

# OAKRIDGE



# MUN 2023



# UNICEF

## BACKGROUND GUIDE

**Deliberation upon protecting children in humanitarian crises with special emphasis on Rehabilitation and Reintegration.**

## **Letter from the Executive Board: -**

Greetings delegates,

It is a great honor to be on the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund at Oak MUN 2023. Please note that the guide, as the name suggests, is to provide you with a basic understanding of the agenda. Nevertheless, the delegates are requested to refrain from limiting their research to the contents of the guide. It should neither emphasize the starting nor the endpoint of their research. A fruitful debate with a broader and rational approach towards the agenda at hand rather than simply abiding by the background guide is expected in the committee.

The delegates have the liberty to choose the flow of the committee with due consensus and the Executive Board will not be intervening with it unless the guidance is extremely necessary. The Executive Board strongly advises the delegates, especially the first-timers, to research thoroughly your country's stance on the agenda and come up with substantial solutions with your country's foreign policy in mind.

As you prepare to participate in the conference, it is important to have a firm understanding of the topics at hand and the history that has led to the current situation. The Executive Board has compiled a background guide to provide you with the necessary information to help you prepare for the conference.

The background guide contains a summary of the topics that will be discussed at the conference, as well as a brief overview of the history and current state of the issues.

In addition, it includes a list of resources for further study. We hope that this background guide will help you to understand the issues and to make informed decisions during the conference.

The Executive Board wishes you the best of luck in your preparation and at the conference.

Sincerely,

**The Executive Board  
United Nations Children's Fund**

**Co-Chair: - G Akshit Varma ([akshitvarmag@gmail.com](mailto:akshitvarmag@gmail.com))**

**Co-Chair: - Sai Preethi Polu ([saipreethi.polu@gmail.com](mailto:saipreethi.polu@gmail.com))**

# GUIDELINES

- Read the entirety of the background guide in the order it was written. Make sure to highlight the names of specific treaties, documents, resolutions, conventions, international bodies, events and any other specific incidents so that you can get back to them later and do a lot more thorough research
- Understand some of the basic details regarding the country that you've been allotted whether this be the capital, current affairs regarding geopolitical situation, political hierarchy etc. While not strictly necessary, you never know when this can turn out being handy. [Geography Now's A - Z Country List](#) has been a particularly helpful resource for this.
- Use a search engine of your choice to create as many tabs as possible for the highlighted terms from your background guide. Wikipedia or a YouTube video act as a great way to get a brief summary of the incidents at hand but such sources (especially Wikipedia articles) cannot be used in committee as sources.
- Delve into deeper research regarding the particular position of your allocation with the agenda at hand. Try searching for the voting stances of your allocation in related conventions and understanding the reasons for voting as so. UN Press Releases are also a helpful source for this matter.
- Find the website for the foreign ministry of the country you have been assigned alongside the "Permanent Mission of COUNTRY to the United Nations" website and search for a key term relating to the agenda, this should often give you statements from recent press conferences or UN committee sessions that can act as valuable sources of information in forming a position.
- Keep a handy copy of the Charter of the United Nations, whether as a .pdf file extension or a physical copy works. This contains the founding principles of the United Nations and contains articles that lay out the mandate of the six bodies that the United Nations is primarily divided into. Spend some additional time researching the specific mandate and functions of the committee that you have been assigned.

- If you are new to Model UN, consider going through a few YouTube videos to understand the ROP (rules of procedure), we follow the UNA-USA ROP unless otherwise explicitly stated by the Executive Board. Debate and discussion always are of higher importance and take precedence over procedure, so whenever necessary we try to be lenient with the intricacies of procedure. Never hesitate doing something in committee because you're not sure about procedure, we're always here to help! Here's a particular video that we found helpful when we were starting our Model UN journey (not all of this is accurate but regardless it is a helpful resource that can be highly recommended to anyone doing Model UN for the first time): [Click Here](#).
- Spend some time trying to predict possible sub-topics that could be discussed in committee and follow a similar procedure to research them. Also make use of the QARMA section at the end of this document to come up with possible solutions that could fall in line with your foreign policy.
- If time permits, try to pick a country with an opposing foreign policy stance with the agenda at hand and research from its perspective to understand possible disagreements that can come up within committee.
- Understand that foreign policy and foreign relations are two different things. Foreign Policy refers to the position of a state regarding a particular issue, foreign policy varies from issue to issue. Two countries might have very different stances regarding how to proceed with *non-proliferation* but might have the exact same position regarding *child rights* for example. Violating the foreign policy of your country, unless in the case of extraordinary circumstances that require it, is the single biggest mistake that a delegate can make.
- Foreign Relations on the other hand refers to the diplomatic ties that one country has with another and considers elements such as the mutual presence of embassies, consulates, ambassadors & diplomatic dialogue. More often than not, foreign policy is what will be of your primary concern during your MUN but it is important to also consider any extremities in your allotted country's foreign relations.

- The Executive Board may ask for the source of a statement that a delegate makes in committee either during a Point of Order circumstance or if said statement stands to be of interest to the Executive Board. Therefore it is recommended that delegates keep track of their sources when making / disputing a claim and also ensure their validity. Please do remember that while you as a delegate are allowed to cite any source you wish during committee, sources listed below are the only sources that the Executive Board would deem verifiable:
  - Documents originating from a multilateral organization such as the United Nations (or any of its subsidiary bodies), EU, BRICS, World Bank, ASEAN etc. Any sort of documents such as press releases, resolutions and more from such an organization will be accepted.
  - Reports, press releases and any other documents originating from the delegate's government and / or any other national agency from the delegate's state. These reports can be used but may be denied by an other another delegate in the committee. Under such circumstances, the ruling of the Point of Order is left to the discretion of the Executive Board.
  - News reports & articles originating from:
    - Reuters. Any article, fact or statistic originating from a Reuters article can be made to repudiate or be used to conform a claim made by a delegate
    - A news report originating from the a media that is affiliated to, owned by or operated by the state itself. Reports from such news organizations can be used to make claims, provided that they are substantial and can be determined to be credible.
- Please do remember that our job as the Executive Board is to facilitate debate. We do not direct the path that the committee moves in, we simply moderate it. It is the collective job of the committee to consider what direction is most sensible. Any of the questions or clarifications we ask are meant for the purpose of furthering debate.

# COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

United Nations Children's Fund, commonly referred to as UNICEF, is a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to promoting the rights and well-being of children worldwide. Established on December 11, 1946, as a consequence of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 57(I), UNICEF was initially created to provide emergency food and healthcare to children in war-torn Europe and China after World War II. Over the years, its mandate has evolved to encompass a broader range of child-related issues, including education, child protection, nutrition, and more.

- UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly 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.
- UNICEF is guided by the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behavior towards children.
- UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress.
- UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families.
- UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children – victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation, and those with disabilities.
- UNICEF responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children and those who provide their care.
- UNICEF is non-partisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.
- UNICEF aims, through its country programs, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities.
- UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

# OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHILDREN

## What is a humanitarian crisis?

A humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), refers to a situation where there is a widespread and severe disruption of normal life, often due to events such as armed conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics, and other situations that result in significant human suffering and require immediate and coordinated international assistance to address the needs of affected populations. Humanitarian crises can have devastating impacts on communities, particularly on vulnerable groups such as children, women, and the elderly.

## How do humanitarian crises affect children?

Humanitarian crises can have profound and lasting impacts on children, often making them one of the most vulnerable groups in these situations. UNICEF emphasizes that children are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of humanitarian crises due to their physical, emotional, and developmental needs. Here are some ways in which humanitarian crises can affect children:

- 1. Health and Nutrition:** Humanitarian crises can disrupt healthcare systems, leading to a lack of access to medical care, vaccinations, and essential medications. Malnutrition rates can increase, leading to severe health complications and even death.
- 2. Education:** Disruptions caused by conflicts or disasters can lead to the closure of schools and limit children's access to education. This can have long-term consequences for their future opportunities and development.
- 3. Psychological Well-being:** Children can experience significant trauma, anxiety, and stress due to exposure to violence, loss of loved ones, and displacement. The instability and insecurity of humanitarian crises can have lasting emotional impacts.
- 4. Protection:** Humanitarian crises can expose children to increased risks of violence, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Separation from family members and loss of caregivers can make them more vulnerable.
- 5. Displacement:** Children are often disproportionately affected by displacement, whether as refugees or internally displaced persons. This can lead to loss of home, community, and support networks, resulting in uncertainty and

**6. Child Labor and Exploitation:** In some crises, children may be forced into child labor or exploited to support their families' survival. They might engage in hazardous work or activities that harm their health and well-being.

**7. Loss of Identity:** Displacement and family separation can lead to a loss of cultural identity and a sense of belonging, impacting children's sense of self and connection to their heritage.

**8. Gender-Based Violence:** Girls are at increased risk of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and early marriage, during humanitarian crises.

**9. Access to Basic Services:** Children's access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities can be compromised during crises, leading to an increased risk of diseases.

**10. Long-Term Development:** The disruptions caused by humanitarian crises can hinder children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, affecting their long-term potential.

The youngest suffer the most in times of crisis. During conflicts, they can be grievously hurt or even killed by weapons and the aftermath of war. When at times, schools and hospitals have fallen victim, the majority suffered, estimated to be children. Some are forced to join armed groups, not just as fighters, but in various roles. Child soldiers are a worldwide problem and efforts have been made on a global scale to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers, with the most important being the minimum age of 18 years to be soldiers.

UNICEF defines child soldiers as “any child under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity.” The age limit of 18 years was set by the Optional Protocol to the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in the year 2002. Earlier 15 years used to be the minimum for recruitment in armed forces set by the Geneva Convention of 1949 and by Additional Protocols of 1977.

### **Why are rehabilitation and reintegration programs important?**

Rehabilitation and reintegration programs play a crucial role in helping children who have suffered from humanitarian crises to heal, recover, and reintegrate into their communities. These programs are designed to address the physical, emotional, psychological, and social needs of children who have experienced the traumas and disruptions associated with conflicts, natural disasters, and other crises. UNICEF emphasizes the importance of these programs to ensure that children can rebuild their lives and achieve a sense of normalcy. Children not only require assistance in terms of healthcare, education, and protection but also in terms of family reunification and long-term support.



Child reintegration differs from adults. It concentrates on individual harm, respecting kids as individuals with rights and choices. Children's best interests and participation in decisions are vital. This approach applies from crisis response to long-term peace efforts, ensuring their rights are upheld at all stages.

## **Role of Gender in Protection of Children**

When planning reintegration, it is important to recognize pre-existing and conflict-driven gender dynamics and acknowledge the diverse roles, experiences, and vulnerabilities of girls and boys at various developmental stages. This implicates recognizing girls' distinct challenges, like protection issues and added stigma from factors such as sexual violence, forced marriage, and early pregnancy.

Girls and boys who experience forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) while associated with armed actors require specialized GBV services. GBV response services should henceforth be in place where reintegration programs are inducted to ensure child survivors, particularly adolescent girls, can access services efficiently and confidentially. Coherence between and coordination among child protection and GBV prevention initiatives is also critical, particularly to tackle detrimental practices and social norms that can be contributing causes to girls' and boys' recruitment. Sexual and reproductive health services are critical, especially for girls who may have experienced GBV and pregnancy.

Specifically, for girls, their active participation and gender perspectives should align with the principles outlined in UNSCR 1325, the pioneering Women, Peace, and Security resolution of the Security Council.

## **Ethical Considerations and Child Rights**

Children and young people share both general human rights with adults and special rights to address their unique needs. They aren't owned by parents or objects of charity; they possess their rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines these rights, aiming for their full potential. The Convention envisions children as individuals within families and communities with age-appropriate rights and responsibilities. It emphasizes their dignity and well-being, promoting a universal quality of life for all children, not just a few.

# CASE STUDIES

## CASE STUDY 1: Central Africa & Iraq

Research conducted in the Central African Republic and Iraq has unveiled the influential role of distinct actors in driving youth engagement in armed groups.

In the Central African Republic, faith leaders emerge as potent agents propelling girls and boys towards hostilities and armed affiliations due to the civil conflict's religiously grounded divisions. Conversely, in Iraq, the study identifies community and family members as pivotal influences spurring adolescent boys to connect with armed factions. These revelations accentuate the critical necessity of intertwining reintegration initiatives with the broader enhancement of child protection systems. By involving parents, faith leaders, and community members, a comprehensive approach can be harnessed.

These findings underscore the importance of linking reintegration programming to broader child protection system strengthening that engages parents, faith leaders and community members in discussions on the protection of children and children's rights, increasing knowledge, and developing local strategies to create a more protective and rights-based environment for girls and boys of all ages.

Research indicates that the most effective outcomes arise from combining vocational training with apprenticeship programs. When it comes to vocational training and alternate education, these approaches must be sensitive to gender considerations and inclusive of consultations. Specifically, they should cater to the requirements outlined by women and older girls, focusing on overcoming obstacles related to safety, accessibility, and participation. By doing so, these efforts can ensure enhanced prospects for employment and income generation, fostering a more equitable environment.

## CASE STUDY 2: South Sudan

In South Sudan, during the reintegration program design, UNICEF faced an unanticipated need for services catering to over 20 adolescent girls with infants and young children. Swift adjustments were necessary to address the care needs of both groups effectively. A gender-sensitive strategy should acknowledge that certain girls might demand a more personalized and potentially costly approach, necessitating flexibility to accommodate dependents. This underscores the importance of adapting interventions to diverse circumstances and highlights the financial and logistical considerations integral to fostering successful reintegration.

The Philippines introduced Republic Act 11188, the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC) Law, in January 2019. This legislation includes tailored gender-sensitive clauses aimed at guaranteeing educational support for girls previously involved with armed forces or groups. The law ensures that these girls, even if they are mothers or wives, gain access to educational assistance through both formal and alternative learning systems. This proactive legal framework acknowledges the specific challenges faced by these girls and underscores the nation's commitment to providing them with equitable educational opportunities, irrespective of their roles or marital status, contributing to their holistic reintegration into society.

## **INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS-**

Following World War I, special care for children began to assume a definitive dimension in international humanitarian law. as well as the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child In 1924, the Child was seen as the outcome. of significant attempts to protect children, and the proclamation was considered as the first structure. stumbling barrier in international child protection rules safety, which mankind must supply It is ideal for youngsters.

The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 protect children in the same way as they protect "all persons taking no active part in the hostilities." The Fourth Geneva Convention states that throughout both international and non-international armed conflicts, all people, including children, have the right to humane treatment. However, none of the four Conventions expressly mentions the need for particular protection for children. The two 1977 Protocols Additional to the Geneva Convention addressed this deficiency.

Although there are many international humanitarian, and human rights and the rights of the displaced incorporated in several binding and non-binding instruments, only those legal instruments that have relevance to the children caught in displacement, armed conflict and international forced migration situations are briefly mentioned here. This is not an exhaustive listing of such provisions, but the enumeration would certainly provide an understanding of the nature and extent of obligations undertaken by the states in the protection of children during humanitarian emergencies.

As a result of the international and non-international armed conflicts during the twentieth century and the ongoing conflicts during the present century, children have been the victims either directly or indirectly. Millions of them have been killed, disabled, orphaned, sexually abused, recruited as soldiers, separated from their families and friends, denied the support of the community in which they lived and have been exposed to a high degree of risk of disease, psychological problems and malnutrition.

At times the international community has to wait and watch helplessly and at times assistance becomes a difficult commodity. There seems to be a widening gap between the needs and the assistance available to face a humanitarian crisis. This situation is explained better by the UNICEF in its Humanitarian Action Report of 2002:

Accordingly, the global humanitarian context is a changing one. New challenges arise, priorities change, and issues interlink with one another... The lack of humanitarian access in conflict situations has a particularly devastating effect on children, preventing the delivery of assistance with major consequences for health care, education and other social services. Insecurity, the widespread presence of landmines and denial of access by warring parties are all major constraints on humanitarian action.

Article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict deals directly with the issue of child soldiers employed and accepted in the armed military opposing groups or military forces of non-state actors. It states that: "Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years", and also "State Parties shall take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalize such practices".

In addition to this, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children - issued by the UN in 2009, The Safe Schools Declaration - adopted in 2015, UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy, and UNSC Resolutions such as S/RES/2427 are a few very important frameworks and suggestions.

# QARMA (QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER):

1. What is the role of the child in the decision-making process related to their rehabilitation, protection and re-integration?
2. How are the members monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its programs and interventions in protecting and rehabilitating children in crises?
3. How does the member state ensure that the rights of refugee and asylum-seeking children are protected following international refugee law?
4. How do the member states coordinate with neighboring states and international bodies to ensure the legal protection of children who may cross borders to escape crises?
5. Do children affected by conflicts and crises have access to legal aid and mechanisms for seeking justice in cases of rights violations?

## REFERENCE LINKS:

- <https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>
- <https://www.unicef.org/protection/protecting-children-in-humanitarian-action>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0145213411002286>
- <https://www.unicef.org/media/85596/file/UN-resolutions-UNICEF-1940s.pdf>
- [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1163/j.ctv1sr6k8f.8.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae195b9aff4e7921c1e34d362b1cfa7cc&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1163/j.ctv1sr6k8f.8.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae195b9aff4e7921c1e34d362b1cfa7cc&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1)
- <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1338352713/F0357F1A5A54937PQ/2?accountid=38647>
- <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2481890390/F0357F1A5A54937PQ/8?accountid=38647>

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/SixgraveviolationsBooklet.pdf>