

BACKGROUND GUIDE— Juniors Beginner



GIISMUN
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CHAPTER 5

Committee:

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

Agenda:

Tackling the global education crisis, focusing on ensuring access to quality education for children in conflict zones and marginalized communities.

Hosted by Global Indian International School Tokyo
18th July ~ 23rd July 2025

Committee Overview

The UNICEF Junior Committee functions as a youth-oriented platform for advanced delegates to explore complex global issues related to child welfare, health, and education. Reflecting UNICEF's mandate as a UN agency focused on humanitarian assistance and development, the committee emphasizes rights-based policymaking and the protection of vulnerable populations. Delegates examine international frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and use statistical data to guide evidence-based debate. Through negotiation and group dialogue, members draft resolutions aimed at improving access to quality education, strengthening child protection systems, and addressing inequalities in healthcare. (UNICEF, n.d.)

History of the committee

The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) is an agency of the United Nations that provides humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.

The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II. Our mandate was clear: to help children and young people whose lives and futures were at risk – no matter what role their country had played in the war. What mattered to UNICEF was reaching every child in need, protecting children's rights to survive, thrive, and reach their full potential. ("What We Do", n.d.)

A few of important moments that define in UNICEF's historical timeline include:

Emerging from the ashes of the war (1946 to 1979):

- The urgent need to provide relief to children in war countries caused the birth of UNICEF.
- It played an important part in eradicating diseases like smallpox and it also encouraged immunization.

Moving with times (1980 to 1988):

- Data and research became the main part of UNICEF's efforts. It worked to address malnutrition, health, improve maternal health, and enhance education.

Uniting Nations (1989 to 2005):

- UNICEF played an important role in uniting different countries by globally advocating for children's rights. It led several campaigns against child labour, child trafficking and discrimination.

Becoming the leading voice (2006 to 2020):

- UNICEF surfaced as the world's primary voice for child survival and development.
- It took several initiatives linked to education, clean water, and protection from violence.

Background Information

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. At first, UNICEF only focused on addressing the emergency needs of children and women in developing countries. However, in 1950 its mandate included long-term needs as well.

UNICEF works in the world's toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents – and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere. Across more than 190 countries and territories, they do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence.

As the world's largest provider of vaccines, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, quality education and skill building, HIV prevention and treatment for mothers and babies, and the protection of children and adolescents from violence and exploitation.

Before, during and after humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF is on the ground, bringing life saving help and hope to children and families. Non-political and impartial, UNICEF is never neutral when it comes to defending children's rights and safeguarding their lives and futures.

Key Definitions

- **Quality Education:** Inclusive, equitable education that promotes lifelong learning, focuses on foundational literacy and numeracy, and is delivered in a safe, supportive environment (as per SDG 4).
- **Marginalized groups:** peoples or populations are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions
- **Humanitarian Emergencies:** Situations such as conflicts, natural disasters, pandemics, or other crises that pose a threat to human well-being and require urgent humanitarian assistance.
- **Equitable Access:** Ensuring fair and impartial access to resources, opportunities, and services, regardless of individuals' backgrounds, characteristics, or circumstances.
- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** People forced to flee their homes due to conflict or disaster but who remain within their country. Often lack stable access to schools, healthcare, and basic services.
- **Non-Formal Education (NFE):** Alternative learning platforms outside formal schooling—like community classes, accelerated learning programs, or mobile schools—especially crucial in emergency contexts.
- **Safe Schools Declaration:** A political commitment to protect education during armed conflict by avoiding the military use of schools and preventing attacks on education facilities.
- **Malnutrition:** A condition resulting from inadequate or unbalanced nutrition, which can lead to health problems and developmental issues, particularly in children.

Agenda Overview

The agenda and the committee's aim/targets

Agenda: Tackling the global education crisis, focusing on ensuring access to quality education for children in conflict zones and marginalized communities.

Access to quality education is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development. However, millions of children around the world, particularly those in conflict zones and marginalized communities, continue to be denied this basic right. The United Nations Children's Fund recognizes the urgency of addressing the ongoing global education crisis and is committed to exploring strategies that ensure every child, especially the most vulnerable, has access to quality, inclusive, and resilient education.

Children living in poverty, rural areas, refugee camps, and regions affected by conflict or natural disasters face disproportionate barriers to education. These include the destruction of schools, displacement, teacher shortages, discrimination, language barriers, and cultural norms that deprioritize girls' education. Children from marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, or those affected by armed conflict are particularly at risk of being excluded from educational opportunities. ("Goal 4: Quality Education - the Global Goals", 2024)

Discussion Points

UNICEF emphasizes the importance of ensuring education reaches all children, including those in the most remote and crisis-affected areas. Solutions may involve building and renovating schools, deploying mobile classrooms, offering transportation services, and implementing flexible or community-based learning models.

Gender inequality remains a significant barrier to education, particularly in many developing countries. UNICEF advocates for measures to promote girls' education, including eliminating school fees, providing menstrual hygiene facilities, offering scholarships and incentives, and addressing cultural norms and practices that hinder girls' access to education.

In humanitarian emergencies such as conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics, access to education is often disrupted or compromised. UNICEF underscores the importance of prioritizing education in emergency response efforts, including establishing temporary learning spaces, providing psychosocial support to affected children, and ensuring continuity of education through crisis-resistant systems.

Issues faced by the committee

On 3rd December 2020, UNICEF issued its largest funding appeal of \$6.4 billion to reach 190 million children. This appeal was a 35% increase over funds requested for 2020. Issues like COVID-19, climate change, conflict, disaster, and displacement coincided due to which UNICEF required more funds to help the children in need.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the lives of children, especially the most vulnerable. Meanwhile, the new humanitarian crisis that broke out in 2020 left 2.8 million people in the [Tigray region of Ethiopia in urgent need of assistance. More than 425,000 people including 191,000 children have been displaced in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. The reports of killings, abductions, recruitment and use of children, and military use of children are on the rise. Furthermore, powerful storms destroyed communities in Central America and East Asia, affecting 2.6 million and 13.4 million children respectively.

While all of these disasters overlapped, they posed a great risk to the well-being of children around the world, water scarcity forced many people to move out of their homes, and increased the risk of conflicts and public health emergencies.

Apart from the 2020 pandemic, UNICEF had to tackle a humanitarian crisis where more than 125 million people needed humanitarian assistance as a result of conflict, displacement, natural disasters and profound vulnerability. The Zika virus threatened the well-being of women and children around 75 countries and the El niño intensified draughts in several countries already suffering high malnutrition levels and food insecurity. Armed conflict continued in countries like Iraq, South Sudan, and Syrian Arab Republic and the global migration crisis reached proportions not seen since World War-II.

In the years since, conditions have only worsened. By 2024, UNICEF launched a \$9.9 billion emergency appeal to assist 109 million children across 146 countries, marking a near-doubling of funding needs within just four years. In conflict zones like Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan, education infrastructure has collapsed. Simultaneously, the climate crisis has disrupted access to schooling for over 242 million children worldwide.

In December 2024, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell highlighted the escalating humanitarian needs facing children worldwide. She emphasized, "The scale of children's humanitarian needs is at a historically high level, with more children impacted every day." Looking ahead to 2025, UNICEF estimates that 213 million children across 146 countries and territories will require humanitarian assistance. This staggering number underscores the urgency of providing essential services such as education, healthcare, and protection to the most vulnerable populations.

UN Response (Actions taken)

Education is a basic human right. In 147 countries around the world, UNICEF works to provide quality learning opportunities that prepare children and adolescents with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive. Some actions taken:

- **Libya:** During recent flare-ups of conflict, UNICEF has partnered with the Libyan Ministry of Education to provide catch-up classes and learning kits, helping internally displaced children return to learning. The initiative has expanded since 2023 to integrate psychosocial support and digital learning options in remote areas.
- **Yemen:** With over 2.7 million children currently out of school, UNICEF's work in Yemen remains critical. More than 2,000 damaged schools are being renovated or equipped with temporary learning spaces. UNICEF's teacher incentive program has continued through 2024–2025, offering emergency stipends and training to over 130,000 educators, keeping classrooms open and reducing dropout rates.

- **Sudan Crisis Response (2023–2025):** Ongoing conflict in Sudan has displaced over 2.8 million children. UNICEF has rapidly deployed emergency education kits, set up temporary learning spaces, and is scaling up teacher training for trauma-informed education, especially in South Kordofan, Darfur, and refugee-hosting areas in neighboring countries.
- **Ukraine Conflict Response:** Since 2022, over 5 million children in Ukraine and neighboring countries have seen their education disrupted. UNICEF has implemented blended learning strategies, refurbished school shelters, and launched digital platforms to support displaced learners across Moldova, Poland, and Romania.
- **Climate-Impacted Zones:** In places like Pakistan (post-2022 floods), Malawi, and the Horn of Africa, UNICEF is integrating climate-resilient school infrastructure, solar-powered classrooms, and flexible curricula to address education disruption caused by climate emergencies.

Scope of Debate

Possible Caucus Questions:

- What barriers are causing the prevention of quality education for individuals in vulnerable communities and marginalized groups?
- In what ways has the education crisis affected gender disparities in access to education, especially for females?
- How does the lack of access to technology worsen the global education crisis in marginalized groups, especially in conflict zones?
- In what ways is the quality of education in marginalized communities and vulnerable communities in conflict zones compromised?
- What strategies can be promoted by UNICEF to promote gender equality in marginalized groups?

- What role do governments play in addressing the education crisis, and how can their efforts be improved?
- How can the specific needs and cultural contexts of marginalized groups be addressed in education curricula to make them more inclusive?
- How can education curricula be adapted to better reflect the specific needs, languages, and cultural contexts of marginalized groups, ensuring that education is truly inclusive?
- What innovative funding models can be explored to support education in vulnerable communities?
- What strategies can be adopted to attract more teachers to underserved regions, and how can teacher training be enhanced to ensure quality education in remote or conflict-affected areas?

Sources/ Useful Websites

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