

American South Model United Nations

Peace and Security through Diplomacy: In Search of a Better Tomorrow

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Committee History:

The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the UN organization with the primary responsibility to design, develop, coordinate and manage all child-related projects and programs worldwide. In 1952 the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee on UNICEF was created as a liaison between NGOs and UNICEF. Since its installation, the committee has provided research, analysis, insight, and perspective on the development of plans, projects, policies, issues, and goals pertaining to UNICEF. The Committee currently consists of nearly 80 NGOs who work on behalf of children from over 110 countries worldwide, and the committee serves as the only network of NGOs with direct consultative status at UNICEF.



Topic 1: Child Soldiers

It is estimated that some 300,000 children under the age of 18 are currently involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. The particular situation of girls in conflict continues to require further attention, as the potential risk of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation of children increase during armed conflicts. In many instances, programs to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers fail to identify appropriate strategies for gaining access to these girls and young women.

For the purposes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs, UNICEF defines a 'child soldier' as any child, boy or girl, under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than family members. This includes children who are recruited for forced sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried, weapons.

History and Full description of the issue:

Child combatants have been found on battlefields throughout history. Unlike later wars in American history, young people were involved in all aspects of the Civil War, including fighting on the battlefield. William Black, the youngest wounded soldier, was twelve when his left hand and arm were shattered by an exploding shell. An unknown number of soldiers (estimates show approximately five percent) were under eighteen, and some were as young as ten. Other boys and girls served as scouts or nurses for the wounded. Yet even those who did not participate in the war itself saw their lives altered

by the conflict. During wartime, young people had to grow up quickly, assuming the responsibilities of absent relatives.

During WWI, all armies in the 'Great War' used kid soldiers. In the beginning of the war, the enthusiasm to join the battle was so great that young boys (and even girls) could hardly be stopped from enlisting. Poorly trained the children were sent to the trenches in Belgium, France, Russia and Turkey, where they mingled with the older soldiers and died with them. Perhaps the most notable example is the Hitler *Jugend* (Hitler Youth) in the closing days of World War II.

During the Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s, children were used by the Viet Cong to detonate explosives or throw hand grenades at US troops. This provoked fierce reprisals, most notoriously at My Lai in 1968, where more than 300 unarmed civilians, primarily old men, women and children, were massacred by American soldiers. In some conflicts, children have become the targets of military atrocity. During the Afghanistan War (1979-89) between the Soviet Union and Afghani guerrilla opposition forces, Soviet aircraft dropped bomblets shaped like children's toys. Picked up by an unwary toddler, the result was often a fearful maiming, usually involving amputation.

Violence has ravaged Burundi since the 1993 assassination of the country's first democratically elected president after a mere hundred days in office. More than half of Burundi's population is under eighteen, and the minimum legal age for military service is sixteen. Yet, children as young as ten have played a significant role in the conflict, serving as combat troops, laborers, spies, and sex slaves for the Burundi armed forces as well as armed political groups. Although the major hostilities have ceased, sporadic fighting persists, and an estimated 5,000 child soldiers have yet to be demobilized.

The armed struggle between the Sri Lankan government and the minority Tamil Tigers raged for more than two decades until a ceasefire in February 2002. During that time, many boys and girls under the age of 18 were 'recruited' by the Tigers- some taken by force, others seemingly joining voluntarily after their parents had been threatened. And, according to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, 281 cases of child recruitment were certified in the first eight months *after* the ceasefire, with many more still to be investigated.

In Angola, following the signing of a ceasefire agreement in April 2002, a wide process of demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants was initiated. However, an estimated 8,000 children recruited during the civil war were released without going through a formal demobilization exercise. Following another African conflict, a peace agreement in August of 2003 put an end to the fourteen-year civil war in Liberia that saw widespread use of child soldiers in both government and opposition forces. The national army even had a Small Boys Unit with commanders as young as twelve. When the conflict ended, an estimated 21,000 children needed to be reintegrated into Liberian society.

Children are often terrorized into obedience, consistently being made to fear for

their lives and well-being. They quickly recognize that absolute obedience is the only means to ensure survival. Sometimes they are compelled to participate in the killing of other children or family members, because it is understood by these groups that there is “no way back home” for children after they have committed such crimes. The majority of child soldiers volunteer, though they often do so because it is their best option for survival. Others enlist to exact revenge after their families are abused or murdered.

Progress has however been made in the strengthening of the humanitarian responses to the plight of children in war; the commitment and perseverance of organizations across the globe to work to improve the lives of children, the growing number of governments and armed groups that have pledged to abide by those lives, and some governments that have prioritized commitments to improving care and protection for children in the midst of armed conflict and once the fighting has stopped.

There are seventeen provisions in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of the civilian population which pertain to the child. The provisions themselves vary as to which group of children it refers to, as there are four different age groups identified. The ages are seven, twelve, fifteen and eighteen. The eighteen age limit refers only to the death penalty provision of the Fourth Geneva Convention. By 1977 two Protocols were added to the conventions on international humanitarian law, as the growing participation of children in international or non-international armed conflicts became increasingly recognized. These new Protocols address the situation of child soldiers and create some form of legal protection for children in armed conflicts.

Since the mid-1980s, UNICEF has played a key role in advocating and securing the release of children from armed forces and other combatant groups in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda.

In 1998, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers was formed by leading international human rights and humanitarian organizations. The Coalition is comprised of an International Steering Committee of member organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and International Save the Children Alliance, in addition to a number of local and national NGOs working on behalf of child soldiers.

In 2002 the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force. It outlaws the involvement of children under 18 in hostilities, raising the previous standard of age (15 years) set by the Convention and the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols. As well as requiring States to raise the age for the compulsory recruitment and direct participation in conflict to 18 the Optional Protocol requires State parties to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment beyond the current minimum of 15. In 2002 the Statute of the International Criminal Court entered into force, making the conscription, enlistment or use of children under 15 in hostilities by national armed forces or armed groups a war crime.

The UN Security Council has passed a series of resolutions condemning the recruitment and use of children in hostilities. These are resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), and 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. The *Cape Town Principles and Best Practice on the prevention of recruitment of children into the armed forces and on demobilization and social reintegration of child soldiers in Africa* was adopted by non-governmental organizations at a conference in Cape Town in 1997. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: The charter is the only regional treaty in the world which addresses the issue of child soldiers. It was adopted by the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) and came into force in November 1999.

Demobilization programs for child soldiers have been officially established in over 12 countries, where UN agencies work in partnership with governments and international NGOs. Most major armed political groups, under increasing international pressure, have pledged to end their use of child soldiers. International Instruments currently in place to combat the use of child soldiers include the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the 1999 ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. However, one of the major drawbacks of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is that it does not sufficiently address current armed conflicts.

Girl soldiers are frequently subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as being involved in combat and other roles. In some cases they are stigmatized by their home communities when they return. DDR programs should be sensitively constructed and designed to respond to the needs of girl soldiers.

Children serve as combatants in nearly three-quarters of the world's conflicts and have posed difficult dilemmas for the professional armies they confront. Parts of Africa, Asia, and South America risk long-term instability as generations of youth do not have the opportunity to receive education or take part in other vital social structures due to their involvement in the ongoing wars.

Current Status:

Children are being increasingly used in modern conflict zones as they are more easily recruited as the social structures around them deteriorate. Despots and warlords tend to use children as cheap, effective and expendable fighters in armed conflicts. This is particularly the case in long, protracted conflicts and in parts of Africa, where the AIDS epidemic will have created 40 million orphans by 2010. Fighting groups have developed brutal and sophisticated techniques to separate and isolate children from their communities. Children are often terrorized into obedience, consistently made to fear for their lives and well-being. They quickly recognize that absolute obedience is the only means to ensure survival. In addition, weapons have also become smaller, lighter, easier to use, and more lethal. A ten-year-old can learn to effectively fire an AK-47 in half an hour.

In recent years in the Middle East, children have been used in the Palestinian *intifada* against Israel. Schoolchildren and young people have regularly been seen

throwing rocks and (more infrequently) Molotov cocktails at the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). In addition, according to the 2004 *Global Report on the Use of Child Soldiers*, between October 2000 and March 2004 there were at least nine documented suicide bomb attacks involving Palestinian minors. Children have also been employed as messengers and couriers during conflict against the IDF. In Lebanon, very young boys have been forcibly conscripted into the South Lebanon Army (SLA), an auxiliary militia controlled by the IDF.

Many thousands of children are used as combatants, sex slaves, messengers and servants in simmering and newly erupting conflicts. Colombia's armed groups are among the worst violators of international norms against the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Over 11,000 children are employed by guerrilla armies in a continuing civil conflict. Some 14,000 children serve in combat, make and deploy mines, and gather intelligence. Child soldiers in Colombia, a quarter of which are girls, are often forced to commit appalling human right violations. After declaring a ceasefire in December 2002, paramilitary groups promised to release all children in their ranks. By 2005 the promise was not fulfilled.

One of the most shocking use of child soldiers has occurred in Uganda, where more than 10,000 boys and girls have been abducted to fight in the so-called Lord's Resistance Army. They are drugged and frequently compelled to kill family members so that they cannot go home.

There are reputed to be more child soldiers in Burma than any other country in the world, some of them as young as 11. The overwhelming number have been forced into the country's national army, the Tatmadaw Kyi, and their training consists of systematic bouts of beating and humiliation.

Tens of thousands of children are believed to comprise as much as 35 percent to 45 percent of combatants in clashes between the Myanmar army and sixteen armed resistance groups. Many of these children are abducted and subjected to brutal treatment in training camps before being forced into combat.

UNICEF works to build support for the reintegration of child soldiers into communities, and in particular to provide them with health care and schooling. Current initiatives include setting up child friendly spaces in demobilization camps, and providing psychosocial counseling and appropriate education and vocational training opportunities.

In February 2007 the Paris Commitments and Principles were outlined in a major effort to free children from war. The meeting, co-organized by the French government and UNICEF, was attended by 58 countries, including dozens of government ministers, donors, the heads of UN agencies and many NGOs. At the meeting, attendees endorsed, and pledged to respect, the principles set forth by the "Paris Commitments." This document laid out a set of legal and operational principles needed to protect children from recruitment or use in armed conflict. The Paris Commitments complement existing legal and political mechanisms already in place, and further detailed principles relating to

the protection of children from recruitment or use in armed conflict, their release, and successful reintegration into civilian life. The principles also address the need for long term prevention strategies in order to definitively end children's involvement in armed conflict.

Committee Directive:

Much of the disparity in ending the use of child soldiers lies in the unfulfilled commitments of nations and the unending conflict in many parts of the world. Monitoring and reporting violations of the laws of war that affect children is extremely difficult on the large scale. Poor economic situations in many countries also make enforcement much more difficult.

The issue of post conflict reconstruction has also been a large source of failure. When conflicts involving children end, experts say the prospects for a lasting peace are hurt by large populations of psychologically scarred, demobilized child soldiers. The challenges in healing and reintegrating children into their communities in the aftermath of conflict is sometimes further compounded by severe addiction and dependency of children to drugs such as cocaine. Because children are now also the instruments of brutality, sometimes committing the very worst atrocities, reintegration is often a complex process of community healing and atonement, negotiation with families to accept their children back. All these dimensions of the experience of child combatants carry significant implications and challenges in terms of design and resources needs for psychosocial and other reintegration programming. The reintegration methods, however, have not been successful. Education is difficult to provide for these children as the deep psychological damage that they have experienced has no ready cure.

It is a difficult aim to hope that states bear the responsibility for providing security to and ensuring the protection of all children within their jurisdiction, that children's reintegration into civilian life is the ultimate goal of the process of securing their release from armed forces or groups, and that planning for reintegration should inform all stages of the process and should commence at the earliest possible stage.

UNICEF is committed to fight against impunity, and to effectively investigate and prosecute those persons who have unlawfully recruited children into armed forces or groups, or used them to participate actively in hostilities, bearing in mind that peace or other agreements aiming to bring about an end to hostilities should not include amnesty provisions for perpetrators of crimes under international law, including those committed against children.

It is the mission of this Committee to ensure that the conscription and enlistment procedures for recruitment into armed forces are established and that they comply with applicable international law, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and to establish mechanisms to ensure that age of entry requirements are fully respected and that responsibility for establishing the age of the recruit rests with the recruiting party.

Research and Preparation Questions:

Despite near-universal condemnation tens of thousands of children continue to be actively involved in armed forces. All these children deserve protection from threats to their life and security, to freedom from violence, forced labor and sexual exploitation. Their right to live in their communities with access to healthcare, education and work opportunities must be guaranteed.

The majority of the world's child soldiers are involved in a varied of armed political groups. These include government backed parliamentary groups, militias, and self-defense units operating with government support in many conflict zones. Others include armed groups opposed to central government rule, groups composed of ethnic, religious, and other minorities; and clan-based or factional groups fighting governments and each other to defend territory and resource.

Despite growing recognition of girls' involvement in armed conflict, girls are often deliberately or inadvertently excluded from Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programs.

- How can the international community ensure enforcement of the policies which protect children from becoming child soldiers?
- How can UNICEF ensure funding and equal distribution of the Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programs for child soldiers so that the specific needs of boys and girls are addressed?
- How can the international community involve war affected children in the peace process and decision making which affects their lives?
- How do we encourage the international community and individual governments to renew their commitment to the demobilization and reintegration process?
- How can this Committee effectively reintegrate former child soldiers into society after the installation of peacetime?
- What are the short and long-term propositions which are possible?
- How do you protect child soldiers who are captured and detained during war?
- How do you address the needs of girls abducted during war to serve as sexual slaves and who may have no alternative to remaining under the custody of their abductors?

Suggested Websites

1. Fact Sheet: Child Soldiers.

<http://www.child-soldiers.org>

2. UNICEF

<<http://www.unicef.org>>

3. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

<<http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/childsoldiers21.html>>

4. Human Rights Watch.

<<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/02/22/colomb10202.htm>>

5. UN News Center.
<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story>>
6. Digital History.
<<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu>>
7. The Heritage of the Great War, Children of the Great War.
<<http://www.greatwar.nl/frames/default-children.html>>
8. Channel 14
<<http://www.channel4.com/history/>>
9. War Child
<<http://www.warchild.org>>
10. Child Soldiers and International Law
<<http://www.issafrika.org>>
11. Council on Foreign Relations
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9331/>
12. Working Child
<<http://www.workingchild.org/current.htm>>

Topic 2: HIV/AIDS and other deadly Diseases among Child Populations

HIV/AIDS has taken the world by storm, the deadly disease has and continues to ravages many areas of Africa, and the disease has spread to all corners of the globe. The international community has done its best to attempt to stop the proliferation of the AIDS virus. And yet the results have yielded little hope that the spread of this deadly foe will subside. In the United States alone the amount of “people living with Aids has risen from 331,482 in 2001 to 421,873 in 2005.” This is a disheartening fact since modern medicine has established better treatment methods and slowed the ability of the disease to progress from HIV to AIDS. Science and technology continue to be at the frontline in the battle against HIV/AIDS and many other diseases that constantly threaten the very life we hold so dear. UNICEF has mad great strides in many areas of effort since the new millennium, and yet so much still has to be done. Thanks to the United Nations continued growth over recent years UNICEF has received more and more prestige as the single most important international organization to ensure the wellbeing of children around the world. The work has piled high and the time for UNICEF to shine is now, will the UN body be able to overcome the vastly different views of countries from all parts of the globe, or will it fail were so many others have. Children cannot fight the battle alone, as a member of UNICEF’s Executive Board you must speak for those who cannot and preserve the next generation of the world’s leaders. This is a tall order, but the international community, and the United Nations can trust it to no other body, it is up to the UNICEF to fight the fight to keep all the worlds’ children safe.

Timeline of the Issue:

1981- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports first cases of rare pneumonia in young gay men in the June later determined to be AIDS. This marks the official beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. CDC also issues report on highly unusual occurrence of rare skin cancer, Kaposi's Sarcoma, among young gay men.

1982- U.S. CDC formally establishes the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS); refers to four "identified risk factors" of male homosexuality, intravenous drug abuse, Haitian origin and hemophilia A.

1983- The U.S. Public Health Service issues recommendations for preventing transmission of HIV through sexual contact and blood transfusions.

1984- CDC states that abstinence from intravenous drug use and reduction of needle-sharing "should also be effective in preventing transmission of the virus."

1985- First International AIDS Conference held in Atlanta. Hosted by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

1986- National Academy of Science issues report critical of the U.S. response to "national health crisis;" calls for a \$2 billion investment.

1987- First antiretroviral drug - Zidovudine or AZT (a nucleoside analog) - approved by U.S. FDA; U.S. FDA creates new class of experimental drugs, Treatment Investigational New Drugs (INDs), which accelerates drug approval by two to three years

1988- UNAIDS reports that the number of women living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa exceeds that of men.

1989- First guidelines for the prevention of *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), an AIDS-related opportunistic infection and major cause of morbidity and mortality for people with HIV, are issued by U.S. CDC.

1990- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 enacted by the U.S. Congress, prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including people living with HIV/AIDS.

1991- U.S. CDC recommends restrictions on the practice of HIV-positive health care workers and Congress enacts law requiring states to take similar action; Freddie Mercury, lead singer of the rock band Queen, dies of AIDS furthering worldwide attention of the issue.

1992- FDA licenses first rapid HIV test, which provides results in as little as ten minutes; Tennis star Arthur Ashe announces he has AIDS; AIDS becomes number one cause of death for U.S. men ages 25 to 44.

1997- President Clinton announces goal of finding an effective vaccine in 10 years and the creation of Dale and Betty Bumpers Vaccine Research Center

2000- U.S. and UN Security Councils each declare HIV/AIDS a security threat; UNAIDS, WHO and other global health groups announce joint initiative with five major pharmaceutical manufacturers to negotiate reduced prices for AIDS drugs in developing countries; Millennium Development Goals, announced as part of Millennium Declaration, include reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB as one of 8 key goals.

2005- At historic and unprecedented joint press conference, the World Health Organization, UNAIDS, the United States Government, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria announce results of joint efforts to increase the availability of antiretroviral drugs in developing countries. An estimated 700,000 people had been reached by the end of 2004; At World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, priorities include a focus on addressing HIV/AIDS in Africa and other hard hit regions of the world.

2007- International **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** held in Kigali, Rwanda and hosted by the Rwandan Government. It draws over 1,500 delegates from around the

world to share lessons on HIV prevention, treatment, and care from the field. Co-sponsors include PEPFAR, The Global Fund, UNAIDS, WHO, UNICEF, The World Bank; The World Health Organization and UNAIDS issue new guidance recommending "provider-initiated" HIV testing in health-care settings; The World Health Organization and UNAIDS recommend that "male circumcision should always be considered as part of a comprehensive HIV prevention package."

Current Status:

UNICEF and its Executive Board have dealt with many issues that threaten the very fabric of the world's future. Children are the future, and in many nations across the world being a children remain a key point of vulnerability. In the Sudan, children are ripped from their own homes to become child soldiers. In parts of south-east Asia, children still work in sweatshops in terrible sub-human conditions for little or no pay. In Eastern Europe children are coerced into becoming sex slaves, and are trafficked through an underground system that eludes police agencies all around the world. UNICEF's youth Aids campaign has done a tremendous job spreading the word about how deadly HIV is. UNICEF has worked with countless non-governmental organizations around the world to help screen thousands of children for this life threatening disease. UNICEF has also been involved with lobbying of pharmaceutical companies to help lower the cost of AZT and other anti-retroviral drugs. The organization has also sponsored research programs that are looking into a human vaccine against HIV which has begun human trials in Thailand. Alongside these auspicious undertakings, the Executive Board of the UN Children's Fund has its hands in many endeavors and the outlook on these programs is strong, but implementation strategies and methods for dealing with the present must also be emphasized. Today children live alone and in fear after losing both parents to the virus. Media based public outreach programs have been instituted as a deterring measure in hopes of increasing awareness of symptom recognition and disease prevention. Posters and flyers however, do not always work because millions of people in the world cannot read. Being a child is hard, and UNICEF is there to ensure that these children will have a tomorrow and that it will be brighter than any could possibly imagine.

Topic 3: Achieving Universal Primary Education

A startling 121 million children worldwide do not have access to primary education. Nearly 96 per cent of children in developed countries have access to primary education, while the rate in the least developed countries is less than 40 per cent. Out of school children in developing countries are especially vulnerable to poverty, hunger, violence, exploitation and disease, contributing to future generations of people with limited chances and almost certain poverty.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, world leaders identified development as a key challenge for the UN and thus placed it at the center of the global agenda for the 21st century by agreeing to adopt the Millennium Declaration. The seven 'International Development Goals' that were drafted during the 1990s were expanded and refined to eight specific goals and were adopted by the UN General Assembly. Millennium Development Goal #2 is the aim to achieve universal primary education, meaning that all boys and girls in the world will have the capability to

complete a full course of primary schooling.

Meeting the Education Goal will speed progress toward every other Millennium Goal, as educating children dramatically helps to reduce poverty and promote gender equality. It also contributes to a lower child mortality rate and is notably linked to Millennium Goal #3, gender parity, as universal primary education by definition requires gender equality. Furthermore, education of children is a fundamental right to which governments committed themselves under the *1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child*.

History and Full Description of the Issue

As long as social classes and formal education have been in existence, disparity in education has occurred. Throughout history there has been no clear dividing line between conflict and non-conflict, which creates ambiguity in determining the cause of unsatisfactory development and analytical methods for understanding the best way to achieve the goal of universal primary education. Education has been used as a weapon in cultural repression of minorities, denying them access to education, or using education to suppress their language, traditions, art forms, religious practices and cultural values. Segregated education maintains inequality between groups within society, and this occurs frequently in developed countries. The denial of education also serves as a weapon of war, as it occurred for Palestinian children by Israel during the Intifada, in which all schools were forced to close. An estimated 50 per cent of children who are not enrolled in primary education live in countries in crisis or emerging from conflict. These are considered to be among the poorest in the world.

School offers children a safe environment, with support, supervision and socialization. Here they learn life skills that can help them prevent diseases, like how to avoid HIV/AIDS and malaria. They may receive life-saving vaccines, fresh water and nutrient supplementation at school. Educating a girl also dramatically reduces the chance her child will die before age five.

Conversely, denying children access to quality education increases their vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and disease. Girls, more than boys, are at greater risk of such abuse when they are not in school. For many villages, a school also provides a safe haven for children, a place where they can find companionship, adult supervision, latrines, clean water and possibly meals and health care.

Yet even these basics are beyond reach for hundreds of millions of children. These children are deprived of their right to education because their families cannot afford school fees or other related costs, or because their communities are too poor or remote to have school facilities and supplies, or because they have to work to put food on the table. Children of indigenous populations or ethnic minorities often face discrimination and are excluded from education, as are children with disabilities.

In addition, HIV-AIDS has decimated schools, communities, and families around the world, creating orphans and other vulnerable children. Civil conflicts and humanitarian crises are also depriving children of the right to education. Girls often bear the brunt of these problems. They are the first to be withdrawn from school if money is short or if household work needs attention, if family members need to be cared for, if the school is too far away, or in situations of pervasive insecurity.

For the Education Goal to be met, actions need to address both human and material needs, including infrastructure and the organic requirements of getting all children into

school and ensuring they complete a quality education. These include gender equality in society, good health and nutrition, and the strong backing of governments and communities.

Current Status:

At the current rate of progress many countries are unlikely to achieve universal primary education. Without government and donor policies that advocate inclusive primary education, the basic human right to education may not be achieved by 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa for example, many countries are unlikely to achieve the goal until 2130, unless progress is accelerated by 400 per cent. Social and cultural exclusion serves as an obstacle to achieving MDG 2.

Decades after commitments and reaffirmations of those commitments have been made to ensure a quality education for every child, some 117 million children- among them 62 million girls- are still denied this right. Despite thousands of successful projects in countries around the globe, gender parity in education- in access to school, successful achievement and completion- is as elusive as ever and girls continue to systematically lose out on the benefits that an education affords. Many countries have fallen short of the 2005 target for gender parity in education. What's more, this failure will jeopardize the goals set for 2015. However, the global percentage of girls enrolled in school has increased, but it does not match the percentage of boys who are enrolled in school. Without the foundation of gender parity in education as the necessary step towards the equality of women, any achievements towards the later goals will not be sustainable. While most of the Millennium Development Goals face a deadline of 2015, the gender parity target was set to be achieved a full ten years earlier - an acknowledgement that equal access to education is the foundation for all other development goals. Yet recent statistics show that for every 100 boys out of school, there are still 117 girls in the same situation. Until equal numbers of girls and boys are in school, it will be impossible to build the knowledge necessary to eradicate poverty and hunger, combat disease and ensure environmental sustainability. And millions of children and women will continue to die needlessly, placing the rest of the development agenda at risk.

Globally, significant progress has been made in primary enrolment and if current trends continue, most of the countries in the Middle East/North Africa, East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions appear to be on course for 2015. In Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) as well, while the rate of increase needs to improve, the target can certainly be met. In all of these regions, gains in enrolment/attendance also need to carry over into high rates of primary education completion. UNICEF has not only provided financial support but has also helped to build capacity in many countries so as to ensure that education reforms are implemented, such as software that allows provincial governments to track development indicators and monitor the well-being of children.

Education for All is an initiative superheaded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments, UNESCO is assisting in the implementation of national education programs which deal with both the quantity and quality of schools. Such policies include literacy and vocational training. Other affiliated groups which have the full support of UNICEF in MDG 2 include the Fast Track Initiative, Save the

Children, and CARE. UNICEF has also worked to help reconstruct school buildings and has found solutions for buildings that cannot be reconstructed in a short time period.

Committee Directive:

In recent history the majority of conflicts which restrict educational access are not attributed to a war between states but to internal conflicts within a country. Those nations involved in conflict and post-conflict situations face the most obstacles in re-creating and sustain a sufficient educational system. In conflict situations mistakes can be easily made, and their consequences tend to be more severe. Outside assistance provided to one ethnic group in an internal conflict can cause a significant impact on the remainder of the conflict. Reconstruction and peace agreements also contribute to the difficulty of this issue, as reconstruction may occur over an exceptional time span, or peace agreements may collapse.

The nature of conflict in this day and age makes it extremely difficult to use definite terms, policies, and actions. Numerous analyses of past and recent conflicts suggest that they arise from deeply embedded struggles over resources or adaptation to change. With conflicts such as those in Sudan and Sri Lanka, which have endured for decades but still erupt into particular events, the effort to find a solid basis for distinctions between relief and development budgets and long and short term interventions is extremely difficult. It is at this point that the international community realizes that education can be attained through conflict prevention. This prevention requires addressing issues of equitable development in the education sector, such as language in education policy, rights education and equity in resource access.

The difficulty in finding a solution also lies in the understanding of the entire issue. UNICEF tends to focus more on the social and political development which is associated with a higher education system, while other NGOs argue that conflict prevention should be the focus of the campaign. However, this does not provide a solution for the undefined and defined conflict and post-conflict areas in which primary education is not available to children.

It is the mission of this committee to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The committee hopes to ensure that by 2015 all children, and especially girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory education of good quality, as well as to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs. The committee wants to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015 as well as gender equality in education, with a focus in ensuring girls' full and access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. In addition, the Committee has the mission to improve all aspects of the quality of education, and ensure their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Research and Preparation Questions:

- What are some ways to eliminate barriers in education between social biases and class separation?

- Does the role of education impact a country through improving political and social processes? What about in conflict areas?
- How do you work with governments in undefined conflict or post-conflict situations to encourage them to understand the purpose of education?

Suggested Websites

1. NGO Committee UNICEF

<http://www.ngocomunicef.org/about_history.htm>

2. UNICEF

<<http://www.unicef.org>>

3. UNICEF UK

<www.unicef.org.uk/unicefuk/policies/policy_detail>

4. Development Gateway

<<http://topics.developmentgateway.org/special/primary-education>>

5. ILO

<<http://www.ilo.org>>

6. Child Information

<<http://www.childinfo.org/areas/education/>>

7. Africa Files

<<http://www.africafiles.org>>

8. UN USA

<<http://www.unuasa.org/site/pp.asp>>

9. Department for International Development

<<http://www.dfid.gov.uk>>