

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 important moments that define 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

Universal and Equitable Access

- Focus on reaching all children, especially those in remote areas and children in crisis-affected regions
- Proposed solutions include:
 - Building and renovating schools
 - Deploying mobile classrooms
 - Providing transportation services
 - Implementing flexible or community-based learning models

Gender Equality in Education

- Gender inequality is a major barrier, especially in developing nations
- UNICEF promotes girls' education through:
 - Eliminating school fees
 - Installing menstrual hygiene facilities
 - Providing scholarships and incentives
 - Challenging harmful cultural norms and practices

Education in Emergencies

- Education is often disrupted by conflicts, natural disasters, pandemics
- UNICEF calls for prioritizing education in humanitarian responses by:
 - Establishing temporary learning spaces
 - Offering psychosocial support for affected children
 - Ensuring continuity of education through crisis-resilient systems

Issues faced by the committee

- In December 2020, UNICEF launched a \$6.4 billion emergency appeal to assist 190 million children, marking a 35% increase from 2019. This was triggered by overlapping global crises, including COVID-19, climate change, conflict, natural disasters, and displacement.
- The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted children's well-being. In Ethiopia's Tigray region, 2.8 million people required urgent aid. In Mozambique's Cabo Delgado, over 425,000 people, including 191,000 children, were displaced.
- Reports of killings, abductions, child recruitment, and military use of children rose sharply during the pandemic.
- Natural disasters further strained UNICEF's operations. Storms affected 2.6 million children in Central America and 13.4 million in East Asia. Water scarcity worsened displacement and increased risks of conflict and public health crises.
- In 2020 alone, over 125 million people required humanitarian aid due to conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. The Zika virus affected 75+ countries, and El Niño worsened drought and food insecurity in already vulnerable regions.
- Armed conflicts persisted in Iraq, South Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic. The global migration crisis reached levels not seen since World War II.
- By 2024, conditions had worsened significantly. UNICEF launched a \$9.9 billion appeal to assist 109 million children across 146 countries — nearly double the 2020 figure.

- In conflict zones like Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan, the education infrastructure collapsed. The climate crisis disrupted access to schooling for over 242 million children globally.
- In December 2024, Executive Director Catherine Russell stated that children's humanitarian needs were at a historically high level.
- UNICEF projects that by 2025, 213 million children across 146 countries will require humanitarian assistance, highlighting urgent needs in education, healthcare, and child protection.

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.

- **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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