



DELEGATE BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNICEF

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Topic 1: Recruitment of Children Into Armed Militias

Overview

Armed conflict and violence have devastated children and their communities for many years, particularly in regions affected by war and civil unrest. One of the most alarming and pervasive forms of violence against children in these circumstances is the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. This practice is a grave violation of children's rights and has serious, long-term consequences for their physical, mental, and emotional well-being in addition to possible immediate safety risks.

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, is deeply concerned about the recruitment of children into armed militias and has made it a priority to end this practice and protect children from its harmful effects. Children recruited into armed groups are often forced to participate in combat, carry weapons, and engage in other dangerous activities that put their lives at risk. They are also subjected to physical and sexual violence, exploitation, and other forms of abuse.

The recruitment of children groups has a devastating impact on their families, communities, and countries. Children recruited into armed conflict often experience trauma and other forms of psychological distress, which can impact their lives. They may also face physical harm, including injury and death, as well as social stigma and discrimination when they return home.

UNICEF is working to end the recruitment of children into armed conflict by supporting the development and implementation of national and international legal frameworks to prevent this practice. The organization also provides humanitarian assistance, education, and rehabilitation services to children affected by armed conflict.

UNICEF is also collaborating with governments, civil society organizations, and other partners to raise awareness about the dangers of child recruitment and to promote the protection of children from this practice. Through advocacy, UNICEF aims to mobilize the international community to take action to prevent the recruitment of children into armed conflict and to ensure that those who have been recruited receive the support they need to heal and rebuild their lives. The organization will continue

working with partners and the international community to promote children's rights and ensure their well-being and safety.

Reasons for Recruitment

1. Psychological Factors

- a. Children may be recruited as they are easier to manipulate compared to adults
- b. It is easier to recruit soldiers at younger ages due to the fact that they don't consider the risks and consequences of joining the military as much as adults do
- c. While adults may demand pay or increased wages for their service, children are easier to motivate with other factors such as honor or prestige and have less credibility and bargaining power

2. Social Factors

- a. Revenge may be a large factor in some cases where children see their family or friends killed by an opposing force, leading to them joining armed groups in order to seek revenge
- b. In regions where child soldiers are normalized, some children may be socialized to believe in the practice from a young age
- c. Due to poverty or a lack of education, children may seek to join armed militias in order to meet their basic needs or support their loved ones

3. Combat Effectiveness

- a. Children can be trained easily and cheaply in lower skilled jobs such as delivery of goods to the frontline
- b. Younger children have lower logistical costs including smaller food, clothing, and water needs
- c. Children are more unassuming to professional "national" forces, and are able to gather intelligence with relative ease

Areas of Interest

Child recruitment into armed militias is a global issue that continues to pose a significant threat to the well-being and rights of children. This practice is a violation of international law and has devastating consequences for the physical, mental, and emotional health of affected children. Despite efforts to

prevent child recruitment, this practice remains widespread in many regions of the world, including Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

In Africa, child recruitment is prevalent in countries such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan. In these countries, children are often recruited by armed groups and used in various roles, including soldiers, cooks, and porters. Frequently, they are forced to participate in combat and carry out other dangerous duties, subject to violence, exploitation, and abuse. The consequences of child recruitment in Africa are far-reaching and have a negative impact not only on the children themselves but also on their families and communities.

The Middle East is another region where child recruitment is a serious concern. In countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, which are affected by conflict and unrest, children are being recruited and used by various armed groups, including state armed forces, armed opposition groups, and non-state armed groups. Children in these countries are subjected to the same abuse and exploitation as children in Africa. The conflict in the Middle East has had a profound impact on the lives of children, and child recruitment is just one aspect of the harm that they are facing.

In Asia, child recruitment is also a serious issue in countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Similarly to Africa and the Middle East, children in Asia often suffer from violence, exploitation, and abuse. Unfortunately, many countries are unable to provide a safe environment for children to grow, and the issue of child recruitment into armed militias affects children globally, regardless of geographical location.

Preventing child recruitment requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. The first step is the development and implementation of legal frameworks that prohibit the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The international community, including the United Nations, has a role to play in promoting the development of such legal frameworks and ensuring their enforcement. In addition to legal frameworks, it is important to provide education and alternative livelihood opportunities to children and their families. By providing them with the skills and knowledge they

need to build a better future for themselves and their communities, we can reduce the risk of children being recruited.

In situations where immediate aid is unavailable, the United Nations seeks to provide humanitarian support. This may include medical treatment, housing, nourishment, etc.

In conclusion, child recruitment into armed militias is a serious and ongoing problem that affects children and their communities in many regions of the world. A comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is required to prevent child recruitment, including legal frameworks, education, alternative livelihoods, and support for affected children.

Past Actions

UNICEF has been actively working for many years to try and prevent children from being recruited into armed militias. One of the main methods that UNICEF uses in order to prevent the recruitment of children into armed militias is through community-based interventions. Interventions consist of providing education and vocational training to students, while also ensuring that children are able to grow up in a safe environment free of violence. By doing so, UNICEF removes many of the economic incentives for children to join armed militias and tries to cut the issue at its root.

Additionally, UNICEF actively monitors and reports on any cases of children being recruited into armed militias around the world. Once UNICEF identifies a case of child recruitment, it works to have the child released from the militia, helping to provide education and psychological assistance to the affected child.

To further protect children from recruitment, UNICEF advocates for the implementation of international standards, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, a UN protocol which attempts to prevent state militaries from recruiting children under the age of 18. These standards provide a framework for protecting children from recruitment and other forms of exploitation during armed conflicts. Although the protocol is signed and ratified by almost every country in the world, at least 14 countries still use children in some form of military service.

Within this committee, it is important to think about how to further use UNICEF's resources to prevent the recruitment of children into armed militias, while also building on the currently existing framework.

Conclusion

In conclusion, UNICEF aims to end the recruitment of children in armed forces around the world. Recruitment can lead to significant mental distress and physical injury. To asymmetric armies, the recruitment of children can provide advantages, making them important to militias and vital to protect. UNICEF has been actively working for many decades to prevent the proliferation of child soldiers through community based interventions, providing higher education to students, and removing economic incentives for children to join militias. Delegates must discuss the importance of removing child soldiers and how member states may do so.

Guiding Questions

1. What steps can UNICEF take in order to eliminate the recruitment of children into armed militias, taking into account the reasons for children joining militias?
2. How can UNICEF prevent children from being forcibly recruited into armed militias?
3. How can UNICEF incentivize or force countries to stop using child soldiers in their militaries? Is there a way to hold states accountable?
4. How should UNICEF approach the use of soldiers aged 16-17? Should they be treated as child soldiers?
5. By what means should UNICEF support existing child soldiers?

Further Reading

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

<https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/children-and-armed-conflict>

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/>

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/child-soldiers>

Topic 2: HIV and AIDS Infections Among Children and Adolescents

Overview

For every two minutes that passed in 2020, a child was infected with HIV. Around the world, nearly 2.8 million children are infected with HIV, with 88% of those infected living somewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although there exists a medication which can significantly decrease the severity of HIV and allow those infected to live long and healthy lives, this medication is not always available or affordable. Especially for those in developing countries with unstable or underfunded healthcare systems, access to this medication and the ability to treat a high volume of patients may be impaired.

Routes of Transmission

Although among adults, HIV is primarily transmitted through sexual activity, though this is not the only method of transmission. Vertical transmission occurs when the mother of the child transmits a virus that they are infected with to their child, and this can occur before, during, and after childbirth. HIV can also be transmitted among adolescents through unprotected sex, which can occur due to a lack of access to proper protection, or a lack of education regarding safe sex. Transmission is possible through a variety of bodily fluids including blood as well, especially in injected drugs and needle sharing. Generally, the virus goes into the infected individual's bloodstream through mucous membrane absorption (i.e. the vaginal and anal cavities, the tip of the penis).

Prevention of Vertical Transmission

In order to prevent vertical transmission from a mother to their child, mothers must have an undetectable viral load. Although this does not prevent the transmission of the disease from mother to child, the probability that HIV is transmitted during pregnancy is less than 1%. Unfortunately, many pregnant women may not have access to the medication required to maintain an undetectable viral load, creating a much higher risk that the disease is transmitted from mother to child. In addition, there is the risk of HIV being transmitted through breastfeeding as well, and if the mother is unable to continue using medication during that time, breastfeeding carries a high risk of transmitting the disease.

This is only for cases wherein the mother knows she has HIV. The number of individuals who are infected with HIV but are unaware can only be estimated, with some figures ranging from 10% in the United States of America to approximately 25% by the UNAIDS in 2017. Access to prevention, testing, and treatment are all essential.

In most developed countries, women affected by HIV are able to access medication in order to maintain an undetectable viral load, but this is not the case in many developing countries. Furthermore, more women in developed countries are able to access alternatives to breastfeeding such as baby formula, while those in developing countries may not be able to do so. Within the

committee, delegates must decide on the best solution to increase accessibility to medication and decrease the risk of vertical transmission from mother to child.

Prevention of Transmission Among Adolescents

Some steps that can be taken by governments in order to prevent transmission among adolescents include increasing sexual education (e.g. sexual education classes in schools). Many adolescents are unaware of the risks associated with unsafe sex, therefore increasing the risk that AIDS is spread among the population. Within Sub-Saharan Africa, although lack of condom use is common, neither the price of condoms nor the lack of their availability are cited as common reasons for the lack of condom use on the continent. Instead, a dislike of condoms as well as the belief that there is a low personal risk associated with not using condoms are the primary reasons listed. Governments can better solve these issues through targeted campaigns highlighting the risks associated with unprotected sex.

Adolescents also tend to be at risk for transmission through needle sharing when partaking in intravenously injected drugs.

HIV/AIDS Stigma

HIV/AIDS stigma is classified as discrimination against people who are infected with HIV. Some examples of how this can manifest include healthcare workers refusing to provide treatment to those infected with HIV or social isolation due to the fear of being infected. This can lead to those who suspect that they are infected with HIV not getting tested in fear of being socially isolated or shamed. Community or cultural beliefs may also contribute to this alienation. In addition, those who know that they have the disease may not share it with their sexual partners or their family, further increasing the risk that HIV is spread.

This stigma is a large factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS. If people who may be infected do not get tested and do not seek treatment until serious symptoms show, they risk spreading the disease to others. Removing this stigma may be one of the committee's top priorities, and delegates must work together to come up with a way to allow those infected with HIV to be able to safely seek treatment, without the risk of being ostracized within their community.

Past Actions

Since the late 2000s, UNICEF has supported PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS) initiatives in many countries, such as Iran and Indonesia to combat the issue of vertical transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child. These initiatives seek to facilitate access to antiretroviral medications for young women and expecting mothers.

Conclusion

HIV prevention has been a focal point of UNICEF and through asking countries to include sexual education, encouraging the use of condoms, and decreasing costs for HIV medications. Despite these efforts, HIV continues to be a critical issue, with 2.8 million children infected as of 2020. Removal of stigma surrounding AIDS patients is also vital, with patients suffering from the refusal of treatment by healthcare workers and alienation from friends and family members. UNICEF must both work to educate communities on the spread of HIV/AIDS, while also attempting to stop the spread of the virus, especially within children.

Guiding Questions

1. How can UNICEF work to increase international cooperation on the issue of HIV/AIDS?
2. How can UNICEF decrease the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS?
3. How can UNICEF help countries educate their citizens on the transmission of HIV/AIDS?
4. How can UNICEF increase accessibility to HIV/AIDS medication

Further Reading

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hiv-aids/symptoms-causes/syc-20373524>.

<https://www.unicef.org/hiv>

<https://www.childrenandaids.org/>