

# E.A.MUNC 2023



## United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Background Guide

### **AGENDA**

*Addressing the Challenges Faced by Children in  
Armed Conflict*

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## **ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:**

In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly approved resolution 57(I) to establish UNICEF and provide relief to children after the Second World War. Originally named the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF was a temporary relief fund of the UN. During the General Assembly of the United Nations, in October 1953, UNICEF's mandate to assist vulnerable children was extended indefinitely. In 1959, the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which outlines children's rights to protection, education, healthcare, shelter, and nutritional needs.

Today it aims to save and defend children's lives and their rights to develop and fulfill their potential in a safe and understanding environment. It is currently active in over 190 countries and territories. The constantly changing global dynamics bring in more challenges that make children more vulnerable to exploitation and violence. The covid-19 pandemic, climate changes, widespread social and economic challenges, and prolonged poverty and inequality are just a few challenges the UNICEF aims at mitigating to protect the lives of the children and their rights as individuals.

Warfare succeeding the World War II has increasingly begun to directly target children during attacks, block accessibility to life-saving assistance to children, force them into malnutrition, and increase their vulnerability to outbreaks of deadly diseases. With this in mind, UNICEF released a Call-For-Action to all warring parties on 23 April 2021 to ensure deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on children and the services they rely upon will be stopped, keep children and their environment safe, hold perpetrators of child rights violations accountable, foster recovery from the effects of war, and work toward an inclusive and durable peace\*.

Despite the difficulties faced by children in conflict, there is still hope for change. This is why it is very important for UNICEF that people speak up for children's rights whenever and wherever they can.



[\\*UNICEF's change agenda for protecting children in armed conflict | UNICEF](#)

## **INTRODUCTION:**

On 20 November 1989, in the light of the changing world order, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. It recognized children as individuals that have all rights to a protected childhood. It reminded the world that childhood must be a time wherein the children grow and develop with dignity in a safe and understanding family environment.


Regardless of the hope, vision, and commitments made by the world leaders in 1989, children worldwide continue to be denied their basic rights. Prolonged conflicts within or amongst countries force them to leave their schools and homes to join the army or sometimes they even come under direct attack from the warring parties' weaponry.

The wars of the 20th century were affecting civilians, half of whom are children and young adolescents under the age of 18\*, in a manner that can no longer be considered "collateral damage". Rather these conflicts are prolonged to the extent that entire generations are growing up in war zones or refugee camps. These 'homes' are also detailed with insufficient infrastructure, health care and educational services.

In the 1996 – Graça Machel Report, 'The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children' UNICEF had established that within the previous year, 2 million children were killed, 4 million were disabled or severely injured, 12 million were displaced or made homeless, and 1 million lost their parents in war.

War has only resulted in creating a vicious cycle of destruction, poverty and violence that young children cannot break out of.

Children and Armed Conflict Annual Report by the Secretary-General 2020 reported and verified the following number of victims of grave violations against children. The covid-19 pandemic had only aggravated the violence that children in warzones faced

○  RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN 8,521 children recruited and used\*\*

○  KILLING AND MAIMING OF CHILDREN 8,422 children killed or maimed\*\*

-  SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN 1,268 children victims of sexual violence\*\*
-  ATTACKS AGAINST SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS 856 incidents\*\*
-  ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN 3,202 children abducted\*\*
-  DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS 4,156 incidents\*\*

\*Machel Report 2001 \*\*Summary 2020 Children and Armed Conflict, Annual Report of the Secretary-General

## **EXISTING POLICIES:**

It has never been a deliberate intention to allow children to be involved in armed conflicts. The militias at times deny necessary assistance for children. However, change is possible and that is why several policies have been adopted. This also requires the active cooperation of governments and other organizations to hold the perpetrators of crimes responsible. The 1977 additional protocol seeks to improve the legal protection of civilians and wounded. The API compels the state to take all necessary measures to prevent the participation of children under the age of 15 years in armed hostilities. According to the additional protocols, child combatants under the age of 15 years are to be given privileged treatment so that they continue to benefit from the special protection accorded to children by international humanitarian law. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges the state to ensure that combatants under the age of 18 years should not take direct part in hostilities. Article 38 of The 1989 Convention on the rights of the child also urges the states to do the same and priority should be given to those aged between 15 and 18 years.



## **CHALLENGES:**

### **A. Health and Hygiene of Children**

As a result of direct violence, children between the ages of 2 and 15 are most prone to contract and die due to diarrheal diseases due to lack of hygiene and access to safe and drinkable water than by acts of violence. In areas of armed conflict, access to basic provisions like soap, clean facilities, uncontaminated water, and stable food supply are highly deficient

Without the availability of safe drinking water, children are vulnerable to contracting many diseases such as typhoid, polio, cholera, etc. In particular, girls are at a likelihood of endangerment while collecting water and using latrines in remote places in times of need. The education of girls in areas of armed conflict is also affected due to lack of access to clean water, as they are unable to attend school when menstruating due to the absence of clean latrine facilities in the school. As an aftermath of war in conflict-ridden areas, countries undergo famine, drought, etc which in turn causes starvation, severe malnutrition, and several other illnesses.

These illnesses add pressure to health systems that are already fragile and do not have the means to facilitate the large volumes of children affected by these diseases. The effects of the unavailability of proper healthcare and food supply, on children are debilitating. Children that suffered malnutrition and survive to adulthood face abnormalities in their development that lead to difficulties in their adult life and a diminished capacity to work. The average under-age-five mortality rate in areas of armed conflict is 81 per 1,000 live births, and this mortality rate is much greater compared to a world average of 72 deaths per 1,000 live births.

## **B. Direct Violence against Children**

- a. One of the six grave breaches denounced by the UN is the killing and maiming of children during armed conflict. Just because their parents went to a demonstration, infants, toddlers, and children are imprisoned and brutalized. During an armed war, children are vulnerable to landmines, unexploded ordinances, shelling, and other hazards.
- b. School attacks and hospital attacks can have lasting effects on children. It is children who are targeted directly to terrorize civilians. Children are even more at risk in conflict areas when they are trying to attend school. Compared to 2019, there were 535 verified attacks on schools in 2020, an increase of 17 per cent. Children who have been relocated as a direct outcome of conflict may be unable to return to school for months. Schools are frequently utilized as shelters for displaced individuals, which might disrupt local children's education. In settings where they should be safeguarded and nourished, children are being ambushed. Beyond the destruction of infrastructure, bombing hospitals results in a lack of medical supplies and the death of medical workers, reducing the probability of getting crucial medical care in the affected regions.
- c. At least 14,200 children have been sexually assaulted, forcibly married, and sexually exploited between 2005 and 2020 by parties in conflicts. Despite this, rape and sexual violence are commonly underreported crimes because of the widespread stigma associated with them, affecting children in conflict. Girl children are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, with 97 per cent of the cases being committed against them. The harmful effects of sexual violence spread through entire communities, destroy family bonds and harm future generations. Sexual violence is also a tactic used in war to reinforce gender inequalities and normalize violence, even after a conflict is over.



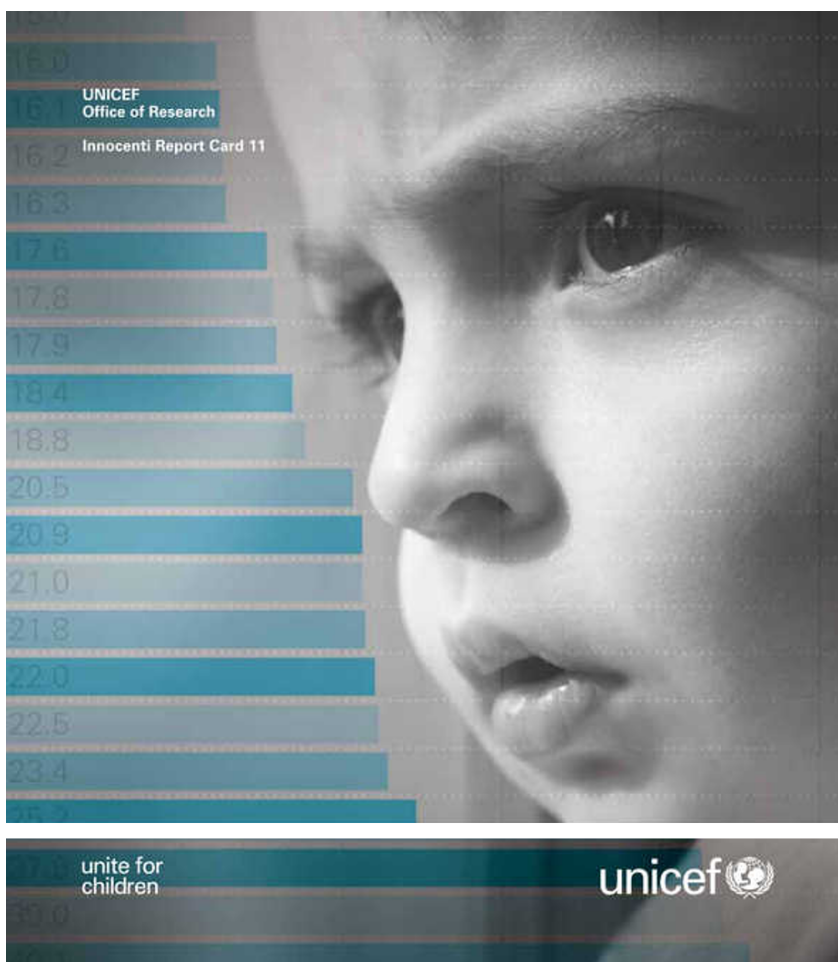
### **C. Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Forces**

- a. The armed groups also forcefully recruit children for a variety of reasons. Children are recruited by militias to help them in their fight and to do many other strenuous errands. These children who are forcibly conscripted are often referred to as ‘child soldiers’ and they are not only used as fighters but also as scouts, cooks, porters, and messengers.
- b. Irrespective of their roles, it is well understood that they are subjected to extreme violence. On the other hand, children voluntarily join these forces as a means to escape from their poverty-stricken lives and sometimes to protect their communities as well. Their association with the armed forces at a very young age deprives them of education and facilities that will nurture their inner potential. They are subjected to substance abuse which will have significant consequences on their mental and physical health.
- c. They may also not be completely aware of the dangers and the ways to face those dangers. Their knowledge about the weapons and tools that they use may also be limited. At times they are compelled to take part in torture and killings.
- d. The highest number of child soldiers is found in West and Central Africa. This region also accounts for the largest under-aged sexual violence. There are as many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 presently serving as combatants around the globe. In 2020, the United Nations verified a total of 26,425 violations against children in conflict situations across the globe.
- e. The degree of acceptance of these children who return home depends on a variety of factors such as their reasons for association with the armed group. If the child faces difficulty in his/her reintegration into society, It will have a negative psychological impact.



## E. Effects of Chemical Weapons

- a. Chemical or physical attacks on minors will "result in children having diminished potential for a complete range of adult functioning," Dr Sandro Galea, an epidemiologist at Boston University claims. "This has the ability to change a generation's developmental pattern."
- b. Chemical weapons are more dangerous to children for a variety of reasons. A chemical agent at a lesser amount might cause more harm to their organs.
- c. If sarin gas is used, the victim's lungs and airways might get clogged with fluid, resulting in asphyxia. Because children have smaller airways and a smaller chest, they would die sooner than adults. Children's defenses are weaker. They can't flee as rapidly as they can from a chemical strike. And once the toxins are in their bodies, their immune systems are immature and incapable of combating them.
- d. Furthermore, if youngsters survive a chemical assault, they will be affected for a far longer period than, say, a 50-year-old.
- e. Chemical assaults can have both mental and physical repercussions, however, it can be difficult to distinguish the effects of nerve damage from post-traumatic stress disorder since symptoms often overlap.
- f. Chemical warfare, like other violent attacks, is thought to cause PTSD and severe depression in survivors of all ages, according to researchers.



## **QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER:**

1. What are some measures that can be taken to improve the hygienic conditions for children in areas of conflict?
2. What are the kinds of approaches that can be used to help children in areas of armed conflict, cope psychologically?
3. How must accountability for violence against children in armed conflict be pursued?
4. What can be the ways in which children can be prevented from joining the armed groups voluntarily?
5. What are the ways in which communities under conflict are made aware of the children's vulnerability?

## **POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES:**

**Font:** Times New Roman

**Font Size:** 12

**Position Paper Page Limit:** One page (excluding bibliography)

## **POSITION PAPER FORMAT:**

### **Page one:**

**Delegate Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Country:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

*'A quote is preferred, not compulsory'*

### **Paragraph one:**

Introduction to the topic and steps taken by the UN on the topic at hand.

***Paragraph two:***

Elaboration on the country's laws and policies regarding the topic and how it is affected by the topic at hand, and measures incorporated by the country to combat the problem. Statistical Data is preferred.

***Paragraph three:***

Unique solutions suggested by the delegate to combat the problem.

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**Page two:**

*Bibliography*

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