



# **UNICEF**

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S  
EMERGENCY FUND

## **AGENDA**

**Protecting children in crisis and  
conflict zones**

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

We feel privileged and honoured to welcome you all to the United Nations Children's Fund, CHIRECJMUN. We are looking forward to working with you all in ensuring a fruitful debate. This MUN aims at giving you a better and more thorough insight upon the working and functioning of UNICEF.

We hope this background guide will help enhance your research and help understand the agenda better. The Background Guide will provide you with the guiding topics for your external research and background research on your country. We urge all members of the committee to take the time to read the background guide and use it as a starting point for their research. We urge every delegate to come to the conference with an open mind, ready to meet and work with new people, and actively participate in the debate on the committee. Debate and argue solutions as well as problems and help form a thorough and effective resolution.

We strongly believe that with good research, the delegates will be able to steer the committee in the right direction. We will be hoping to see a lot of enthusiastic delegates debating a great passion. We hope to see some relevant solutions being discussed in committee, and also a lot of fun. Additionally, we hope to see a lot of discipline as well, regarding following the Rules of Procedure and adhering to foreign policy. We promise to make this a memorable and entertaining experience for each one of you. This topic will certainly be of challenge to your minds for it requires innovative solutions that need to address the cultural practices and notions, all the while focusing on reinstating political and economic stability in a foreign territory.

During your research, it is crucial for you to think outside the box for possible solutions that address every aspect of the issue.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Executive Board at any time prior to or during the conference in case you have any queries about the agenda or the rules of procedure. We are here to help you during the conference at all times. We request the delegates do not view this conference as a zero-sum game. Model UN conferences are collaborative in nature rather than competitive and we would like to keep this spirit alive during our committee. Also kindly note, this background guide is only a foundation for your research and cannot be used as a reference during committee, any decision made by the EB's discretion is final.

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# ABOUT UNICEF

UNICEF, which stands for the United Nations Children's Fund, is a global organization dedicated to protecting the rights and well-being of children. Its main mandate, established by the United Nations General Assembly, is to ensure that every child has the chance to grow up healthy, educated, and safe. UNICEF works in over 190 countries and focuses on meeting children's basic needs such as health care, nutrition, education, clean water, and sanitation. It provides immunizations, treats children and mothers affected by HIV, and supports programs that improve maternal and child nutrition.

In addition, UNICEF protects children from violence, abuse, and exploitation, including efforts to prevent child marriage and female genital mutilation. It also helps children who are refugees or living in emergency situations caused by conflicts or natural disasters by providing emergency relief and long-term support.

Gender equality and empowering girls and women are also central to UNICEF's work. The organization collaborates with governments, civil societies, and other partners to promote laws and policies that uphold children's rights globally. Put simply, UNICEF's mandate is all about giving every child, no matter where they live, the chance to survive, thrive, and reach their full potential.

The mandate of this committee will be explained during committee as required.

# PROTECTING CHILDREN IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT ZONES

Children are among the most vulnerable groups in times of instability, and the impacts of crises—whether caused by conflict, economic collapse, or natural disasters— are often most severe for them. According to UNICEF, more than one in six children globally live in areas affected by armed conflict, while millions more face the consequences of humanitarian crises such as displacement, pandemics, poverty and environmental disasters. These conditions not only threaten children's immediate safety and well-being but also endanger their long-term development, rights and futures.

This agenda seeks to address the impact of both, ***conflict-related and crisis-related threats*** to children, recognizing that while armed conflict exposes children to direct violence and often visible dangers, other crises—such as pandemics, economic collapses, and climate disasters—undermine children's survival, growth, and development both in the short and long term.

## **I. Types of crises affecting children**

### **1. Armed Conflict**

The United Nations recognizes countless conflicts throughout our world. More than one in six children globally now live in areas affected by conflict, forced to face unthinkable violations as the world experiences the highest number of conflicts since World War II. Armed conflicts expose children to some of the most severe human rights violations. In such contexts, children are not only caught in the crossfire but are also deliberately targeted.

To better monitor, prevent and end attacks against children, the United Nations Security Council has identified and condemned six grave violations: **the killing and maiming of children, their recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups, attacks on schools and hospitals, rape and other sexual violence, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access.**

It's crucial to note that **sexual violence** has increasingly become a disturbing feature of modern conflicts, often affecting both girls and boys. In some cases, it is used as a tactic to instill fear or force communities to flee. Such acts leave lasting emotional and physical scars on children, affecting their health, sense of safety and long-term well-being. **An often-overlooked aspect is the trauma faced by boys who may witness or be coerced into committing such acts**, leading to deep psychological harm that remains largely unaddressed.

Between 2005 and 2020 more than **104,100 children** have been verified as **killed or maimed** in situations of armed conflict; more than **93,000 children** have been verified as *recruited and used* by parties to conflict; at least **25,700 children** have been verified as *abducted* by parties to conflict; parties to conflict have **raped, forcibly married, sexually exploited**, and committed other grave forms of sexual violence against at least **14,200 children**.

More children than ever are estimated to be either living in conflict zones or forcibly displaced due to conflict and violence. A record number of children affected by conflict are having their rights violated, including being killed and injured, out of school, missing life-saving vaccines, and being critically malnourished. The number is only expected to grow. Conflict drives approximately **80 per cent** of all humanitarian needs around the world, disrupting access to essentials, including safe water, food and healthcare.

In such conditions, children often face some of the most severe consequences of war. These situations lead to direct violations of their fundamental rights, such as:

**a. Recruitment and use of child soldiers**

Thousands of children are recruited and used in armed conflicts across the world. Often referred to as “child soldiers,” these boys and girls experience multiple forms of exploitation and abuse that extend far beyond combat roles.

Often referred to as “child soldiers,” these boys and girls experience multiple forms of exploitation and abuse that extend far beyond combat roles. Armed groups and forces frequently use children as scouts, porters, cooks, messengers, guards, and in other supporting capacities, exposing them to severe physical and psychological harm. While living among armed actors, children experience unconscionable forms of violence. They may be required to participate in harrowing training or initiation ceremonies, to undergo hazardous labour or to engage in combat – **with great risk of death, chronic injury and disability.**

These boys and girls, some as young as seven, are recruited and used in countless conflicts around the world, including but not limited to the ongoing conflicts in **Yemen, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan.**

The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict violates international humanitarian and human rights law. The **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC)**, adopted in 2000, prohibits the use of children under 18 in hostilities. Furthermore, **UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005)** established a monitoring and reporting mechanism to document and address such violations.

### **b. Killing and maiming**

The killing and maiming of children occur through bombings, airstrikes, shelling, landmines, unexploded ordnance, and small arms fire, as well as through torture or targeted violence.

Beyond the battlefield, children are also killed or injured during attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and residential areas. Explosive weapons kill and injure thousands of civilians each year, during and after armed conflict. Children account for roughly half of the casualties from explosive ordnance.

These violations not only cause immediate physical harm but also long-term psychological trauma and disability, depriving children of access to education, healthcare, and a sense of safety. Many survivors face permanent disabilities, stigmatization and limited opportunities for rehabilitation and social reintegration.

### c. **Abduction**

Abduction of children refers to the unlawful removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, or enforced disappearance of a child either temporarily or permanently. Whether it's an intentional act of violence or retaliation, to instill fear among populations, or to forcibly recruit and/or sexually abuse children, abduction is one of the most pervasive violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

Boys have accounted for around three quarters of verified instances of abducted children. However, girls remain at risk of being abducted, including for the purpose of sexual violence and exploitation.

## **2. Other Humanitarian Crises**

Beyond conflict, children are affected by economic crises, climate and environmental disasters, and public health emergencies. Economic crises limit access to food, healthcare, and education while increasing child labor, exploitation and early marriage. Natural disasters caused by climate changes, floods, tsunamis, and droughts, for example, not only cause immediate dangers such as injuries and forced evacuation, but also, indirectly, they will lead to shortage of food and clean water, school drop-out, illness and long-term psychological pressure.

Studying both crisis and conflict zones under this agenda is crucial because children's vulnerabilities extend far beyond active combat situations.

### **a. Economic crises**

An **economic crisis** is a situation in which a country or region experiences a sudden and severe downturn in economic activity, often characterized by high unemployment, inflation and reduced government revenue.

Children are especially at danger in these circumstances since economic instability raises the possibility of child labor, exploitation, and early marriage while restricting access to sufficient food, healthcare, and education. Children may have to drop out of school if their families are unable to provide for their basic necessities, which could result in long-term developmental setbacks and missed opportunities. Children's health may be further endangered if financially strapped healthcare systems are unable to treat avoidable illnesses or administer vaccinations.

### **b. Climate and Environment Crisis**

Across the world, climate change and environmental degradation are threatening child survival, health and well-being. Floods, hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, and droughts have caused children to get **hurt physically, to die, to be displaced, to lose their parents and caregivers, and to go through the immediate destruction of their houses, schools, and hospitals.**

Indirect effects include disrupted access to essential services, shortages of food and water, malnutrition, disease, interrupted education, and psychological trauma, all of which can have long-term developmental consequences for children affected by the disaster.

For example, the **2019 Cyclone Idai** in Mozambique, at least **1.6 million children** were in need of urgent assistance – **in healthcare, nutrition, protection, education, water and sanitation**. In addition, a significant number of the children were out of school, either because schools had been destroyed, or were being used as shelter for internally displaced persons. One of the major threats was the growing number of cases of **cholera, malaria, and diarrhea**, along with respiratory infections, due to poor living conditions and lack of adequate sanitation facilities where affected people are taking shelter.

## **Recent Progressions**

### **Gaza (Palestine):**

The situation for children in Gaza remains extremely dangerous and unstable. Even though a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas began on 10 October 2025, living conditions are still very harsh. Many children are living in crowded tent camps after losing their homes. Access to clean water, food, and medicine is still very limited, and hospitals are struggling to treat the wounded. Schools remain closed or destroyed, leaving millions of children without a safe place to learn or play.

In the past 10 days, aid deliveries have increased slightly, and some cooking gas has entered Gaza, but the truce is fragile. On 19 October, air-strikes resumed after alleged violations of the cease-fire, causing new civilian deaths, including children. Many roads and infrastructure remain damaged, making it hard for aid to reach families. Even during the cease-fire, children are living in fear, hunger, and unsafe conditions.

## **Syria:**

The situation for children in Syria is still very serious. More than 7.6 million children need daily help to survive. This year, fighting in parts of the northwest has gotten worse again, forcing families to flee their homes. Many children are living in overcrowded camps without enough clean water, food, or medicine. Nearly 2.1 million children are not going to school because many school buildings were destroyed, damaged, or turned into shelters. Hidden explosives left from the war still make it dangerous to walk to school or play outside. Even in calmer areas, destroyed water systems and hospitals make daily life unsafe for children.

## **Yemen:**

Yemen's long war has created one of the worst humanitarian crises for children in the world. Over 17 million people – including millions of children – don't have enough food. Recent clashes in the south have made aid delivery harder, and the water system is breaking down in several governorates. More than 1.3 million children under the age of five are suffering from severe malnutrition, and hospitals are struggling to treat them. Many schools remain damaged, and some are still being used as shelters for displaced families. Cholera and other water-borne diseases are spreading again, putting more children's lives at risk.

## **Ukraine:**

The war in Ukraine has entered its fourth year, and the effects on children remain devastating. Heavy shelling continues along the eastern and southern frontlines, and missile strikes in major cities earlier this month damaged more schools and hospitals. Over 2,600 children have been killed or injured since the war began. Many families have had to move repeatedly to stay safe, leaving children without stable access to school or healthcare. Winter is approaching, and millions of children face cold weather without proper heating, safe water, or enough food. Many are also dealing with trauma from years of violence.

## **Sri Lanka:**

Sri Lanka is not in an active war, but its economic crisis continues to seriously affect children. Food and fuel prices remain high, and nearly half of children under five show signs of malnutrition. Power cuts and supply shortages have made it harder for hospitals and schools to run normally. Many schools have reduced hours or canceled programs because they can't afford resources. More families are skipping meals, and children are dropping out of school to help their parents earn money. Though aid programs are active, the economic pressure on families is not improving quickly.

## **Case Study 1: Yemen**

Yemen's humanitarian crisis has stretched on for more than a decade, making it one of the longest-running emergencies in the world. The conflict between the internationally recognized government and Houthi rebels, along with regional involvement, has devastated the country's infrastructure and economy. As of 2025, more than two-thirds of the population relies on humanitarian aid just to survive.

### **Impact on Children:**

Yemen's children face multiple overlapping dangers — hunger, disease, displacement, and lack of education. Over 1.3 million children under five are suffering from severe malnutrition. Clean water is hard to find, and the water systems in many governorates are on the brink of total collapse. Cholera outbreaks continue to reappear, affecting children the hardest. Schools are damaged or occupied by displaced families, leaving millions of children without access to education or safe spaces. Many children are also at risk of recruitment by armed groups or being caught in crossfire.

## **Response Efforts:**

Several international organizations — including UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO) — have been working in Yemen for years. Aid operations have focused on emergency food distribution, clean water supply, vaccination campaigns, and mobile clinics. Some cash transfer programs were launched to help families buy basic goods, and a few temporary learning centers were built to give children access to education even in unstable areas. There have also been multiple attempts to reach cease-fire agreements. The 2022 truce saw a significant drop in violence and allowed more aid to flow into the country, but it broke down months later. More recent local agreements have helped reduce fighting in certain areas but have not resolved the larger political conflict.

## **Limitations and Challenges:**

Despite years of aid, the crisis remains severe because most solutions only address **immediate needs** — food, water, and medicine — not the **root causes** of the conflict.

Aid groups face major access restrictions, damaged roads, and political blockages. Funds for humanitarian operations have also been cut in the past two years, forcing agencies to scale back programs. As a result, while short-term relief has reached some communities, long-term recovery has barely begun. For Yemen's children, this means life has not meaningfully improved despite the aid.

### **Case Study 2: Ukraine**

The war in Ukraine began in early 2022 and has continued into its fourth year. The conflict has caused large-scale destruction, especially in the east and south of the country. Cities like Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Donetsk have faced repeated shelling, damaging schools, hospitals, power stations, and homes. Millions of people have been forced to flee, either to other parts of Ukraine or to other countries.

## **Impact on Children:**

Children in Ukraine face daily risks from missile strikes, artillery fire, and unstable living conditions. Many have experienced trauma from losing family members or being forced to relocate multiple times. Over 2,600 children have been killed or injured since the war began, and millions more have had their education disrupted. Many schools have either been destroyed or moved underground for safety. Power shortages, lack of heating in winter, and damaged infrastructure make daily life especially harsh for families with young children.

## **Response Efforts:**

Unlike Yemen, Ukraine has seen **large-scale and well-coordinated international response efforts**. The government, along with the UN, the EU, and major NGOs, has set up extensive support systems. Temporary learning spaces and online education platforms have been created to keep children in school even during attacks. Mental health programs and counseling services have been expanded to help children deal with trauma. Aid convoys are regularly sent into frontline areas with food, medicine, and water purification kits.

European countries have also taken in millions of Ukrainian refugees, offering them education and healthcare access. This external support has reduced some of the worst impacts of the war, even though many children remain in dangerous conditions inside Ukraine.

### **Limitations and Challenges:**

Despite strong international support, the scale of the conflict makes it hard to protect every child. Aid deliveries to frontline zones often face delays or get cut off during active fighting. Many children are still out of school or living in unstable conditions. Psychological trauma is widespread, and rebuilding damaged infrastructure takes time. However, the **combination of government coordination and international assistance** has prevented the crisis from becoming as catastrophic as in places like Yemen.

## Case Study 3: Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's crisis may not come from bombs or frontlines, but it has created a serious humanitarian emergency for children. Since 2022, the country has faced one of its worst economic downturns in history. A mix of heavy debt, foreign currency shortages, and political instability pushed the country into a deep recession. Although some progress has been made since the peak of the crisis, as of October 2025, the **economic recovery remains slow** — and children are still facing the consequences every day.

### **Impact on Children:**

The crisis has made it difficult for families to afford even basic necessities like food, clean water, healthcare, and education. Inflation and currency depreciation caused food prices to skyrocket, and child malnutrition rates jumped sharply — with around 43% of children under five facing some form of malnutrition. Many children come to school hungry or drop out entirely to help their families earn money.

Hospitals have struggled to stock essential medicines, vaccines, and equipment. Shortages in fuel and electricity have affected transport to schools and clinics, leaving children without consistent access to learning and healthcare. Rural communities are particularly affected, with many children missing vaccines, suffering from preventable diseases, and lacking adequate nutrition. Unlike in war zones, the threat here isn't immediate violence – it's the **slow erosion of their future.**

### **Response Efforts:**

Sri Lanka's government has worked with international partners like UNICEF, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme to stabilize basic services. One major focus has been **school meal programs**, which provide nutritious food to millions of children to fight rising hunger. The government also launched a targeted cash transfer program for low-income households to help families meet basic needs like food and medicine.

UNICEF has expanded nutrition interventions, providing fortified foods, micronutrient supplements, and maternal health services to pregnant women and children. Several vaccination campaigns were restarted after being disrupted during the worst months of the crisis.

### **Limitations and Challenges:**

Despite these efforts, recovery is uneven. Economic reforms have helped stabilize inflation but haven't fully restored household incomes. Rural and low-income families continue to face high food insecurity. Malnutrition rates remain stubbornly high, and many schools lack resources to properly support children. Cash transfers and aid programs have reached some families but often fall short of covering rising costs.

In addition, climate shocks like floods and droughts have made the situation worse in farming regions, threatening both livelihoods and food supplies. So while Sri Lanka is not a conflict zone, **the humanitarian impact on children is still deep and long-lasting.**

Many children are growing up with limited access to nutrition, healthcare, and education – problems that could shape their entire futures if not addressed effectively.

## **REFERENCE MATERIALS**

Kindly use the link below as a **foundation** for your research.

UNICEF – Child Protection in Emergencies:

United Nations Office on Violence Against Children:

Save the Children – Children in Conflict Zones:

UNHCR – Protecting Refugee Children

Geneva Conventions and Child Protection Protocols

## **GLOSSARY**

1. Armed Conflict- An armed conflict is said to exist when there is an armed confrontation between the armed forces of States (international armed conflict), or between governmental authorities and organised armed groups or between such groups within a State (non-international armed conflict). Other situations of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions are **not considered to be armed conflicts.**

2. Sexual violence- Sexual violence is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by **any person** regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.
3. Humanitarian Crisis - A humanitarian crisis is defined as any circumstance where humanitarian needs are sufficiently large and complex to require significant external assistance and resources.
4. Climate and Environment Crisis- Climate and Environment Crisis is defined as the interlinked threats of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, which pose an urgent danger to ecosystems and human well-being.

## **Closing Remarks**

The Executive Board assures a productive, enjoyable and cheerful environment, given that delegates adhere to committee guidelines and reciprocate the respect they expect. We look forward to seeing delegates come prepared with adequate research as well as the mindset to learn more! Kindly use this document as a reference for your own research and do not hesitate from reaching out to any of the EB members prior to the conference if you face any issues.

Good luck with the rest of your research !