



UNESCO 2012 BACKGROUND GUIDE

2012



LETTER FROM THE DAIS

Dear Delegates,

Hello! We are thrilled to have you on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at the 2012 Massachusetts Institute of Technology Model United Nations Conference (MITMUNC). We look forward to your innovative thinking, creative compromises, and thorough resolutions.

This committee will be discussing the reactivation educational systems and the preservation of cultural diversity. These are both topics we found relevant to the modern world and believed would create for good debate in committee. It is our hope that these topics stimulate a lot of new ideas especially because there is so many different directions to approaching them.

Here's a little bit about me: I'm currently a freshman (2015) from the windy city of Chicago, majoring in Electrical Engineering. In my free time I make glass mosaics and hang out with friends. Prior to our conference I will be going to Korea for three weeks to teach Model UN to middle school students, and I look forward to using what I learn there as I chair for our committee!

And about Defne: I am a freshman at MIT, planning to study and double major in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science and Management Science. I'm originally from Turkey, and have organized and participated, specifically, in

model UNESCO conferences there. I love to travel - especially to MUN conferences around the globe – but also to smaller boutique villages in Europe!

As you prepare for MITMUNC here are a couple things to keep in mind. Be creative. These topics were chosen to give you an opportunity to think outside the box. Also remember that collaboration is a great way to create thorough resolutions, but can also lead to inconsistencies.

Finally, as my high school advisor would always tell me before conferences, “Have fun, and don’t forget to pack socks!”

Sincerely,

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Topic 1:**REACTIVATING
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS
IN POST-DISASTER
SITUATIONS****Background**

“UNESCO’s mission is to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.” (UNESCO.org). More specifically, UNESCO’s primary educational purpose is to guide the international community in educating all populations, building scholastic networks, and establishing knowledge sharing networks to accelerate progress on other UN goals.

Education is a fundamental building block for the creation of peace and security. Every year over 200 million people are affected by natural hazards. Developing countries, those whose educational systems are already fragile, are especially sensitive to these natural hazards. Tensions caused by issues ranging from unproductive crop yields to lack of opportunity and prejudice can all be alleviated through the teaching and application of information. Educating a community includes teaching its members more efficient ways to live their lives, teaching them skills that vary from sustainable development and farming practices to communicating with one

another. In the long term, a conflict’s impedance of education can leave lasting effects. Many children who leave school due to natural hazards or conflict never return. This is why maintaining educational systems in the face of natural hazards and conflict is vital.

UNESCO currently has three institutes highly relevant to this topic. First, the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) works to develop innovative curriculums, which improve practical skills. It is also responsible for the global dialogue on education. Second, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) aids countries in managing their educational systems. Third, the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA) works in Africa to enhance its educational system.

Past Action

Past actions include the Dakar Framework and the Hyogo Framework for Action. While the Dakar Framework addressed education, the Hyogo framework focused on disasters.

The Dakar Framework was adopted in the year 2000 to reaffirm UNESCO’s global commitment to education. Section II of the Framework specifically addresses education as a key to preventing conflict and building peace and stability. In clause 44, it states that a successful educational program requires well-nourished students, trained teachers, proper facilities and materials, a relevant curriculum, and a safe environment. In the Framework, Strategy

5 addresses educational systems which have been affected by conflict, natural hazards, or instability but does not directly state how to implement restored learning.

Clause 57 continues on this point but is also very vague. Clause 58 adds that schools should be respected as safe-zones during conflict. So, although the Dakar Framework highlights the need for educational systems to be restored after conflict or natural hazards, it did not outline any specific plan to accomplish this.

The Hyogo Framework for Action was based on the 1994 Yokohama Strategy for A Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action (“Yokohama Strategy”). Specifically, the Hyogo Framework was meant to fill the gaps left by the Yokohama Strategy. These gaps were found in legal organization, risk identification, knowledge management, risk reduction, and preparedness. Among its many clauses to improve identification and monitoring of risks, the Hyogo Protocol called for the development of risk maps to be updated periodically and disseminated. The protocol also called for the implementation of both a system of indicators of disaster risk and vulnerability and early warning systems, where warning systems are timely and understandable (such as those for earthquakes). It also called for disaster occurrence to be recorded and statistically analyzed. The Hyogo Framework was an important step in preventing the deactivation of educational systems because it comprehensively addressed the gaps in

preparing for natural hazards.

Present Situation

Conflict, both within countries and across borders, increases the percentage of the population without formal education and/or lowers the average number of years of formal education. Access to formal education was extremely limited in times of conflict in countries such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Uganda. In other countries containing stronger educational systems, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of the Congo, and Tajikistan, access to formal education continued, although obtaining higher levels of education was impeded.

The existence of conflict in a country also often correlates to gender gaps in education. In countries with conflict such as Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, the education of males suffered more than their female counterparts. However, in the majority of cases, the education of females declined more than their male counterparts, both in the percent receiving formal education and the extent of educational attainment. Countries having this disparity include Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Tajikistan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. This educational inequality in these countries also worked to reinforce or intensify existing social and economic disparities between men and women. In other countries, such as Afghanistan, Burundi, Guatemala, Iraq, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, there was little observable difference between the decline

of education of the males and females throughout times of conflict.

Wealth and conflict were also correlated to gaps in education. In most countries, the education of children from the richest homes was relatively unaffected while the poorest were most affected. In some countries, such as Burundi, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Somalia, this was reversed. This reversal is partially explained in the case of Cambodia, Rwanda, and Somalia by the active targeting of the educated classes during the period of conflict.

Conflict tends to affect specific regions more than others. This is not always true though. Specific educational trends were observed across the entirety of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Republic of the Congo, and Zimbabwe. In these areas, conflict, which can often be centered in the most urbanized areas of a country, often affects the education of those living in urbanized areas more than their rural counterparts.

This discrepancy between the decline in education of urban versus rural areas was seen most strongly in Chad and Somalia.

Even so, educational attainment in the urbanized areas of Chad and Somalia was better than that of the rural areas throughout the conflict in these areas.

Although it may appear that there is comprehensive knowledge on the impact of conflict on education that is simply not the case. The evidence presented here was primarily taken from *The quantitative impact of conflict on education*, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2010.

Though thorough, this report is only based on the minimal data known at that time. Current data collection on education varies from country to country and is often spotty in times of conflict and disaster.

Even less is known about the effects of natural hazards on educational systems. Vital information has not yet been collected on the subject, and though one can surmise that education systems falter in the face of natural hazards; at this time there is no comprehensive report which either accepts or rejects that claim. Lack of information is one reason why, at this time, there is no global strategy to help nations who have undergone sudden disaster helping them to reactivate their educational systems. Rather than a comprehensive effort, individual nations may seek to help another country restore its educational system. Often though, restoring education systems is not considered a priority and is not addressed.

Country Blocs

This issue is not one that causes regional divisions. Instead, it is a good idea to look into your country's current situation.

Many countries are directly analyzed in second source listed below, *The quantitative impact of conflict on education*. You are recommended to use *The World Factbook*¹

¹See:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>)

for background information that may be relevant to the topic.

Future

It is unrealistic to hope for an end to conflict and natural disasters. Instead, the best this committee can hope to do is to implement preventative, preparative, effective measures. With this in mind, consider the current situation in your country. What types of conflict and natural hazards are most relevant to your nation? What demographics' education, if any, is most effected by disaster and what can be done to improve this situation?

Sources

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TOPIC 2: PRESERVING ENDANGERED CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

Background

As humankind has spread out more and more over the planet, more cultures and languages have developed, with a current estimate of 6,000 languages on earth. However, with increased globalization comes the dying out of many of these cultures and languages as humanity moves more towards a unified way of communicating. UNESCO estimates that by the end of the century, half of the languages in the world will have disappeared.

How do you classify an endangered culture or language? While it may seem like numbers alone could help you determine whether or not a culture is endangered, a more dependable analysis is on the age spread of those who speak the language. Indonesia, for example, has approximately 2 million native speakers, but the majority of them are older, the language failing to be passed on to the younger generation.

Why is protecting endangered cultures and languages important? As shown in Figure 2 in the Appendix, half of the world doesn't speak one of the top 25 most common languages. As more cultures and languages die out, cultural diversity is lost, which not only results in a loss of

emotional and intellectual enrichment, but also in economic development. Sustainable development can be better achieved by the using the variety of ideas that are available by looking at different cultures. In addition, human history and the our capabilities can be defined by examining different cultures and languages, by mapping them out and finding connections across the seven continents. Cultural diversity aids in all aspects of human development.

UN Policies

The UN devoted a decade to what is known as the World Decade for Cultural Development from 1988-1998. The goal of the decade was to "[...] eradicate illiteracy, ensure broad participation in culture and emphasize the cultural dimension of development and the affirmation of the cultural identity of each nation." The result of this decade was the determination that how the UN views development itself should be rethought to better aid in achieving the goals stated.

The UN also began the International Decade on the World's Indigenous People, from 1994-2004. We are currently in the second International Decade on the World's Indigenous People, which began in 2004 and will last through 2014. Indigenous people make up approximately 350 million of the world's population, and speak approximately half of the 6,000 languages in existence. In promoting the rights of indigenous people, their cultures and languages can be better preserved within their community and without.

The 2003 International Forum on Local Cultural Expression and Communication addressed one feature of preserving cultural diversity, in preserving cultural expressions. The goal of this forum was to “map cultural landscapes knowledge systems with and by indigenous peoples.” Mapping cultural knowledge gives this knowledge a more tangible sense, and aids in non-indigenous peoples’ understanding of indigenous peoples’ culture.

As of early December 2011, 2474 languages are considered endangered.

What to Consider

UNESCO’s goal is to determine what the best course of action for preserving endangered cultures and languages is. Remember to keep in mind your country’s view on cultural diversity

Some questions to consider while you’re doing your research are:

- What are examples of endangered cultures/languages in my country?
- Is it more important to preserve some cultures over others?
- What causes the endangerment of these cultures, and how can we prevent/combat that?

References

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APPENDIX



Figure 1: Variety of languages worldwide

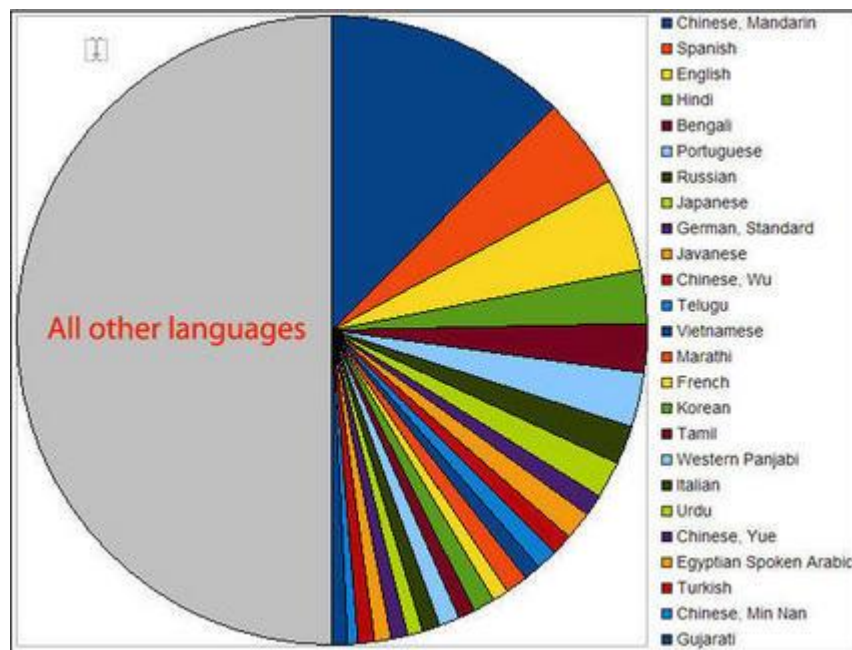


Figure 2: Distribution of spoken languages

