

IASMUN

Background Guide



United Nations Children's Fund

LETTER FROM THE DIAS



DEAR DELEGATES,

WELCOME TO UNICEF. AS YOUR HEAD CHAIR, I, SARAH DHIRANI, AM HONORED TO SERVE ALONGSIDE MY CO-CHAIR, JANA GHALY. WE ARE TRULY THRILLED TO HAVE YOU JOIN US, AND I HOPE YOU ARE PREPARED TO DIVE INTO A COMMITTEE THAT REQUIRES CAREFUL CONSIDERATION, COMPASSION, AND MORAL DIPLOMACY. I URGE YOU TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE, EMBRACE RISKS, AND UTILIZE THIS COMMITTEE TO ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS AS DELEGATES AND THINKERS, AS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MUN ROOMS UNICEF'S MISSION IS TO ENSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED EMERGENCIES, HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION THAT IS EQUITABLE, HIGH-QUALITY, AND INCLUSIVE, EVEN IN THE FACE OF CONFLICT AND DISASTER. NOT ONLY SHOULD YOU FOCUS ON EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, BUT ALSO ON JUSTICE, SAFETY, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEMS RESILIENT TO FUTURE CRISES.

THE SECOND TOPIC, PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND DIGITAL HARM, ASKS YOU TO EXAMINE THE GROWING RISKS CHILDREN FACE IN DIGITAL SPACES. THE ONLINE WORLD OFFERS A COMPLEX AREA THAT INCREASINGLY CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, FROM CYBERBULLYING AND PREDATORY BEHAVIOR TO DATA MISUSE AND HARMFUL CONTENT. IT IS YOUR JOB TO DETERMINE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT AND HOW TO CREATE SAFEGUARDS THAT KEEP KIDS SAFE WITHOUT RESTRICTING THEIR RIGHTS OR OPPORTUNITIES.

AS YOUR CHAIRS, WE WANT TO CREATE A FAIR, STIMULATING, AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR SUCCESS. PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT US IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE WITH PROCEDURE, GUIDANCE DURING A DEBATE, OR A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF ANYTHING. I'M HERE TO SUPPORT YOU AS YOU CONFIDENTLY PURSUE YOUR GOALS OF LEARNING, CHALLENGING YOURSELF, AND REPRESENTING YOUR NATION.

LETTER FROM THE DIAS



WE ARE TRULY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE IDEAS, COLLABORATION, AND DIPLOMACY YOU'LL BRING TO THIS COMMITTEE. LET'S MAKE THIS A PRODUCTIVE, INSPIRING, AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE.

**WARM REGARDS,
UNICEF's DAIS**

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE



LAUNCHED IN 1946, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF) IS A SPECIALIZED UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROVIDING IMMEDIATE AID TO CHILDREN IMPACTED BY WORLD WAR II. UNICEF IS CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN MORE THAN 190 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES, WORKING TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S HEALTH, NUTRITION, EDUCATION, SAFETY, AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE. THE CRC, WHICH RECOGNIZES THE BASIC RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, SUCH AS PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PROTECTION, AND SURVIVAL, IS THE LEGAL BASIS FOR UNICEF'S ACTIVITIES.

IN THE EVENT OF A GLOBAL CRISIS, UNICEF IS USUALLY ONE OF THE FIRST BODIES TO ARRIVE AT THE SCENE, BRINGING CRUCIAL SERVICES, INCLUDING CLEAN DRINKING WATER, EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. FOR EXAMPLE, A MODEL UN COMMITTEE OF UNICEF FOCUSES ON PROMOTING CHILD-CENTERED POLICIES AROUND RESILIENCE, EQUITY, LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT, AND PROTECTION, A UNIT SPECIALIZED IN ENSURING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING. DELEGATES MUST ALSO COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS THAT BALANCE GLOBAL COOPERATION, NATIONAL CAPABILITIES, AND GLOBAL INEQUALITIES IN CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

AGENDA 1



“REBUILDING THE FUTURE: TRANSFORMING GLOBAL EDUCATION IN A POST-CRISIS WORLD”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

EDUCATION SYSTEMS ARE SOME OF THE FIRST PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO BREAK DOWN IN TIMES OF CRISIS. ARMED CONFLICT, NATURAL DISASTERS, PANDEMICS, CLIMATE EMERGENCIES, AND PROLONGED POLITICAL INSTABILITY SEVERELY DISRUPT CHILDREN’S ACCESS TO SAFE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS. SCHOOLS UNDERGO DESTRUCTION OR REPURPOSING, TEACHERS FACE DISPLACEMENT OR UNPAID LEAVE, AND FAMILIES MUST PRIORITIZE SURVIVAL OVER EDUCATION. EVEN THOUGH EDUCATION IS CRUCIAL FOR PROTECTION, STABILITY, AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY, THESE SETTINGS OFTEN OVERLOOK IT.

ACCORDING TO UNICEF, AROUND 222 MILLION CRISIS-AFFECTED CHILDREN CURRENTLY NEED URGENT EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE. THESE CHILDREN HAVE OVERLAPPING VULNERABILITIES: DISPLACEMENT, POVERTY, TRAUMA, MALNUTRITION, AND LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE. TO MANY, EDUCATION IS NOT JUST A MEANS OF LEARNING, BUT A SOURCE OF SAFETY, PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT, AND REASSURANCE IN THIS RAPIDLY SHIFTING LANDSCAPE. THE ISSUE WITH RECOVERING FROM CRISIS EDUCATION IS ALSO COMPLICATED BY THE STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES THAT EXISTED AND PERSISTED PRIOR TO THE CRISES. EDUCATION SYSTEMS’ EFFORTS TO REBUILD DISPROPORTIONATELY EXCLUDE MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS, RURAL POPULATIONS, REFUGEES, INTERNALLY DISPLACED INDIVIDUALS, AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

HOWEVER, WITHOUT WELL-CONSIDERED EQUITY-DIRECTED EFFORTS, THE RECOVERY PROCESS WILL ONLY EXACERBATE ALREADY-EXISTING INEQUITIES. ADDITIONALLY, THE RAPID ACCELERATION OF THE SHIFT TO DIGITAL HAS TRANSFORMED EDUCATION GLOBALLY.

AGENDA 1



WHILE TECHNOLOGY HAS FACILITATED THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, IT HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE EXPANSION OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE. CHILDREN WHO LACK INTERNET, ELECTRICITY, DEVICES, OR DIGITAL LITERACY SYSTEMATICALLY FALL BEHIND. CONSIDERING THERE ARE ONGOING AND ESCALATING CRISES AND COMPLEXITY, THE CALL FOR RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE, AND ADAPTABLE EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN A TIME OF CRISIS IS MORE IMMEDIATE AND CRITICAL.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC:

THE ONGOING DISRUPTIONS IN THE GLOBAL EDUCATION SYSTEM ARE ONE OF THE MOST SEVERE IN MODERN HISTORY. OVER THE LAST DECADE, COMPOUNDED CRISES SUCH AS COVID-19, ARMED CONFLICTS, FORCED DISPLACEMENT, ECONOMIC INSTABILITY, AND CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY RESTRICTED CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION. LOSS OF LEARNING HAS PILED UP AT RATES NEVER SEEN BEFORE, ESPECIALLY IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES.

UNICEF'S MISSION IS TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH EMERGENCIES, HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION THAT IS FAIR, HIGH-QUALITY, AND OPEN TO EVERYONE. IN THESE POST-CRISIS CONTEXTS, EDUCATION SHOULD NOT ONLY FOCUS ON RECONSTRUCTING THOSE SYSTEMS TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE SOCIETY AFTER THE CRISIS, BUT RATHER BE MORE RESILIENT, FLEXIBLE, AND RESPONSIVE TO FUTURE SHOCKS.

HIS COULD INCLUDE EMBEDDING CRISIS PREPAREDNESS, DIGITAL READINESS, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND INCLUSIVE POLICIES IN NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORKS. WE DO NOT ONLY NEED COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL ACTION, SUSTAINABLE FUNDING, AND LONG-TERM PLANNING TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION IN A POST-CRISIS WORLD.

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GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND OTHERS MUST ACT TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT OUR EDUCATION SYSTEMS CAN WITHSTAND DISRUPTIONS IN THE FUTURE WHILE BEING ACCESSIBLE TO EVERY CHILD.

CORE ISSUE:

THE UNDERLYING CONCERN IS THAT IT IS LEADING TO A LOSS OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES CAUSED BY PROLONGED SCHOOL CLOSURES, UNSAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, TEACHER SHORTAGES, AND UNEQUAL EDUCATIONAL ACCESS. CONFLICT ZONES OFTEN TARGET OR DESTROY SCHOOLS, LEAVING CHILDREN WITHOUT SAFE PLACES TO LEARN. IN DISASTER-STRICKEN AREAS, INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGE AND DISPLACEMENT HALT EDUCATION FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE EXACERBATES EDUCATION INEQUALITY. REMOTE LEARNING, FOR EXAMPLE, BECAME A LEADING SOLUTION IN TIMES OF CRISIS SUCH AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, YET MILLIONS OF CHILDREN DID NOT HAVE INTERNET ACCESS, DIGITAL DEVICES, OR ELECTRIC POWER. WHEREVER SUCH ACCESS WAS AVAILABLE, MOST TEACHERS HAD NO EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL PEDAGOGY AND, AS A RESULT, THESE ISSUES SIGNIFICANTLY DIMINISHED THE IMPACT OF ONLINE INSTRUCTION. AND THE CHALLENGES TO MENTAL HEALTH ARE ENORMOUS, TOO.

CHILDREN WHO SUFFERED VIOLENCE, DISPLACEMENT, LOSS, AND UNCERTAINTY FREQUENTLY HAVE TRAUMA THAT HAS DIRECT EFFECTS ON COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT, ATTENTION, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. EDUCATIONAL RECOVERY IS UNFINISHED WITHOUT THE FULL COMPLEMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT. FURTHERMORE, THE UNDERFUNDING OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN FRAGILE STATES DOES NOT ADEQUATELY ENABLE THEM TO REBUILD. EMERGENCY RESPONSES PRIORITIZE IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS OVER LONG-TERM SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT. AS A RESULT, EDUCATION RECOVERY IS UNEVEN, SLUGGISH, AND OPEN TO FUTURE CRISES.

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WHY URGENT:

THE URGENCY OF THE MATTER IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERSTATE. ACCORDING TO GLOBAL ESTIMATES, APPROXIMATELY 70 PERCENT OF TEN-YEAR-OLDS IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES ARE UNABLE TO READ OR UNDERSTAND A SIMPLE TEXT. SINCE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, LEARNING POVERTY HAS GROWN DRAMATICALLY, REVERSING YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS.

CRISES ARE NO LONGER LOCALIZED AND IMPERMANENT. ARMED CONFLICTS PERSIST IN SUDAN, UKRAINE, AND THE MIDDLE EAST, AND CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS SUCH AS FLOODS, DROUGHTS, AND EARTHQUAKES OCCUR WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY. WE CANNOT OVERSTATE THE URGENCY OF THIS MATTER. ACCORDING TO STATISTICS FROM AROUND THE WORLD, ALMOST 70% OF TEN-YEAR-OLDS IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES ARE UNABLE TO READ OR UNDERSTAND A BASIC TEXT.

SINCE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, LEARNING POVERTY HAS DRAMATICALLY INCREASED, REVERSING YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS. AT A MACRO-LEVEL, WEAKENING EDUCATION SYSTEMS ERODES NATIONAL ECONOMIES, SOCIAL COHESION, AND POLITICAL STABILITY. THE TIME TO REVERSE LEARNING LOSS IS SHORT. EARLY INTERVENTION IS CRUCIAL, PARTICULARLY FOR THE YOUNGER ONES WHO HAVE NOT YET ESTABLISHED THEIR CORE SKILLS. IGNORING THESE CHALLENGES WILL RISK BUILDING A “LOST GENERATION” OF LEARNERS AND DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF URGENT AND ONGOING INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION REVITALIZATION.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT & KEY DEVELOPMENTS:

CURRENT RELEVANCE;

THE PURSUIT OF UNIVERSALITY AND UNIVERSAL EDUCATION HAS TAKEN MANY DECADES. TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION WORLDWIDE, THE EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) INITIATIVE WAS LAUNCHED IN 1990. ALTHOUGH ENROLLMENT NUMBERS INCREASED, DIFFERENCES IN BOTH QUALITY AND ACCESS REMAINED, ESPECIALLY IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES.

HOWEVER, PROGRESS ON EDUCATION REMAINED UNEVEN IN 2000 WITH THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) THAT ALSO FOCUSED MORE BROADLY ON EDUCATION. A DEEPER, MORE INCLUSIVE, EGALITARIAN, AND HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION FRAMEWORK, AS WELL AS POSSIBILITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING, WERE MADE AVAILABLE AS THE CORNERSTONE. THIS FRAMEWORK ALIGNS WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4, ESTABLISHED IN 2015. OVER 1.6 BILLION STUDENTS WORLDWIDE WERE AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC, WHICH WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INTERRUPTION TO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN HISTORY.

STUDENTS' QUICK REACTIONS TO REMOTE LEARNING DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES EXPOSED STRUCTURAL FLAWS AND INJUSTICES. EDUCATION SYSTEMS FREQUENTLY LACKED FLEXIBILITY, TRAINING, OR PREPAREDNESS. WAR AND CLIMATE DISASTERS CONTINUE TO DISPLACE MILLIONS OF YOUNGSTERS FROM THEIR HOMES AND DEGRADE EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE. EVEN DECADES AFTER CRISES HAVE OFFICIALLY SUBSIDED, EDUCATION SYSTEMS OFTEN REMAIN CHRONICALLY UNDERFUNDED, UNSTABLE, AND UNPREPARED FOR POST-CRISIS DEMANDS. THIS APPROACH EMPHASIZES THE VALUE OF RESILIENT, LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES RATHER THAN A SINGLE, FAST CORRECTION.

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PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE:

IN TIMES OF CRISIS, THERE ARE MANY GLOBAL ATTEMPTS AT EDUCATION. BY USING INNOVATION, DIGITAL SOLUTIONS, AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE, UNICEF'S REIMAGINE EDUCATION INITIATIVE IS TRYING TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION. TO FACILITATE CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION DURING CRISIS, THE UNESCO GLOBAL EDUCATION COALITION HELPS TO ORGANIZE COOPERATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR.

EVEN THOUGH THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION (GPE) PROVIDES GUIDANCE ON LONG-TERM SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION IN LOW-INCOME NATIONS, EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT (ECW) PROVIDES EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR EDUCATION AT DISASTER AND CRISIS TIMES. THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION ADVOCATES TO PROTECT EDUCATIONAL ASSETS AND STUDENTS IN CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS. IN MANY COUNTRIES, REMOTE OR HYBRID APPROACHES TO LEARNING WERE ADOPTED TO ADDRESS COVID-19. THESE INITIATIVES WERE ADAPTIVE, BUT THEY ALSO IDENTIFIED GAPS IN ACCESS, TEACHER TRAINING, AND COORDINATION FOR SUCH POLICIES.

SUCCESSES:

THEY HAVE ALREADY SEEN ENORMOUS SUCCESS WITH THESE PROJECTS. IN AN EMERGENCY, MILLIONS OF KIDS MAY CHOOSE TO USE ALTERNATE TEACHING OPTIONS TO KEEP EDUCATION FROM COMPLETELY COLLAPSING. EDUCATION PROGRAMMING HAS PRIORITIZED MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT DUE TO THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LEARNING OUTCOMES AND WELLNESS. GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND DIGITAL FIRMS QUICKLY FORMED ALLIANCES THAT ENCOURAGED INNOVATION IN DELIVERING EDUCATION. THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE REINFORCED EMERGENCY FINANCE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION AND GREW GLOBAL AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR EDUCATION AS A HUMANITARIAN NECESSITY.

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LIMITATIONS:

HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO SUCH ADVANCEMENT. BECAUSE DIGITAL PROGRAMS MOSTLY FOCUSED ON TECHNOLOGY, THEY OFTEN OVERLOOKED SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN WHO DIDN'T HAVE INTERNET CONNECTION, DEVICES, OR THE DIGITAL LITERACY TO COPE. FUNDING FOR EDUCATION RECOVERY IS SPORADIC BUT ALSO DETERMINED BY DONOR PRIORITIES, WHICH POSES A CHALLENGE FOR LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS. WEAK GOVERNANCE AND INSECURITY SLOW DOWN RECOVERY IN FRAGILE STATES. MANY TEACHERS HAD NO COACHING IN CRISIS-RESPONSIVE OR DIGITAL PEDAGOGY, LIMITING THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHODS. FURTHERMORE, AS INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS LIKE THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION ARE VOLUNTARY, THERE IS NOT MUCH ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENFORCEMENT.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

TO CREATE MORE RESILIENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS, GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS NEED TO INVEST MORE IN CRISIS-RESISTANT INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING MOBILE CLASSROOMS, MODULAR BUILDINGS, AND SOLAR-POWERED SCHOOLS.

INCREASING DIGITAL EQUITY (INCLUDING BY PROVIDING INEXPENSIVE INTERNET ACCESS, SUBSIDIZED DEVICES, AND OFFLINE LEARNING TOOLS) IS CRUCIAL.

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS SHOULD FOCUS ON DIGITAL INSTRUCTION, TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING, AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND STUDENT WELLBEING.

MONITORING MECHANISMS, RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES MUST REINFORCE THE PROTECTION OF SCHOOLS IN CONFLICT ZONES.

SCALING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CAN HELP NARROW LEARNING GAPS BEFORE THEY WIDEN FURTHER, WHILE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS CAN BUILD AFFORDABLE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY.

AGENDA 1



GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND POSITION PAPERS:

- 1. HOW CAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS WORK AND BE ACCESSIBLE IN FUTURE CRISES, PANDEMICS, WARS, OR CLIMATE DISASTERS?**
- 2. WHAT BALANCE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN DIGITAL LEARNING AND TRADITIONAL IN-PERSON SCHOOLING IN A POST-CRISIS WORLD?**
- 3. HOW CAN COUNTRIES ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET, ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME, RURAL, AND DISPLACED CHILDREN?**
- 4. WHAT MECHANISMS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO PROTECT SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, AND TEACHERS IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED REGIONS?**
- 5. HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS INTEGRATE PSYCHOSOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT INTO EDUCATIONAL RECOVERY INITIATIVES?**
- 6. WHAT ROLE SHOULD PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS ASSUME IN REVITALIZING RESILIENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS?**
- 7. TO ADDRESS LEARNING DISPARITIES AND PREPARE STUDENTS FOR A RAPIDLY EVOLVING WORLD, HOW SHOULD THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM BE ADAPTED?**

AGENDA 1



REFERENCES AND SOURCES:

- **UNICEF:** [HTTPS://WWW.UNICEF.ORG/EDUCATION](https://www.unicef.org/education)
- **UNESCO GEM REPORT:** [HTTPS://WWW.UNESCO.ORG/GEM-REPORT](https://www.unesco.org/gem-report)
- **WORLD BANK – EDUCATION & CRISIS:**
[HTTPS://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/TOPIC/EDUCATION](https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education)
- **GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION:**
[HTTPS://WWW.GLOBALPARTNERSHIP.ORG](https://www.globalpartnership.org)
- **EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT:** [HTTPS://WWW.EDUCATIONCANNOTWAIT.ORG](https://www.educationcannotwait.org)
- **SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION:** [HTTPS://SSD.PROTECTINGEDUCATION.ORG](https://ssd.protectingeducation.org)

AGENDA 2



‘PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND DIGITAL HARM’

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

IMPROVEMENTS IN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY HAVE IMPACTED HOW CHILDREN IN TODAY'S WORLD INTERACT, COMMUNICATE, AND LEARN. ACCESS TO DIGITAL PLATFORMS HAS RISEN, AND SO HAS THE AGE CHILDREN (TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS) ARE FIRST INTRODUCED TO THE INTERNET. ACCESS TO THE INTERNET HAS GIVEN CHILDREN THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, SOCIALIZE, AND EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN WAYS THAT WERE NOT AVAILABLE BEFORE.

UNFORTUNATELY, MANY CHILDREN HAVE NO SUPERVISION WHEN USING THE INTERNET, AND THEY LACK THE SAFETY SKILLS NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND THE RISKS INVOLVED. MOST ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS WERE CREATED BY INDIVIDUALS WITH NO REGARD FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN. THESE ENVIRONMENTS ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE HARASSMENT AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND THEY EXPOSE CHILDREN TO BULLYING, INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT, AND THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OF THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION. CHILDREN FROM LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATIONS ARE THE MOST AT RISK, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY LACK BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS, BUT THEY ALSO LACK THE LEGAL PROTECTIONS NECESSARY TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE FROM EXPLOITATION ON THE INTERNET.

IT'S HARD FOR GOVERNMENTS TO REGULATE DIGITAL PLATFORMS BECAUSE THE INTERNET IS GLOBAL. THERE ARE MANY CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ENFORCEMENT BARRIERS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ONLINE TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES ARE SUBJECT TO MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS, AND THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY IS DIFFUSE. UNICEF FOCUSES ON THE DIGITAL SPACES AND NOTES THAT IT IS A FOCUS OF INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY ON PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND IS A CLEAR CASE OF TARGETED POLICY CHILD-CENTERED ADVOCACY.

AGENDA 2



ALWAYS INTERSECTS WITH THE VULNERABILITIES. ARE THERE ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND OFFLINE VULNERABILITIES INCLUDING POVERTY, DISPLACEMENT, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION. THE EXPLOITATION GROWS GLOBALLY. THERE IS THE INTERNET, A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPING, AND THERE IS THE SHARP FOCUS ON GROWING CROSS CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC:

IT IS A GLOBAL PRIORITY TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND DIGITAL HARM. ACCESS TO THE INTERNET IS A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE FOR CHILDREN, AND BECAUSE OF THAT, THE DIGITAL WORLD IS A PART OF THEIR CHILDHOOD. CHILDREN FACE THE DANGER OF ONLINE GROOMING, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, CYBER BULLYING, EXPOSURE TO EXTREMIST AND VIOLENT CONTENT, AND THERE ARE DATA PRIVACY ISSUES AND TARGETING ADVERTISING. THE DIGITAL THREATS CHANGE AS THE TECHNOLOGY EVOLVE AND IMPROVE, AND THEY POSE ISSUES THAT MAKE ONLINE REGULATION AND PROTECTION IMPOSSIBLE. IT'S HARD FOR GOVERNMENTS TO REGULATE DIGITAL PLATFORMS BECAUSE THE INTERNET IS GLOBAL. THERE ARE MANY CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ENFORCEMENT BARRIERS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ONLINE TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES ARE SUBJECT TO MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS, AND THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY IS DIFFUSE. UNICEF FOCUSES ON THE DIGITAL SPACES AND NOTES THAT IS A FOCUS OF INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY ON PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND IS A CLEAR CASE OF TARGETED POLICY CHILD-CENTERED ADVOCACY. ALWAYS INTERSECTS WITH THE VULNERABILITIES. ARE THERE ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND OFFLINE VULNERABILITIES INCLUDING POVERTY, DISPLACEMENT, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION. THE EXPLOITATION GROWS GLOBALLY. THERE IS THE INTERNET, A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPING, AND THERE IS THE SHARP FOCUS ON GROWING CROSS CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES.

AGENDA 2



CORE ISSUE:

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IS THE LACK OF BREACHABLE PROTECTION THAT IS ABLE TO STOP CHILD ONLINE EXPLOITATION IN A DIGITALLY FUNDAMENTAL WAY. ESPECIALLY, CHILD DIGITAL EXPLOITATION. MOST DIGITAL PLATFORMS LACK CHILD SAFETY NETS THEREFORE ALLOWING THE MASSIVE SPREAD OF ONLINE CONTENT. CHILD PREDATORY BEHAVIOR, AND THE ALGORITHMS THAT TARGET USERS, CAN IN FACT BE ABLE TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF ELICIT MATERIALS.

THE EXPLOITATION OF PERSONAL CHILD DATA IS A COMPOUNDING ISSUE. INFORMED CONSENT IS LARGELY AN UTOPIAN NON-EXISTENT ABSTRACTION AND THUS SENSITIVE CHILD PERSONAL DATA IS MONETIZED. THE LACK OF CONTROLLED CONSENT CHILD DATA SURVEILLANCE, AND THE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT IS WALKED BY THE CHILD AND WILL NOT WALKED BACK.

THE SECONDARY NETWORKS THAT EXPLOIT CHILDREN FACE NO ACTIONABLE LEGAL PROTECTION. MODERN POLICING OF DIGITAL CRIMES IS INEFFECTIVE, OFTEN THE RESULT OF LACK OF THE ADEQUATE OPERATIONAL DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE, AND THE NECESSARY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS. THUS, THE CHILD ONLINE EXPLOITERS ARE ABLE TO WALK IN PLAIN SIGHT DIGITALLY WITH NO FEAR OF CLOSING A DIGITAL TRACE.

CHILDREN HAVE NO OF MINIMAL VOICE IN DIGITAL SAFETY POLICY. THIS DISCONNECT LIMITS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROTECTION STRATEGIES AND FAILS TO ACCOUNT FOR CHILDREN'S LIVED EXPERIENCES IN DIGITAL SPACES.

AGENDA 2



WHY URGENT:

THE CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY HAVE MADE THE ISSUE OF ONLINE VIOLATION AND DIGITAL HARM MORE SERIOUS. CHILDREN ARE NOW ONE OF THE LARGEST DEMOGRAPHIC USER GROUPS ON THE INTERNET, BUT THE LACK OF PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN ARE ALARMING. CHILDREN ARE ALSO FACING HARM BEFORE THEY HAVE THE TOOLS AND ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE, REPORT, AND RECUPERATE FROM THE HARM THAT THEY FACE.

ACCORDING TO UNICEF REPORTS, MANY CHILDREN HAVE FACED ONLINE HARM BELOW THE AGE OF TEN. THERE IS HARM IN THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN THAT CAN IMPACT MANY AREAS OF THEIR LIVES, AND THESE INJURED AREAS CAN BE VERY DETRIMENTAL TO CHILDREN. THE CHILDREN ABUSE AND NEGLECT THAT IS SERIOUS AND THE IMPACT OF THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT ON CHILDREN CAN BE VERY SERIOUS.

THE ABILITY TO USE TECHNOLOGY LIKE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, SPYWARE, AND ANONYMOUS MESSAGE PLATFORMS INCREASES THE ABILITY TO SECRETLY EXPLOIT AND ABUSE CHILDREN AND INCLUDE A DISPROPORTIONATE LEVEL OF EXPLODING A CHILD THAT CAN BE HIDDEN. CURRENT REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN DO NOT INCLUDE PROTECTIONS FOR CHILD.

WITHOUT INVOLVEMENT FROM THE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FROM THE USE TECHNOLOGY THAT ARE DESIGNED FOR CHILDREN, THE INJURIES TO THE CHILDREN ABUSE AND NEGLECT WILL DO MORE HARM FROM TECHNOLOGY. THE LACK OF INVOLVEMENT CONCERNING THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN THREATENS TO DO INJURY TO CHILDREN ALL OVER THE WORLD.

AGENDA 2



HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS; CURRENT RELEVANCE:

THE EARLIEST CONCERN GLOBALLY ABOUT THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN ON THE INTERNET IN THE EARLY 2000S WHEN THE INTERNET STARTED BECOMING WIDELY ACCESSIBLE. ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO REDUCE THE COLLECTION OF DATA AND ADDRESS THE ACCESSIBILITY OF SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIAL. ONE OF THE EARLIEST AND MOST COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL EFFORTS TO SHIELD CHILDREN FROM HAVING THEIR PRIVACY ABUSED ONLINE WAS THE CHILDREN'S ONLINE PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT (COPPA) IN THE USA.

ONCE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES DEVELOPED AND WERE BEING USED MORE WIDELY, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS BEGAN TO ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP STANDARD RESPONSES TO THE GROWING AND CHANGING CHALLENGES. UNICEF AND THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION (ITU) AND OTHER BODIES WITHIN THE UN CREATED THE FIRST DIGITAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS IN RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT CHILDREN WERE AND STILL ARE ACCESSING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AT A RATE THAT FAR EXCEEDS THE ORGANISATIONS ABILITY TO CREATE THE POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS.

OVER THE YEARS, MORE CHALLENGES HAVE EMERGED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, CYBERBULLYING, RADICALISATION, PREDATORY ADVERTISING, AND LIVE-STREAM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION. THE RAPID GROWTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, ONLINE GAMING AND INSTANT MESSAGING APPS WERE FOR A LONG TIME, AND IN MANY INSTANCES, STILL ARE, PRESENTED WITHOUT THE NECESSARY CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES.

IN THIS CURRENT CLIMATE, WHEN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS BEING INTEGRATED INTO MANY DIGITAL PLATFORMS, AND WITH THE INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF THE INTERNET IN IMPOVERISHED COUNTRIES, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS SEEKING TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES MORE URGENTLY THAN EVER.

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THE PROLIFERATION OF DIGITAL SERVICES AND THE DIFFERING SOCIAL, LEGAL AND ECONOMIC FRAMEWORKS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES CREATE AN ADDITIONAL LAYER OF COMPLEXITY TO THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE:

MANY INITIATIVES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PROTECT CHILDREN ONLINE. COPPA IS STILL ONE OF THE FIRST AND MOST CITED PIECES OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION ON CHILDREN'S DATA PRIVACY. UNICEF'S CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION FRAMEWORK ADVISES GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY ON BUILDING A SAFER DIGITAL WORLD.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING, AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ARE ALL PART OF THE ITU CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION INITIATIVE. THE WE PROTECT GLOBAL ALLIANCE MODEL NATIONAL RESPONSE DESCRIBES HOW COUNTRIES CAN ORGANIZE THEIR LEGAL, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS TO RESPOND TO ONLINE ABUSE.

IMPROVED COOPERATION BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES HAS LED TO THE ABILITY TO CONDUCT JOINT INVESTIGATIONS AND SHARE INFORMATION. HOWEVER, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE EFFORTS DIFFERS GREATLY BASED ON THE COUNTRY'S CAPACITY AND POLITICAL WILL.

SUCCESES:

DATA IS BEING USED IN WAYS NEVER BEFORE SEEN IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD. EVERY SECOND OF THE DAY DATA IS BEING USED ACROSS INDUSTRIES SUCH AS FINANCE, TRANSPORT, AND EVEN HEALTH CARE. IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, THESE INDUSTRIES AND TECHNOLOGY HAVE DEVELOPED RAPIDLY AND HAVE BECOME MORE AFFORDABLE AND MORE ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS.

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COMPANIES AND PEOPLE DERIVE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION IN REAL TIME, MORE EFFECTIVELY, AND MORE PRECISELY. TODAY, THE INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF DATA CAN AND IS USED TO ASSIST HUMANS IN MAKING BETTER, MORE RATIONAL DECISIONS, AS WELL AS HELPING TO FORECAST FUTURE EVENTS. IT IS UNEQUIVOCALLY THE DATA COLLECTION REGIME IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE PEOPLE ARE.

LIMITATIONS:

THE PROBLEMS THAT REMAIN ARE VERY SIGNIFICANT. THERE ARE LARGE GAPS IN ENFORCEMENT DUE TO THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN NATIONAL LAWS. THERE ARE ALSO MANY COUNTRIES THAT DO NOT HAVE THE TECHNICAL ABILITY TO REGULATE ONLINE SPACES OR TO PROSECUTE CRIMES THAT ARE ONLINE.

MANY GLOBAL DIGITAL PLATFORMS OPERATE WITH LITTLE TO NO REGULATION. THEY DO NOT CONSIDER CHILD SAFETY THE PROFIT DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT OF SUCH PLATFORMS IS PRIORITIZED. THE RAPID RATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY IS ALSO GOING TO CONTINUE TO LEAVE REGULATIONS EXTREMELY OUT OF DATE.

CHILDREN IN LOW RESOURCE SETTINGS HAVE EVEN MORE OF THESE PROBLEMS DUE TO THE LACK OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES, REPORTING SYSTEMS, DIGITAL LITERACY, AND EDUCATION. THE USE OF ANONYMOUS AND ENCRYPTION SYSTEMS CREATE PROBLEMS THAT COMPOUND THE DIFFICULTY OF DETECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS :

FOSTERING GLOBAL COLLABORATION IS VITAL. GOVERNMENTS NEED TO ADVANCE CROSS-BORDER CASEWORK, EVIDENTIARY COLLABORATION, AND AMALGAMATED REPORTING.

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DIGITAL SERVICES SHOULD FACE REQUIREMENTS FOR MORE VIGOROUS AGE CHECKS, MORE METICULOUS PRIVACY, AND MORE EFFICIENT PROCESSES FOR REMOVING CONTENT.

NATIONAL LAWS SHOULD BRING TO BEAR UNICEF AND ITU RECOMMENDATIONS TO CREATE MORE HARMONIZED SYSTEMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN. ADDITIONAL DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES CAN HELP CHILDREN, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS UNDERSTAND AND REACT TO ONLINE DANGERS.

TECHNOLOGY DESIGN SHOULD FOCUS ON CHILD SAFETY AND ETHICAL ALGORITHMS, PRIVACY BY DEFAULT, AND CHILD-APPROPRIATE DESIGN. IT IS CRUCIAL TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES THROUGH STRENGTHENED CAPACITY, TRAINING IN CYBERSECURITY, AND INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE.

ENHANCED REGULATION OF DATA CAN PROTECT CHILDREN. IT CAN ALSO PROVIDE A CHANGE IN THE ADVERTISING OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO A MORE PRINCIPLED AND LESS EXPLOITATIVE FORM. THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF REGULATION SHOULD BE THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND POSITION PAPERS:

1. DO YOU THINK AGE VERIFICATION SYSTEMS SHOULD BE PUT IN PLACE TO PREVENT CHILDREN FROM USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED TO HELP WITH PRIVACY?

2. HOW SHOULD INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS BE IMPROVED TO PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MADE ON THE INTERNET AND TO HELP TECH COMPANIES TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY?

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- 3. WHAT IMPACT DO AI AND THE DARK WEB HAVE ON THE DANGER OF PRACTICES LIKE ONLINE GROOMING, CYBER BULLYING, AND DISTRIBUTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL?**
- 4. HOW OLD SHOULD CHILDREN BE WHEN THEY START LOSING THE BENEFITS OF BEING CLASSIFIED AS A CHILD IN REGARD TO DIGITAL POLICY REGULATIONS, AND HOW SHOULD THIS DIFFER FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER?**
- 5. WHAT METHODS SHOULD BE USED TO EQUIP CHILDREN WITH THE DIGITAL LITERACY TO IDENTIFY, HIGH RISK ONLINE SCENARIOS, DANGEROUS PREDATORS, AND INAPPROPRIATE MATERIAL?**
- 6. WHAT MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN BY PARENTS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES TO ASSIST AND TRACK THE SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET BY CHILDREN WITHOUT ENCROACHING ON THEIR PRIVATE SPACE?**
- 7. HOW SHOULD COUNTRIES REACT WHEN THE OFFENDERS ARE MINORS, AND DO YOU THINK CURRENT NATIONAL LAWS ABOUT CYBER BULLYING AND IMAGE BASED ABUSE ARE SATISFACTORY?**
- 8. HOW CAN DATA FROM TECH COMPANIES, GOVERNMENTS AND UNICEF COLLABORATE TO IMPROVE THE SPEED OF IDENTIFYING AND ELIMINATING EXPLOITATIVE MATERIAL?**
- 9. IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS WITH LITTLE INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY, HOW CAN THE ALIGNMENT OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST WITH DIGITAL ABUSE BE IMPROVED ALONG WITH THE PROVISION OF DIGITAL SERVICES?**

AGENDA 2



REFERENCES AND SOURCES:

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WEPROTECT GLOBAL ALLIANCE. MODEL NATIONAL RESPONSE. WEPROTECT.ORG

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