later in life. Due to declining vaccination rates and poor sanitation, children are contracting and dying from 100 percent preventable diseases.

The UN came together and passed the UNCRC to ensure security, education, healthcare, and the right to their own futures for all children in the international community. Armed conflict directly violates those rights for children all over the world. It is imperative that the UN takes a strong stance on protecting children and their livelihood to uphold the commitment that was made over two decades ago.

Committee Directive

Delegates should be aware of children's rights as outlined in the UNCRC, specifically their rights to healthcare, education, and security and look for ways that these rights are not being adequately protected. Delegates should be mindful of the armed conflict situation happening not only in the Middle East, but in other parts of the world such as Africa, East Asia, as well as the problems arising in Southern and Eastern Europe. In regards to the child refugee issue, delegates should ensure that the proper policies and procedures that concern accompanied and unaccompanied refugee children are being upheld in Member States that are experiencing a high influx of refugees.

Delegates should be mindful of the goals of the UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2016, which highlights the tasks, goals, as well as some of the hurdles the committee is already facing in tackling this topic. This Humanitarian Action has been renewed and updated each year, so delegates should look to see the focus of this year's plan, and look for any shortcomings that may be present.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ "On Day Three, Executive Board Discusses Child Rights and the Key Role of National Committees," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_53813.html (accessed November 4, 2016).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ "UNICEF Executive Board discusses humanitarian action and financing," United Nations Children's Fund, http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_90032.html (accessed September 15, 2016).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Technical Appendix Guide

Topic I: Ending Discrimination Against Children with Disabilities

Florian, Lani. "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Classification of Children with Disabilities: Part I. Issues in the Classification of Children with Disabilities." *The Journal of Special Education*. 40(1) (2006).

The article examines the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) and the gaps within classifying those with disabilities. While labeling children for purposes of accommodations within the educational backdrop is common, many children are not getting the services that they need to access education. Furthermore, in developing Member States where education and healthcare is limited, many of these children go unnoticed and undocumented. This article further examines six renowned articles on this field and looks at the strengths and weaknesses and how this classification can further be improved.

Kuper H, Monteath-van Dok A, Wing K, Danquah L, Evans J, Zuurmond M, et al. "The Impact of Disability on the Lives of Children; Cross-Sectional Data Including 8,900 Children with Disabilities and 898,834 Children without Disabilities across 30 Countries." *PLoS ONE*. 9(9) (2014).

This is a cross-sectional study that compared participants across 30 Member States with varying age, sex, health, education, poverty, and water and sanitation facilities. Disability was addressed through a solitary question and then the children were selected. The outcomes were primarily what we already know in regards to those with disabilities being behind in education, less employable, and often overlooked. The study looks at children from all different backgrounds and economic climates and came to one resounding conclusion: regardless of the opportunities available for a child, children with disabilities are always behind in some aspect. The study also looks at the protections in place and looks to strengthen them and how they can be applied to different populations.

Odom, Samuel L; Buysse, Virginia; Soukakou, Elena. "Inclusion for Young Children with Disabilities: A Quarter Century of Research Perspectives." *Journal of Early Intervention*. 33(4) (2011): 344-356.

The article details the importance of early childhood interventions for those with disabilities. It further posits that with early intervention, the response is more favorable, thus promoting inclusion and easier access to education along with more opportunities for socialization. It gives a brief history of children with disabilities and shows the progression that has been made throughout the last 25 years, both domestically and internationally. While this article primarily focuses on the United States, and studies within the U.S., globalization is the topic of the conference and this article could be used to theorize proven treatments and interventions at the international level.

"Children with Disabilities in South Africa," UNICEF Department of Social Development/Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_sitandisabilities.pdf (2012).

This study looks at the children of South Africa and their disabilities. It considers the gaps that are created and unaddressed within the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as the UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It further, recognizes the implementations that have been furthered by both important historic steps. Along with looking at the ICF as a classifying tool, and better advances that could be made, this study leaves room for much discussion on the advancement of tools and classification of children with disabilities.

Topic II: Protecting the Rights of Children in Armed Conflict

"The Machel Reports," United Nations Office for the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/mandate/the-machel-reports/>

The report was brought to the UN General Assembly (GA) in 1996 and brought this topic to the forefront of UN discussions. It detailed the atrocities and human rights violations that children were experiencing in areas of armed conflict across the globe. It delved into topics such as child soldiers, refugees, malnutrition, sexual exploitation, as well as some of the psychological affects that children may experience. The report also offers a variety of recommendations for courses of action the UN may take to eradicate these violations and it remains the groundwork for many UN initiatives aimed towards protecting children's rights in conflict.

Convention on the Rights of a Child. United Nations General Assembly. November 20, 1989.

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=en

This document is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the international community. This document clearly defines specific rights that all children are entitled to including education, healthcare, and safety as well as freedom of thought, religion, and expression. It addresses issues with refugee children and calls upon states to ensure to the maximum extent possible that children are protected. Since this document is almost universally ratified states should be willing to ensure that these rights are not being violated or infringed upon.

Majekodunmi, Ben. "Protection in Practice: The Protection of Children's Rights in Situations of Armed Conflict, UNICEF in Burundi." <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/protection.pdf>

This article looks at a case study of the United Nation Children's Fund's (UNICEF) impact in Burundi when dealing with protecting children's rights in armed conflict. It gives an overview of the topic as well as some context dealing with the situation in Burundi. What is most important, however, are the successes and limitations of UNICEF's time in Burundi and offers some suggestions on how to better improve methods that could be applied to other areas where UNICEF has a presence.

"Results for the Children: 2015 Annual Review," Save the Children.

http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0df91d2eba74a%7D/SC_2015_ANNUALREVIEW_FULL%20-%20FINAL.PDF

This is a great example of how non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, are working to alleviate some of the issues dealing with children in armed conflict. They have expanded and improved on initiatives dealing with healthcare, education, the refugee crisis, and child trafficking. It details areas where they have shown tremendous success as well as detail places where things could be improved upon. While they work in many countries that are not experiencing armed conflict, their impact in the regions that do are vital and life-changing to the children who live there.