

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund



AGENDA

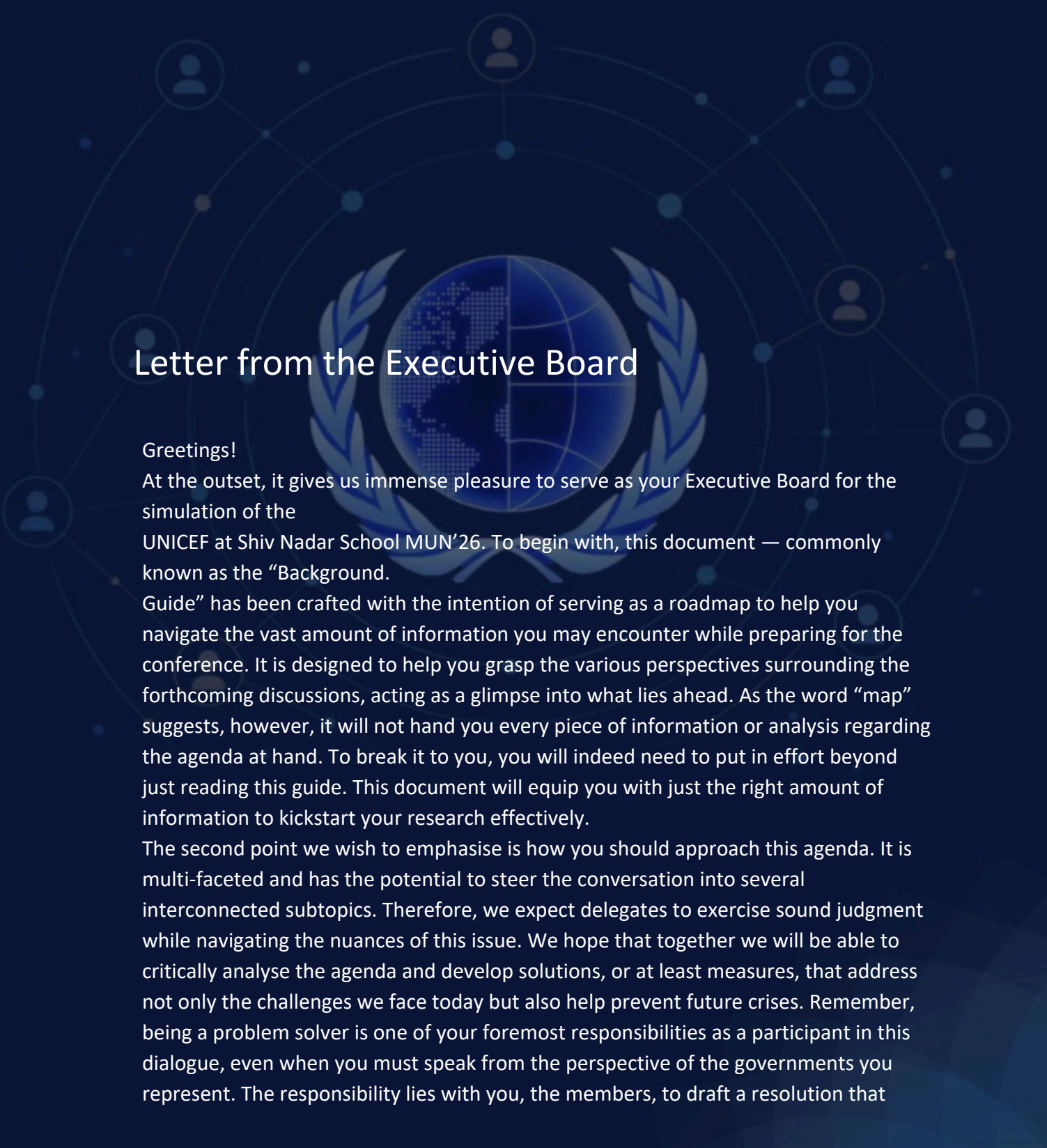
Deliberation on Ensuring Access to Education and
Food Security for Children in Crisis Zones

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The background of the page features a large, faint UNICEF logo in the center, which consists of a globe with a map of the world and two olive branches. Surrounding the logo is a network diagram with several circular nodes, each containing a person icon, connected by lines. The entire background is a dark blue color.

Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings!

At the outset, it gives us immense pleasure to serve as your Executive Board for the simulation of the

UNICEF at Shiv Nadar School MUN'26. To begin with, this document — commonly known as the “Background.

Guide” has been crafted with the intention of serving as a roadmap to help you navigate the vast amount of information you may encounter while preparing for the conference. It is designed to help you grasp the various perspectives surrounding the forthcoming discussions, acting as a glimpse into what lies ahead. As the word “map” suggests, however, it will not hand you every piece of information or analysis regarding the agenda at hand. To break it to you, you will indeed need to put in effort beyond just reading this guide. This document will equip you with just the right amount of information to kickstart your research effectively.

The second point we wish to emphasise is how you should approach this agenda. It is multi-faceted and has the potential to steer the conversation into several interconnected subtopics. Therefore, we expect delegates to exercise sound judgment while navigating the nuances of this issue. We hope that together we will be able to critically analyse the agenda and develop solutions, or at least measures, that address not only the challenges we face today but also help prevent future crises. Remember, being a problem solver is one of your foremost responsibilities as a participant in this dialogue, even when you must speak from the perspective of the governments you represent. The responsibility lies with you, the members, to draft a resolution that

makes a sincere attempt to present practical solutions for treaties that are impaired, stagnating, or paralysed by political interests pushing humanity to the brink of conflict. We sincerely hope that our committee at SNSMUN'26 will help you sharpen your skills. We look forward to witnessing all of you in action.

For any queries, feel free to contact the Executive Board.

Warm regards,

The Executive Board.

Committee Overview

Introduction to UNICEF

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was created in 1946 to provide relief to children in countries devastated by World War II. After 1950, the fund directed its efforts toward general programs for the improvement of children's welfare, particularly in less-developed countries and in various emergency situations.

Its mandate is

The organisation's broader mission was reflected in the name it adopted in 1953, the United Nations Children's Fund. UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1965.

Further, UNICEF plays a critical role in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). UNICEF seeks to address a wide range of topics regarding children, such as mainstreaming their significance in efforts to further the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and advocating for their human rights. In order to accurately simulate this committee, delegates will need to understand its role and mandate, while also keeping a global viewpoint to ensure solutions meet the needs of all children.

UNICEF has concentrated much of its effort in areas in which relatively small expenditures can have a significant impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged children, such as the prevention and treatment of disease. UNICEF supports immunisation programs for childhood diseases and programs to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS; it also provides funding for health services, educational facilities, and other welfare services. Since 1996, UNICEF programs have been guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which affirms the right of all children to "the

enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. ”

UNICEF’s activities are financed by both government and private contributions. Across more than 190 countries and territories, UNICEF does whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. Before, during and after humanitarian emergencies.



Mandate, Functions and Powers

Mandate

Created by the UN General Assembly in 1946 to provide emergency relief to children devastated by World War II, UNICEF's mandate was extended indefinitely in 1953.

Today, its core mandate is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, help meet their basic needs, and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Since 1996, UNICEF's mandate has been explicitly guided by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), shifting its focus from purely "needs-based" charity to a "rights-based" approach.

Functions

UNICEF operates in over 190 countries and territories. Its practical functions span both long-term development and immediate emergency response:

- **Child Survival and Health:** UNICEF is the world's largest provider of vaccines. It manages massive immunisation programs, combats HIV/AIDS transmission from mother to child, and provides maternal health care.
- **Nutrition and Food Security:** It treats millions of children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and promotes proper infant feeding and vitamin supplementation.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Delivering clean drinking water and setting up sanitation facilities to prevent deadly waterborne illnesses.
- **Education:** Ensuring equitable access to quality basic education, particularly championing gender equality for girls who face systemic barriers to schooling.
- **Emergency Relief:** Rapidly deploying supplies, setting up temporary learning spaces, and providing psychosocial support during natural disasters and armed conflicts
- **Climate Change:** Focus on advocating for child-centred sustainability policies, strengthening the resilience of social services against climate and environmental impacts, empowering children and young people to drive adaptation and positive change, and ensuring sustainability across its own programmes, operations, and supply chains.

Powers

UNICEF holds unique organisational leverage, though its "powers" are rooted in influence and resource mobilisation rather than legislative force.

- **Global Procurement and Logistics Power:** UNICEF operates the world's largest humanitarian warehouse in Copenhagen and has significant purchasing power. This enables it to reduce the global cost of lifesaving goods like vaccines and therapeutic food.

- Political Mobilisation and Lobbying: UNICEF has the political influence to negotiate directly with heads of state and governments. It works to shape national policies, budgets, and laws that benefit children.
- Monitoring and Reporting: Under Article 45 of the CRC, UNICEF can advise the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It submits expert reports on how well countries protect youth.
- Setting International Standards: UNICEF serves as the leading global authority on data related to child mortality, education, and safety. It influences how international law and aid are allocated.

Limitations

Despite its large global presence, UNICEF operates under strict limitations.

- No Enforcement Power: UNICEF is not a court or police force. It cannot legally punish a government that violates children's rights, uses child labour, or fails to protect minors. Instead, it relies on diplomacy and persuasion.
- Sovereignty Constraints: UNICEF cannot start programs in any country without the direct invitation and permission of that country's government. If a government denies access, UNICEF cannot act.
- 100% Voluntarily Funded: Unlike the main UN, UNICEF doesn't receive any mandatory dues from UN member states. It depends solely on voluntary contributions from governments, corporations, and private individuals. This makes its budget and its programs vulnerable to global political changes and economic downturns.
- Political Neutrality Dilemmas: To keep access to children in conflict zones, UNICEF must stay strictly non-partisan. This sometimes limits its ability to openly condemn governments or groups committing atrocities, as such actions could lead to staff expulsion and disrupt aid to vulnerable children.
- Bureaucratic and Logistical Challenges: While UNICEF has immense procurement power, delivering supplies to landlocked, corrupt, or war-torn regions often results in aid being stolen, delayed at borders, or blocked by local bureaucracy.

The Agenda

Introduction to the Agenda

Hello Delegates, the agenda put before the committee is as stated below, **“Deliberation on Ensuring access to Education and Food security for Children in conflict Zones”**.

More than one in five children globally are living amid conflict. They are forced to flee their homes, and many remain displaced for extended periods or never return, while others are orphaned or separated from caregivers. Conflicts fought in densely populated cities systematically destroy the infrastructure children depend on for survival: water and sanitation systems, power grids, and health facilities. The violence itself takes a direct toll through killing, maiming, sexual violence, abductions, and the armed recruitment of children, while schools and hospitals are routinely targeted. In places like Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and South Sudan, recurring violence continues to endanger young lives with little accountability for perpetrators. Poor living conditions and inadequate sanitation accelerate the spread of infectious disease, and the absence of medication, medical staff, and functioning health services drives up both mortality and morbidity. Children who lose parents and family members to conflict are often left to survive on the streets, where they face exploitation, substance abuse, and slavery. Meanwhile, parents consumed by the demands of sheer survival are frequently unable to protect or even attend to their children, who are left alone to process profound trauma.

Destruction, poverty, and violence reinforce one another in a vicious cycle that blends these harms over generations. When infrastructure is destroyed, schooling is disrupted and often halted entirely; an outcome that inflicts lifelong damage on education and economic prospects while stripping children of one of their most vital protective environments. UNICEF plays a central role, working to restore access to education and food security for children in conflict zones. Collaborating with governments across health, education, and social sectors, and partnering with businesses and civil society, UNICEF operates at both national and local levels to strengthen laws and policies for public service delivery, support parents and caregivers through dedicated parenting initiatives, amplify young people's voices in shaping programming, and challenge the harmful social norms that perpetuate unsafe environments. Through emergency relief operations, family reunification efforts, child-friendly spaces, targeted anti-exploitation interventions, and assistance to communities affected by landmines and explosive weapons, UNICEF works to interrupt cycles of violence and restore a measure of normalcy to children's lives. Critically, UNICEF also calls on all warring parties to honour their obligations under international law, demanding an immediate end to

violations against children and to attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and water sources.

We shall delve deep into the agenda in further segments.

What are Conflict Zones?

A conflict zone is a geographic area where active armed conflict, such as war, civil unrest, or insurgencies, is taking place. These environments are characterised by intense violence, severe instability, massive civilian displacement, and the breakdown of essential services like healthcare, sanitation, and transportation. Because "conflict zone" can be an umbrella term, the UN evaluates these regions based on specific risk factors:

- Armed Conflict: The presence of a recognised international or non-international armed conflict.
- Extreme Political Instability: Institutional weakness, collapse of state infrastructure, or pervasive political repression.
- Human Rights Crisis: Widespread or serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.
- Civilian Threat: Situations where essential services (health care, housing, sanitation) are disrupted by violence.

1. Armed Conflicts

An armed conflict is a contested situation where warring parties resort to the sustained use of armed force or violence. Instead of just "war," the UN distinguishes between International Armed Conflicts (IACs), clashes between two or more sovereign states, and Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs), which involve long-lasting hostilities between government forces and organised armed groups or between multiple armed groups within a single state. Armed conflicts greatly increase child protection risks. UNICEF outlines this in the context of the UN Security Council's Six Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict, established under UNSC Resolution 1612. These are the metrics delegates must monitor:

1. Killing and maiming of children.
2. Recruitment or use of child soldiers.
3. Attacks on schools or hospitals.
4. Rape and other forms of sexual violence.
5. Abduction of children.
6. Denial of humanitarian access.

When a situation escalates to a formal armed conflict, UNICEF activates its Cluster Lead responsibilities (specifically leading the WASH and Nutrition clusters, and co-leading Education and Child Protection).

2. Extreme Political Instability

It refers to situations where a government loses its monopoly on the legitimate use of force or lacks the administrative capacity to deliver core public services. When state infrastructure collapses, national health, welfare, and judicial systems deteriorate. This creates a severe void of governance.

- System Collapse: Birth registration systems fail, leaving newborn children legally and highly vulnerable to trafficking.
- Economic Deterioration: Runaway inflation often defunds essential public programs, rendering the state incapable of purchasing routine vaccines or maintaining social safety nets.

In highly unstable environments, UNICEF often shifts its operation from *supporting* national authorities to *bypassing* them, partnering directly with local civil society organisations or implementing direct humanitarian cash transfers (e.g., the Mother and Child Cash Transfer Plus program) to keep families afloat.

3. Human Rights Crisis

When there is a systemic, state-sponsored, or widespread failure to uphold international treaties. For UNICEF, a human rights crisis is explicitly defined as a systemic failure to honour the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols. A human rights crisis manifests in specific child rights violations:

- Gender-Based Crises: Systemic denial of education to girls, spikes in child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), or targeted sexual violence as a weapon of war.
- Displacement: Forced mass migrations that create millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, resulting in thousands of unaccompanied or separated children who lack legal status.

Under Article 45 of the CRC, UNICEF works in tandem with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to document violations. In committee, this is where the tension between national sovereignty (Article 2(7) of the UN Charter) and the international Responsibility to Protect (R2P) becomes a major point of debate for delegates.

4. Civilian Threat

Violence kills children directly, but the collapse of essential infrastructure kills them in much larger numbers due to disease and starvation. This is broken down into UNICEF's primary operational sectors:

- WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene): When power grids or water treatment plants are shelled, civilians resort to contaminated water sources. This triggers catastrophic outbreaks of waterborne diseases like cholera and Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD).
- Nutrition: Supply chain blockades and agricultural destruction lead to a spike in Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), pushing areas toward famine thresholds.
- Health and Education: The closure of clinics halts routine immunisation, while the conversion of schools into military barracks or displacement shelters causes a total collapse in learning.

This requires UNICEF to launch its Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) global appeals to deploy emergency health kits rapidly, establish temporary learning spaces, and truck clean water into high-risk zones.

Violation of International Law

International humanitarian and human rights law is frequently violated in conflict zones, leaving civilians vulnerable to violence, displacement, and exploitation. Despite the existence of international law, weak enforcement mechanisms and ongoing hostilities often undermine compliance. These violations disrupt education, healthcare, and food security systems, exacerbating humanitarian crises and creating long-term barriers to recovery and development.

1. Fourth Geneva Convention

While the entirety of the Fourth Geneva Convention is dedicated to protecting civilians in times of war, specific articles serve as direct mandates for child protection:

- Article 23: Requires all states to allow the free, unhindered passage of essential foodstuffs, clothing, and medical supplies intended for children under fifteen, pregnant women, and maternity cases.
- Article 24: Mandates that parties to a conflict must ensure that children under fifteen who are orphaned or separated from their families are not left to their own resources, requiring states to facilitate their education and safety.
- Article 89: Explicitly states that in cases of internment/detention, children under fifteen must be given additional food in proportion to their physiological needs.

2. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)

Under the Rome Statute Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi) for international conflicts, and Article 8(2)(e)(vii) for internal/civil conflicts, the Rome Statute legally establishes that, “Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities is a War Crime”

However, a dilemma is observed. While the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Optional Protocol calls for no military recruitment under 18, the Rome Statute only makes recruitment under 15 a crime. Additionally, Article 26 of the Rome Statute says the ICC cannot prosecute anyone who committed a crime while under 18.

3. UN Security Council Resolution 2427 (2018)

Adopted unanimously with a record 98 co-sponsors, UNSCR 2427 sets the standard for modern UN child-protection mandates. It introduces several important legal frameworks:

- The "Children as Victims" Principle: It states that children associated with armed groups must be seen as victims, not as perpetrators. It strongly discourages detaining or prosecuting children just for being part of insurgent groups.
- Integration into Peace Treaties: The resolution requires that child protection, formal release, and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs must be clearly included in all ceasefire and peace negotiations from the very beginning.
- Focus on Gender and Education: It is the first major resolution to recognise the unique vulnerabilities of boys, who are often targeted for combat, and girls, who are often targeted for sexual slavery, in DDR planning. It also firmly condemns the military use of schools.

Active Conflict Zones:

Middle East

- Iran: Characterised by centralised control under the Central Government and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Regional dynamics are shaped by external monitoring from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) alongside state alignment with non-state proxies like Hezbollah.

- Iraq: The Central Government navigates fragile political balances alongside marginalised Sunni Arab communities and heavily armed, influential Shia Militias, leaving state-run welfare systems fractured.
- Israel: Operational theatre of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). High civilian exposure to asymmetric warfare, distinct political pressures from the United States, and localised friction regarding the presence of international aid bodies like the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
- Lebanon: A state experiencing severe economic paralysis and political deadlock, where Hezbollah wields parallel military and social control across territories, competing against fractured Sunni and Maronite Christian factions under the monitoring of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
- Palestine: An acute crisis zone defined by the collapse of public infrastructure managed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), compounded by the governing authority of Hamas, catastrophic displacement of millions of Refugees, and systematic existential bottlenecks faced by UNRWA.
- Syria: A fragmented landscape controlled by the Syrian Government, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in the northwest, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the northeast. Complicated by intersecting cross-border military interventions from Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States, and Israel.

Eastern Africa & The Sahel

- Libya: Marked by dual-government instability affecting the Libyan Ministry of Education, with civil protection efforts split between the Libyan Red Crescent and localised organisations like the Bunyan Foundation, amid deep geopolitical interference from Italy, Qatar, Germany, and the United States.
- South Sudan: A highly volatile post-conflict state where the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and UNHCR manage historic internally displaced person (IDP) crises, and non-governmental entities like the Norwegian Refugee Council and Rural Action Against Hunger face violent delivery environments.
- Ethiopia: Healing from severe regional conflicts (Tigray, Amhara, Oromia), where the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, SOS Children's Villages, and the Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (RaDO) lead recovery operations heavily dependent on funding from the US, UK, and Japan.
- Somalia: Protracted counter-insurgency against Al-Shabaab, where the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) work alongside local networks like SOYDEN and GREDO to avert climate-and conflict-driven famines.

- The Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad): A volatile belt experiencing structural government collapses, military juntas, and pervasive cross-border insurgent violence that has triggered mass closures of thousands of rural school networks.
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Long-term conflict in the eastern provinces under the peacekeeping presence of MONUSCO, where specialised local health and aid networks like Heal Africa and Caritas Congo navigate vast terrain to treat survivors of mass displacement and violence.

Europe

- Russia-Ukraine: A high-intensity, conventional international armed conflict featuring massive urban destruction by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. Frontline humanitarian response and evacuation metrics are coordinated by the European Union, CARE International, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and domestic protection networks like Save Ukraine.

Role of Children in Conflict Zones

In modern asymmetric and conventional warfare, children are no longer just innocent



Adverse Effects and Impact on Children

The basic indicators for human development—security, physiological balance, and intellectual advancement—become totally irrelevant in conflict zones. While the short-term implications involve high death tolls from blast injuries, outbreaks of diseases, and lifelong physical impairment.

However, the underlying and hidden effect of this situation becomes systemic. The absence of secure environments during early stages in life creates severe levels of toxic stress, complex PTSD, and even intellectual regression. The fact that war zones deny a child access to educational facilities and proper nutrition triggers an evolutionary mechanism that makes him/her uncompetitive economically in the future.

Understanding the Crisis

Education in Conflict Zones

Attacks on Infrastructure and Military Occupation

Schools are now emerging as more of a target or resource for the two competing forces. The army and other armed militant groups tend to use schools, whether active or abandoned, for setting up stores for their ammunition, barracks, sites for interrogations, and sniping operations. What this means is that an institution protected by IHL has been turned into a legitimate military target, making it vulnerable to bombing raids that destroy its physical structures forever.

Institutional Collapse: Lack of Teachers and Digital Divide

The breakdown of state educational systems is expedited by the brain drain and targeting of human capital resources. Teachers are often killed, driven away, or made to flee because there are no salaries paid to them from collapsed states. When traditional schools cease functioning, current educational approaches focus on digital options for learning. Yet, in conflict areas, the digital gap creates a complete barrier. Destruction of electricity, telecommunication towers, optical networks, and poverty render children in these areas unable to participate in the knowledge economy of the global village.

Forced Displacement and Refugee Education Gaps

With violent conditions driving people to become internally displaced persons, the issue of educational disruption becomes a problem not only in the short term but also chronic. The countries or camps where people find refuge do not usually have the infrastructure and funding to take care of such a sudden influx of pupils.

The institutional gaps faced by the refugee children include issues like no official identification papers, significant language barriers due to moving to another country, restrictive national policies towards immigrants, and lengthy processes in validating their non-formal education programs.

Gender Consideration

Within zones of conflict, girl children experience compounded vulnerabilities when it comes to accessing education. As household assets dwindle due to poverty resulting

from conflict, families place the priority on the survival and education of boy children ahead of that of girl children.

Moreover, insecure transit routes, owing to the presence of armed groups, pose threats of sexual harassment to girl children, compelling their parents to keep them at home. School closures correspond to skyrocketing incidences of CEFM and early pregnancy, denying them access to education.

Food Security in Conflict Zones

Child Malnutrition, Stunting, and Wasting

Conflict is the primary driver of global acute food insecurity. In war zones, child malnutrition accelerates through two distinct clinical pathologies: Wasting (Severe Acute Malnutrition - SAM, where a child is dangerously thin for their height, presenting an immediate risk of death) and Stunting (chronic malnutrition that permanently arrests physical and neurological height-for-age development). When access to specialised therapeutic nutrient mixtures (such as Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food - RUTF) is blocked, the metabolic system of a child degrades, causing muscle atrophy, organ failure, and a complete collapse of the immune system. This leaves them highly vulnerable to preventable waterborne pathogens.

Agricultural Disruption, Sanctions, and Blockades

Food scarcity in conflict zones is rarely a natural phenomenon; it is structurally engineered. Active warfare disrupts local agricultural cycles by scattering farming populations, littering arable land with Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and landmines, and destroying essential irrigation networks. Simultaneously, the enforcement of sweeping international economic sanctions and naval or terrestrial blockades impedes the commercial import of essential fertilisers, seeds, and fuel. Even when humanitarian exemptions exist on paper, the bureaucratic phenomenon of over-compliance by international banks and shipping lines effectively cuts off conflict zones from regional and global supply chains.

Food Inflation, Supply Chain Distortions, and Economic Collapse

When a conflict zone experiences supply shocks, the local currency often undergoes hyperinflation, and black markets capture the remaining food supply. The destruction of local markets, commercial storehouses, and transport fleets means that the food that does make it across the border becomes financially inaccessible to the average civilian household. Families are forced to employ negative coping strategies, such as

reducing meal frequencies, selling off vital reproductive assets, or sending children to work or beg, directly heightening exploitation risks.

The Framework of Starvation as a Weapon of War

The denial of food is recognised as an active military strategy. The conceptual framework of Starvation as a Weapon of War is formally articulated through UN Security Council Resolution 2417 (2018). This framework states that starvation is not an unfortunate side effect of war, but a deliberate war crime driven by specific actions:

- The intentional destruction, removal, or rendering useless of Objects Indispensable to the Survival (OIS) of the civilian population, including agricultural land, crops, livestock, water installations, and food storage facilities.
- The willful blocking, disruption, or manipulation of neutral humanitarian relief convoys to bring about the physical capitulation or forced displacement of civilian populations in besieged territories.

The Interconnection: Education and Food Security

The crises of educational collapse and weaponised food insecurity do not exist in separate silos; they operate within a highly destructive feedback loop.

Nutrition as a Determinant of Cognitive Capacity

A child will not be able to learn when their brain lacks the necessary micronutrients that it requires. The problem with chronic malnutrition and stunting in early childhood years results in neurological cognitive deficits. Highly insecure children are unable to focus well because they cannot retain anything and suffer from lethargy, thus making any learning process difficult.

Schools as Nutrition Delivery Hubs

However, schools are the major institutions through which public health interventions can be made in developing countries. The School Feeding Program has been cited as the most dependable means through which children can gain access to a balanced caloric intake on a daily basis. If a school is shut down because of violent actions, children miss out not only on their education but also on the safety net of their meals. Additionally, children are denied a chance of remaining within the educational chain because of the lack of meals.

Historical Background & Legal Foundations

Post-WWII Humanitarian Systems & The Rise of International Law

The current global regime regarding child protection was created following the aftermath of World War II. In 1946, the UN General Assembly founded the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), whose mission was to offer humanitarian aid to European children affected by the war. Following the dissolution of global colonial regimes, the UN made the extension of the operations of UNICEF into a permanent arrangement in 1953.

In addition, the international community began to establish the laws of warfare through the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Fourth Geneva Convention would be the basis of all civilian protection during times of war, including providing children with special treatment and evacuation services.

Evolution of the Child Rights Framework

The international legal understanding of youth evolved from a "needs-based" charitable model to a strict, legally binding "rights-based" regime through three major frameworks:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989): The most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. It establishes that children are independent rights-holders, mandating under Article 28 the state's obligation to ensure accessible primary education, and under Articles 6 and 24 the right to survival, health, and adequate nutrition.
- The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) (2000): Often referred to as the "Straight-18 Standard," this treaty raised the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities and forced conscription by armed groups to 18 years.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015): The UN 2030 Agenda explicitly links these historical mandates to measurable global targets, specifically SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), recognising that sustainable peace is structurally impossible while these two indicators remain unfulfilled in crisis areas.

Present World Scenario

Although there are strong international agreements in place, there exists a serious disconnect between theory and practice in relation to international law. The contemporary global picture is marked by a large number of simultaneous, lengthy disputes leading to an enormous humanitarian problem that cannot be adequately addressed.

The Compliance Gap

While nearly all UN Member States have signed and ratified the CRC, compliance metrics are low. State parties and non-state armed actors routinely target civilian infrastructure with total impunity. The UN Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict continuously documents thousands of verified "Grave Violations" year-over-year, demonstrating that the existence of international law has not effectively deterred tactical violence against youth.

A Financial Gap in Resource Allocation

The current system of international financing for humanitarian activities is suffering from a significant gap in resource allocation. The appeal programs by UNICEF, known as the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC), suffer from chronic funding issues. Importantly, in emergency funds, Education in Emergencies (EiE) constitutes an even smaller portion of total humanitarian aid funding (less than 3% globally).

Past Action Taken Up to Achieve the Agenda:

A. The Sovereignty-Access Axis

The Friction Between Article 2(7) and the Mandate of Humanitarian Access

- By far, the most significant structure that affects the effectiveness of UNICEF is the conflict that exists legally and politically between State Sovereignty (UN Charter Article 2(7)) and human rights obligations. Article 2(7) clearly asserts that no provision in the Charter confers on the UN the authority to intervene in matters that are essentially domestic to any state.
- This is because UNICEF has been mandated through the UN General Assembly and CRC to defend child rights worldwide. Therefore, UNICEF cannot start emergency projects, deliver therapeutic foods, and establish temporary learning centres in a particular country without the direct invitation of its sovereign government.

State Coercion and Administrative Weaponisation

- Authoritarian governments or state actors engaged in an ongoing conflict have made use of the sovereignty clause to politicise humanitarian access. The government denies visa applications for foreign experts on child protection; delays customs clearance of

essential medical supplies and RUTFs; and even blocks movement permits inside the country for field workers.

- The states defend such blocking on the grounds of "national security concerns." This puts UNICEF in a diplomatic bind to continue functioning with the bare minimum of presence to provide vaccines and food; UNICEF often has to tone down its criticisms of human rights violations by the state or attacks on schools by the military.

Fragmented Sovereignty and the Non-State Engagement Dilemma

- In contemporary asymmetric conflicts like those in Syria, Yemen, or Libya, sovereignty becomes splintered among several competing entities. As UNICEF works only with the internationally recognised government, the children who require urgent help in terms of food and education mostly inhabit areas under the control of the de facto governments or armed militant organisations listed as terrorist groups on the international platform.
- To navigate such an intricate scenario, UNICEF is required to engage in extremely sensitive talks with non-state entities to develop humanitarian corridors for access. Such interactions become unlawful under the domestic counter-terrorism legislation of the member states, according to which any engagement with these terrorist organisations is prohibited.

B. The Vulnerability of Voluntary Aid

The Volatility of Non-Mandated Funding

- While the UN secretariat, unlike UNICEF, relies on mandatory funding sourced from its members' contribution according to their GDP, UNICEF gets all of its funding through voluntary donations. The donations are contributed by governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses, and national committees. This mode of funding creates instability in planning UNICEF's operations.
- If donor nations go through economic hard times, change their politics, or adopt financial cuts, they will be able to drastically cut down their budgets for development assistance. This makes planning education and nutrition initiatives for many years ahead impossible.

Earmarking and the Geopolitical Distortion of Aid

- A key problem in this voluntary funding system is the use of earmarking. Donors do not normally give core and flexible funds; instead, they decide how their funds should be spent on specific countries, emergencies, or sectors.

- These allocations are made based on geopolitical visibility and publicity rather than any humanitarian need. Emergencies receive lots of funds, whereas protracted structural crises in countries such as the Central African Republic or the Sahel have severe funding gaps.
- Moreover, donors prefer spending money on emergency interventions that offer quick results, such as providing water tanks or medicines, rather than on rebuilding schools destroyed by bombs or training teachers, which take years to produce results.

The Hyper-Inflationary Impact on Field Procurement

- UNICEF works in very skewed economic conditions in war-torn regions. Shortages created by war and the devaluation of local currencies cause hyperinflation.
- The price of obtaining educational material, renting safe storage facilities, and moving food supplies through war-torn areas will triple within days. The impact on the ability of UNICEF to buy with its already allocated budget becomes evident very quickly.
- When the cost of transportation via the international logistics industry increases due to supply chain disruptions worldwide or blockades in the region, UNICEF must allocate its funds not to expand its reach but merely to pay for increased costs of fulfilling its existing contracts.

C. Legal Enforcement Deficits and Accountability Mechanisms

The Jurisdictional Realities of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

- Although conscription, enlistment, or active involvement of children under the age of fifteen years in armed conflicts is recognised as a war crime by the Rome Statute, the ICC is confronted with several jurisdictional obstacles in prosecuting such crimes. The ICC has jurisdiction only if the crime is committed on the territory of a State party to the Rome Statute or by nationals of a State party to the Statute unless there has been a referral by the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII.
- The world's major superpowers and some countries plagued by civil strife have not ratified the Rome Statute. Thus, many millions of children have been left out of reach of international criminal jurisdiction, resulting in absolute immunity of those who make use of the children as soldiers.

The Political Deadlock of UN Security Council Resolution 1612

- The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) established under UNSCR 1612 is the UN's premier tool for tracking the six grave violations against children in armed conflict. It feeds directly into the Secretary-General's annual "List of Shame."
- However, the transition from *monitoring* violations to *enforcing* compliance is blocked by the political dynamics of the UN Security Council. The five permanent members (P5) utilise their veto power to shield themselves, their strategic allies, and client states from the legal and economic consequences of being listed.
- Consequently, placement on the list rarely triggers the automatic arms embargoes, asset freezes, or travel bans intended by international law, reducing a vital accountability tool to a political debate topic.

Domestic Policy Failures and Non-State Legal Gaps

- International law is structurally designed to regulate the behavior of sovereign states, making it less effective at governing non-state armed groups or domestic criminal networks. When a state experiences institutional collapse or severe corruption, its domestic judicial system fails to enforce international treaties like the CRC.
- Non-state armed groups, rebel coalitions, and urban gangs do not sign international treaties and care little for diplomatic condemnation. Because international law lacks a centralized global police force to enforce compliance within sovereign borders, UNICEF is left with no legal recourse when non-state actors choose to reject humanitarian principles entirely.

Existing International Frameworks and Agreements

Delegates are advised to adopt and cite the following resolutions, treaties, and declarations while forming their operative clauses:

- UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005): Created the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Children and Armed Conflict, which tracks and reports information on the six grave violations committed against children.
- UN Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016): Calls for an end to violence and attacks against medical facilities, health-care personnel and humanitarian workers in times of conflict, urging all sides to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.
- UN Security Council Resolution 2427 (2018): Restates the overarching principle guiding protection of children in war, highlighting that formerly associated child soldiers need to be addressed first and foremost as victims and calls for integrating child protection in all peace processes.

- The Safe Schools Declaration (2015): An international commitment among governments, in which signatories vow to safeguard educational institutions from deliberate attacks and refrain from using them for military purposes during armed conflict.
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998): Outlines the active recruitment, enlistment, and use of children below the age of fifteen by armed forces as a war crime under Article 8.

Previous UN Actions and Their Loopholes

The United Nations system has launched numerous policy initiatives and field interventions to protect youth, but these mechanisms are hindered by structural loopholes that delegates must address:

The UN Global Education First Initiative & The Cluster System

The United Nations created the Humanitarian Cluster System to ensure coordination of efforts during emergencies, where UNICEF was appointed the co-lead of the Education Cluster on a global level and the lead of the WASH and Nutrition Clusters. However, the main problem associated with the system is that it is voluntary and not binding. It cannot force states to cooperate and lacks an enforcement agency that could protect its workers and lines of supply.

The Secretary-General's "List of Shame"

Under Resolution 1612, the UN publishes an annual annex naming specific state militaries and insurgent groups that commit grave violations against children. This acts as a diplomatic "naming and shaming" mechanism.

The Loopholes:

- Political Manipulation: Powerful member states routinely exert immense diplomatic and financial pressure on the Secretariat to have themselves or their strategic allies removed from the list, undermining its objective credibility.
- Lack of Sanction Triggers: Placement on the list does not automatically trigger punitive international economic sanctions or arms embargoes; it serves merely as a political reporting tool with minimal direct legal consequences.

Stakeholder Analysis

Children

The primary rights-holders and beneficiaries. They are highly vulnerable to physical trauma, malnutrition, and educational loss, yet they remain central actors whose local voices and psychosocial recovery must guide the design of rehabilitation and educational initiatives.

Educational Institutes

Schools, local universities, and teacher unions in conflict zones serve as the front lines of defence against community collapse. They face existential operational risks, including targeted assassinations of educators, structural physical damage, and lack of operational budgets, yet they remain critical for delivering civic resilience and nutritional support.

Governments of Countries in Conflict Zones

The primary duty-bearers under international law are responsible for protecting all citizens within their territory. However, they are frequently the primary perpetrators of rights violations, utilise state sovereignty as a legal shield to block international oversight, or lack the fundamental administrative capacity to deliver basic public services.

Military and Non-State Armed Groups

The primary drivers of violence and infrastructure destruction. They prioritise tactical territorial control, asymmetrical military advantages, and resource capture over humanitarian compliance, routinely exploiting children and civilian infrastructure for strategic gain.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Entities such as Save the Children, the ICRC, and local civil society groups. They act as the primary implementing partners for UNICEF, executing direct field deliveries of food and education. They possess high local agility but face extreme operational dangers, funding insecurity, and shifting domestic legal restrictions.

Parents and Caregivers

The primary protectors of the immediate family unit. They face severe economic collapse and psychological trauma, often forced to choose between sending children

into unsafe educational environments, deploying negative economic coping strategies, or initiating dangerous displacement migrations.

United Nations Bodies

UNICEF, WFP, UNESCO, UNHCR, and OHCHR. They provide global tracking, resource mobilisation, and policy frameworks. However, they are constrained by overlapping mandates, systemic funding deficits, bureaucratic delays, and absolute dependence on host-government permissions.

Regional Perspectives and Case Studies

Gaza, Palestine:

The Operational Context and Infrastructure Devastation

Gaza Strip can be viewed as an extreme case of emergency, wherein almost all the urban infrastructure has been destroyed. After military actions and shelling in heavily populated areas, the foundation for survival of the children has been completely demolished. Gaza Strip has a unique geographical location; the densely populated area is surrounded by borders. There are no safe zones or exits from inside the strip for the children to flee from the conflict. Almost everything, ranging from water desalination facilities to electric grids and sewage systems to bakeries, has been destroyed.

The Nutritional Emergency and the Breakdown of the IPC Scale

In Gaza, food insecurity has escalated at an unprecedented rate. The complete closure of terrestrial border crossings and strict vetting procedures have choked off the entry of commercial trucks and humanitarian aid. Arable agricultural land in northern and eastern Gaza has been bulldozed or rendered inaccessible by military operations, greenhouse networks have been destroyed, and the local fishing fleet has been restricted from entering the sea.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the entire population faces acute food insecurity, with significant portions entering IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe/Famine). For children under five, this has triggered an acute nutritional crisis. The lack of clean water has caused widespread waterborne diseases, including a resurgence of polio and chronic diarrhea. When a malnourished child suffers from persistent diarrhea, their body cannot absorb therapeutic nutrients, leading to rapid metabolic failure and elevated child mortality rates.

The De Facto Eradication of the Educational Infrastructure

The educational ecosystem in Gaza has experienced total structural collapse, a phenomenon international legal experts describe as scholacide—the systematic destruction of a population's educational framework. According to UNICEF and the Palestinian Ministry of Education, over 80% to 90% of all school buildings, including state schools, private institutions, and UNRWA facilities, have been severely damaged or completely destroyed by airstrikes and artillery fire.

Schools that survived structurally have been transformed into overcrowded emergency shelters for millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs). These facilities lack basic sanitation, clean water, or safety.

Consequently, formal learning has ceased entirely for over 625,000 students. The loss of UNRWA's educational network also means the loss of critical psychosocial support systems designed to help children cope with war-induced trauma, leaving an entire generation facing deep educational gaps and long-term psychological distress.

The Humanitarian Access Deadlock and UNRWA's Operational Crisis

The primary challenge in Gaza is the ongoing political and administrative deadlock surrounding aid delivery. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the primary logistical spine for aid distribution in Palestine, faces intense political opposition and legislative bans from Israeli authorities. This has severely disrupted its funding and restricted its staff from operating in critical areas.

When UNRWA's operations are restricted, UNICEF and other UN bodies lose the warehousing, transport fleets, and local distribution networks needed to deliver Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) and medical kits. The weaponization of bureaucratic clearances, combined with the ongoing targeting of aid workers and distribution centers, has created an operational environment where international law regarding unhindered humanitarian access is consistently undermined.

Sudan:

The Geopolitical Dynamics of the SAF-RSF Conflict

The outbreak of intense armed hostilities in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) plunged Sudan into a severe humanitarian crisis. The conflict quickly spread from the capital, Khartoum, into a multi-front war consuming the Darfur states, Kordofan, and Gezira—Sudan's primary agricultural breadbasket. The warfare is characterized by the use of heavy artillery in urban zones, ethnically motivated massacres by paramilitary forces, and widespread

looting of state institutions, causing a total collapse of central governance and public welfare systems.

The Largest Child Displacement Crisis Globally

The SAF-RSF conflict has triggered the largest child displacement crisis in the world. Over five million children have been forced to flee their homes, generating massive waves of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and cross-border refugees entering unstable neighboring countries like Chad, South Sudan, and Egypt. During these sudden, violent flights, thousands of children have become separated from their families.

These unaccompanied minors arrive at makeshift camps with no legal documentation, exposed to the elements, and highly vulnerable to predatory networks, child trafficking, and forced recruitment by both warring factions. The vast geographic scale of Sudan, combined with the collapse of fuel supplies and transport networks, means these displaced populations are frequently cut off from international aid for months at a time.

The Weaponization of Agriculture and the Darfur Famine

Sudan represents a stark case of a food crisis driven by the deliberate disruption of agricultural production and supply routes. The Gezira scheme and other farming regions have become active battlegrounds, preventing farmers from planting or harvesting sorghum and millet, the country's primary food staples. Furthermore, both the SAF and RSF have systematically blocked, looted, and extorted humanitarian aid convoys traveling from Port Sudan across frontlines into rebel-held territories.

This multi-front blockade has driven parts of Sudan, particularly the Zamzam IDP camp in North Darfur, into verified IPC Phase 5 Famine conditions. Millions of children suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).

Without access to RUTF, their immune systems collapse, making them highly vulnerable to preventable diseases like measles, malaria, and cholera, which are spreading through overcrowded displacement camps.

The Structural Collapse of the School Network

The education sector in Sudan has faced an unprecedented shutdown. More than 10,000 schools located in conflict-affected governorates have been closed indefinitely due to active fighting, direct targeting, or occupation by military forces using them as barracks and weapon depots.

The national ministry of education has been unable to administer standardized exams or provide salaries to its teaching staff, leading to a massive flight of educators from the country. This total shutdown has left over 19 million children out of school.

Without a stable school environment to provide a protective framework, routine, and a daily meal, adolescent boys are heavily targeted for forced military conscription, while young girls face rising rates of sexual violence and forced child marriage as families struggle to survive.

Ukraine:

The Context of Conventional State-on-State Conflict

The escalation of the international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine represents a high-intensity, conventional state-on-state war. Unlike asymmetric conflicts involving insurgent groups, this theater features the widespread use of sophisticated military technology, including long-range cruise missiles, heavy artillery, and kamikaze drones across a frontline spanning hundreds of miles. The conflict has caused significant civilian casualties, massive waves of external refugee migration into Western Europe, and widespread structural damage to urban infrastructure across Ukraine.

Targeted Infrastructure Attacks and the Civilian Threat Framework

A defining characteristic of this conflict is the systematic targeting of Ukraine's critical civilian energy infrastructure by Russian missile forces. Coordinated strikes against electrical sub-stations, thermal power plants, and hydroelectric installations have repeatedly disabled the national energy grid. This strategy functions as a significant civilian threat under International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

When the power grid fails, water filtration plants, central heating networks, and sewage systems stop working instantly. During freezing winter months, this exposes children to extreme hypothermia risks and disrupts the operations of pediatric hospitals and neonatal clinics, which must rely on emergency diesel generators to keep life-support systems running.

The Transformation of the Educational Landscape: The Digital Gap

The conventional nature of the war has forced a total transformation of Ukraine's educational landscape. Due to the constant threat of long-range missile strikes, thousands of educational institutions have transitioned entirely to remote, online learning. However, this shift is severely hindered by the intentional destruction of the energy grid.

Rolling blackouts, cell tower failures, and the lack of internet connectivity have created a significant digital divide. Children living near frontlines or in rural areas cannot access digital classrooms or online educational resources.

To maintain educational continuity, communities have been forced to build underground "metro-schools" inside subway stations and reinforced bomb shelters. This environment causes significant psychological stress, as children are forced to learn in windowless, underground bunkers while air-raid sirens sound above.

Psychological Trauma and the Demographics of Displacement

The war in Ukraine has created a profound mental health crisis among youth. Millions of children have experienced displacement, either as internally displaced persons (IDPs) within western Ukraine or as refugees scattered across Europe. The separation of families—due to national martial law policies preventing adult men from leaving the country—has placed a heavy emotional and economic burden on mothers and caregivers.

Yemen:

The Geopolitical Landscape and Chronology of Collapse

The conflict in Yemen escalated dramatically in March 2015 when a coalition of states led by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily against the Houthi movement (Ansar Allah), which had seized control of the capital, Sana'a. What began as a domestic power struggle rapidly transformed into a complex regional proxy war.

For over a decade, the country has been split into fragmented zones of control: the Houthi-controlled northern highlands, which contain roughly 70% of the population, and the internationally recognized government (IRG) forces backed by the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in the south and east. This geographic and political fracture has systematically torn apart the nation's unified administrative, economic, and social welfare architectures.

The Mechanics of Blockades and OIS Destruction

Yemen represents the most definitive modern example of a crisis driven by the destruction of Objects Indispensable to the Survival (OIS) of the civilian population, a flagrant violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Yemen structurally relies on imports for over 90% of its staple foods, medicine, and fuel.

The Saudi-led coalition enforced a strict naval and aerial blockade on the Red Sea port of Hudaydah and Sana'a International Airport, arguing that these measures were necessary to prevent the smuggling of Iranian weapons to Houthi forces.

The operational reality on the ground, however, was a catastrophic economic chokehold. The blockade delayed or completely denied entry to commercial container ships carrying grain and fuel.

Without fuel, water pumps could not run, electrical grids failed, and internal transportation costs spiked exponentially. The Houthi authorities compounded this by taxing aid shipments, blocking internal humanitarian corridors, and diverting relief supplies to frontline fighters.

The weaponization of ports and infrastructure directly triggered a systemic collapse of food supply chains. Arable land in the Tihama coastal plain was heavily mined, agricultural infrastructure was shelled, and fishing boats in the Red Sea were systematically destroyed by airstrikes, stripping the population of local coping mechanisms.

The Micro-Impact: The Physics of Malnutrition in Yemeni Children

The restriction of imports directly translated into clinical devastation for Yemeni children. Millions of children drifted into severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and acute watery diarrhea/cholera epidemics.

When food is scarce, families reduce meal frequencies and switch to nutrient-poor foods. For a child under five, this initiates a rapid physiological breakdown.

In Yemen, the prevalence of Wasting reached historic peaks. When a child lacks sufficient caloric and micronutrient intake, their body enters a state of metabolic crisis, consuming its own muscle tissue and fat reserves to keep vital organs functioning.

This muscle atrophy extends to the heart and diaphragm, making the child highly susceptible to respiratory infections. Furthermore, the lack of clean water caused by the fuel crisis triggered the largest cholera outbreak in recorded history, infecting over one million people.

A malnourished child lacks the epithelial integrity in their gut to fight off pathogens; diarrhea flushes out remaining nutrients, causing rapid dehydration and death. For survivors, the long-term impact is severe Stunting. Chronic nutritional deficits have permanently arrested the physical growth and neurocognitive mapping of an entire generation of Yemeni youth, introducing lifelong cognitive impairments.

Educational Disintegration and the Collapse of the Central Bank

The education system in Yemen did not merely stop functioning; it was economically defunded. In 2016, the Central Bank of Yemen was relocated from Houthi-controlled Sana'a to government-controlled Aden.

This move split the monetary policy of the state and led to a complete cessation of salary payments for over 170,000 public school teachers and civil servants in northern governorates. For nearly a decade, educators have worked without stable compensation, forcing them to abandon classrooms to seek alternative manual labor or informal employment just to feed their own families.

Structurally, over 2,500 schools have been rendered completely non-functional. Hundreds have been directly obliterated by coalition airstrikes, while others have been occupied by armed factions or transformed into squalid IDP shelters for the over 4.5 million internally displaced Yemenis.

With formal schooling unavailable, the protection risks for children have soared. The UN has verified the recruitment of thousands of boy soldiers, some as young as ten, by Houthi forces into frontline combat roles, while the rate of child marriage for girls has increased by over 300% since the conflict began, utilized by parents as an extreme economic survival strategy to reduce the number of mouths to feed.

Haiti:

This case is unique in the sense that the protection systems for children have failed in Haiti, not due to the normal civil war or inter-state war, but rather due to the gang wars that have made the situation uncontrolled within the capital of Port-au-Prince. Armed gangs control over 80% of the capital of Haiti through the manipulation of the delivery of important utilities to have control over the population. These gangs have set up terrestrial blockades around the important fuel terminals and food supply channels, making the citizens suffer from food scarcity as well as cholera as a result of the destruction of the water systems. The education system in the country has been a target of the armed gangs, as hundreds of schools have been attacked by the gangs and taken for ransom.

Cabo Delgado, Mozambique:

An active non-state actors' (NSAs) insurgency in northern Mozambique, popularly known locally as Al-Shabaab but different from the terrorist group in Somalia, has created a significant child protection crisis. Human rights and refugee crisis have emerged as a result, with many children having to leave their villages due to attacks on civilians. The NSAs have deliberately targeted and torched schools, clinics, and governmental installations in an effort to break down state authority. Children seeking

refuge as a consequence of the ongoing crisis have had to rely entirely on overwhelmed humanitarian camps for survival. The food situation in Cabo Delgado has worsened, since people have been forced to leave their farms before harvesting. Several unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) who lost their parents while fleeing violence pose a serious child protection problem for UNICEF.

Challenges in Solving the Crisis

A. The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Split

The Structural Divide in Institutional Aid Funding

- One of the biggest systemic obstacles to the resolution of children's crises during conflict is the operational and funding disconnect referred to as the split within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. Traditionally, the international aid system has been operating in separate silos:
- Emergency aid is short-term, reactionary, and narrowly aimed at providing basic needs for survival (transporting bottles of water, erecting tents, delivering high-calorie paste). Developmental aid, on the other hand, is long-term, structural and focuses on capacity building (building of schools, forming national policies for agriculture and teacher training programs).
- For prolonged conflicts lasting many years, this creates serious operational mistakes. Although donors will continue to fund emergency food distribution for many years to come, they are unwilling to finance the rebuilding of local water facilities and agricultural cooperatives that would make this aid unnecessary.

The Premature Cessation of Emergency Educational Funding

- The most affected aspect in this situation is the education. Since the international donors see education as a developmental need that cannot be equated to human needs, the sector always lacks funding during times of crisis. As soon as the conflict takes a break or the people get displaced to a relatively stable region, the funding for emergencies ends.
- Unfortunately, the developmental funding is not possible since the region is not considered stable enough for such investments. The result is a serious lack of funds where schools remain destroyed and teachers underpaid for many years.

B. Supply Chain Vulnerability and the Over-Compliance Bottleneck

The Physical Geopolitics of Cold-Chain and RUTF Delivery

- Child survival in the regions with ongoing warfare demands a special type of international logistic chain. The supply of critical medical products such as vaccines requires a complete Cold-Chain that represents uninterrupted connection of cooled containers from the manufacturer till the kid gets vaccinated.
- Just like vaccines, the Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) represents thick lipid-rich paste that is required in large amounts. Physical logistics in the war zones encounter constant disruptions.
- Warfront shifts constantly, bridges fall, and roads are contaminated with improvised explosive devices (IED) or landmines. One minute of delay on the road can deprive a cold chain transport from its electric source and lead to destruction of millions of dollars of vaccines within seconds.

The De Facto Blockade of Financial Over-Compliance

- In addition to geographical impediments, UNICEF supply chains are facing an emerging barrier through a process known as “Financial Over-Compliance.” In order to counter terrorism across the globe, international agencies, as well as financial centers around the world, put stringent AML/CFT sanctions on certain countries or rebel-held regions.
- Though such sanctions provide legal exceptions for humanitarian assistance, private commercial banks, shipping lines, and insurance companies often indulge in the practice of “de-risking.” For fear of hefty fines imposed by regulatory agencies, these private players prefer to outright reject any financial transaction, lease of container ships, or insure cargoes going to conflict-affected areas.
- Such an approach results in de facto blockade that may delay the acquisition and dispatch of goods necessary for children’s survival by months, despite availability of funds.

C. The Biometric Security and Privacy Dilemma in Hostile Tracking

The Technical Shift to Biometric Aid Verification

- In order to counter the problem of corruption and diversion of aid as well as double-dipping in volatile regions, UNICEF, as well as other organizations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), have moved on to implementing digitalized aid delivery mechanisms. This includes the use of biometric authentication technology (eye scans, fingerprint and facial recognition data) to identify beneficiaries before handing out food packs or cash assistance.
- Although an excellent solution to ensure donor financial responsibility, this digitalization presents an additional layer of protection challenge for vulnerable children and their families.

The Weaponisation of Digital Identity Databases

- In war zones, data security is an issue of life and death. When UNICEF creates biometric identification databases of displaced children and their families, the information is vulnerable to intelligence services and non-state militias.
- If the intelligence services of an unfriendly state or rebels manage to hack and/or take control over those biometric databases, they can apply the digital footprint analysis, geolocation and social connections mapping to initiate programs of forced conscription, repression, or ethnic cleansing. The situation represents a complex dilemma in terms of operations – in order to raise the funds necessary to feed a child, UNICEF needs to gather digital information which may endanger his/her life if it falls into the wrong hands.

Possible Solutions and Policy Approaches

To construct high-impact, actionable resolutions, delegates should evaluate and expand upon the following policy approaches:

Cross-Border and Decentralised Aid Delivery Models

To bypass hostile central government blockades, resolutions should authorise and fund direct cross-border humanitarian corridors managed by neutral international consortia. Furthermore, UNICEF should transition its implementation architecture away from centralised state channels toward direct financial and material partnerships with trusted local civil society groups and women-led community networks, utilising decentralised blockchain tracking to minimise corruption risks.

The "Schools as Sanctuaries" Institutional Framework

Committees must universalise and enforce the principles of the Safe Schools Declaration. Operative clauses should establish strict international frameworks that penalise the military occupation of schools through targeted economic sanctions against offending state actors.

Furthermore, UN-monitored Demilitarised Educational Blue Zones should be negotiated between warring factions, ensuring that schools are recognised as protected neutral sanctuaries where child nutrition and learning can proceed without military threat.

Rapid Scaling of Emergency Nutrition-Education Integration

Resolutions should mandate that all future UNICEF emergency responses integrate nutritional aid directly with educational delivery. This can be achieved by deploying

prefabricated Mobile Learning and Nutrition Tents to IDP camps. These dual-purpose hubs provide simultaneous access to emergency learning curricula, psychosocial trauma counselling, and daily distributions of high-calorie RUTF mixtures, securing both survival and cognitive development within a single operational space.

Innovative Financing and Accountability Mechanisms

To resolve the chronic funding deficit, UNICEF should explore innovative financing models, including the issuance of Humanitarian Peace Bonds guaranteed by international financial institutions, and the establishment of dedicated multi-year global trust funds for Education in Emergencies. To ensure accountability, the committee should look to strengthen the MRM by deploying autonomous drone and satellite monitoring networks to log infrastructure attacks, providing tamper-proof digital evidence directly to the International Criminal Court

Questions a Resolution Must Address (QARMAs)

1. How can UNICEF ensure unhindered humanitarian access to deliver lifesaving nutritional and educational supplies when a sovereign government is the primary actor violating child rights?
2. What specific legal, economic, or diplomatic mechanisms can be created to enforce the Safe Schools Declaration and hold state and non-state actors accountable for the destruction of educational infrastructure?
3. How can the international community reform the humanitarian financing model to ensure predictable, multi-year funding for Education in Emergencies, rather than relying on volatile, short-term voluntary donations?
4. What operational strategies should UNICEF employ to bridge the digital and infrastructure divides for displaced and refugee children, ensuring their reintegration into accredited, formal educational systems?
5. How can the UN Security Council framework under Resolution 2417 be strengthened to penalise the intentional use of starvation and the blocking of aid as tactical weapons of war against children?

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