

United Nations International Children's Fund:
Children and Armed Conflict



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Contents

United Nations International Children’s Fund: Children and Armed Conflict	1
I. Letter from Your Chair	3
II. Letter from Your Co-Chair	4
III. Introduction to The UNICEF	5
IX. Introduction to the Topic	6
IX. History of the Topic	7
XI. Present Situation	8
XII. Critical Questions	9
XII. Positions	10
XIII. Bibliography	11

I. Letter from Your Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Patrick Reed, and I am honored to serve as your chair, and welcome you to BC High's 33rd Model UN Conference! On behalf of the entire BC High community, I would like to thank you for expressing interest in the rights and dignity of young people around the world and your willingness to work toward a resolution.

I began Model UN four years ago as a 7th grader, and have been fascinated with international relations and social justice ever since. Outside of Model UN, I am an active member of BC High's Mock Trial team and a leader in our Youth and Government delegation. Additionally, I am passionate about writing and politics, and I am a black belt in Uechi-Ryu Karate. Model UN has connected me with countless like-minded people from across the state, granting me with great opportunities. I am very proud to be able to foster an environment of collaboration and learning for you all, and am excited to see you all work together to create change.

As the events of this committee are deeply connected to active conflicts, some aspects of this background guide may be outdated by the time of the conference! Please be prepared for a relevant debate, and actively research the topic. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to my email that is linked below. I look forward to reading your position papers, and seeing you all in March!

All the best,

Patrick Reed '27

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II. Letter from Your Co-Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Nolan Seebeck, I am a senior at BC High (class of 2025). I am incredibly excited to welcome all of the esteemed delegates to our committee on the Children's Fund: Children and Armed Conflict. I can assure you we have spent a lot of time making it the best experience for all of you. Last year I had the opportunity to chair and this year will be my third time serving as a Co-Chair at BC High MUN. In terms of my Model UN experience, I have been involved in Model UN for four years and competed at UCLA and NAIMUN in D.C. Outside of Model UN, I play club soccer, and participate in theater and I work as Surf camp counselor in the summers.

I joined Model UN because I love discussing global issues. Something about taking a stance and working strategically with others in order to come to the best possible solution is an amazing experience. However, what I truly enjoy most about Model UN is the people that I have met at different conferences. I have become friends with some of the coolest people through MUN and I urge you to reach out to each other when you step onto BC High's Campus.

Lastly, I am so excited to be your Co-Chair and am incredibly interested to see where you guys take such a unique committee. I wish you the best of luck in your preparations and look forward to seeing all of you. If you have any questions, reach out to me or Patrick and we will be glad to help!

Best,

Nolan Seebeck '25 Committee Co-Chair

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III. Introduction to The UNICEF



The United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is one of the UN’s oldest bodies. It was formed in the wake of WWII, to provide emergency relief to children and their mothers. It became a permanent body of the UN in 1953, when its mandate was

extended to addressing the needs of all children and women. Today, the organization is one of the most widely recognized welfare organizations. It is operating in 192 of the world's nations and territories, and consistently works to indiscriminately aid those in need of help and advocacy. people. The fund sustains itself entirely based on private donations and voluntary contributions; this past year, the fund made 8.4 billion dollars. 36 government representatives, elected the UN ECOSOC council, oversee and guide the organization. To this day, the policies and works of UNICEF ensure the safety, health, and education of countless youths, striving for a world in which self-actualization is possible.

IX. Introduction to the Topic

The United Nations recognizes countless conflicts throughout our world. In almost all of these conflicts, children are directly and indirectly involved. The UN defines a child in armed conflict as “any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes.” These children are forced into conflict for a variety of reasons, varying from kidnapping, to debt bondage, to communal protection. The UN records 55 parties wherein children as young as 8 years old are forced into conflict zones. These children take on a variety of roles, such as cooks, combatants, and spies. Many modern terrorist organizations have weaponized the vulnerabilities of young people, using them as hostages and suicide bombers. This modern phenomenon is just one of the horrors which young people, in conflict, are exposed to. Regardless of a child’s place in an armed conflict, they will doubtlessly be exposed to, witness of, or become a participant to violence. These horrors are magnified for young women, who oftentimes become victims of rape, slavery, and pregnancy. For children of all genders, who survive their time in conflict, reintegrating into society is incredibly difficult, as they face PTSD and great stigma.





IX. History of the Topic

Children have been involved in armed conflict since antiquity. For the purposes of this committee, we will focus on the experiences of child soldiers from WWII onward. During that time, it was not uncommon to see children engaging in war. They were indoctrinated into the ideologies of their nation, quickly trained, and sent off to fight. Many of these children were never able to return home. A prominent example of this is the German SS Panzer division, which was almost entirely made up of children under the age of 18, recruited from the Hitler Youth Brigade. The brigade was deeply protective of their ideology, and willing to die for their nation;

60% of them died during the battle of the Normandy beaches. Within the countries involved in WWII, children received no legal protection, leaving them vulnerable to exploitative governments and trauma. Following the war, UNICEF developed a definition for a “child”. Although this may seem minor, it has led to the protection of thousands of children. Oftentimes, nations which do not recognize this definition end up exploiting children for the sake of war.

Beyond this conflict, children can be found on the battlegrounds of almost all major conflicts of the 20th century. This is only amplified when looking at international political movements, civil wars, and extremist groups. Examples of such conflicts and groups include the Cambodian Civil War, Hezbollah, Uganda’s LRA, and Algerian Civil War. But, the involvement of children in conflict is not limited to the past. It is a constant in modern warfare and is only complicated by an increase in terrorism.

XI. Present Situation



With the advent of the 21st century, children's involvement in armed conflict continues to shift and evolve. In the year 2000, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) was signed by numerous nations. The act helps to ensure that

nations refrain from recruiting children into their armies, creating a global shift towards recruitment from 18 onward. While this has been largely effective, children continue to be recruited to armed forces, and affected by conflicts in various ways.

By the numbers, 46 countries recruit youth under the age of 18 for their forces. An unknown number of countries recruit children who are younger than 15 years old. Those numbers are only in reference to state organizations; typically, children are recruited and impacted more greatly by non-state military organizations. These groups are often unwilling to agree to international accords and agreements, prioritizing their individual agendas over the safety and inalienable rights of youth. As many of our modern-day conflicts involve insurgent and radical groups, it is essential that they are considered throughout the committee. Historically, some groups have been willing to do so. Approximately 60 groups have signed agreements

toward the end of the involvement of children in conflicts, or recruiting them. As wars and conflicts continue to wage on, it is essential that we work towards protecting our youth.

XII. Questions to Consider

- 1. What specific legal frameworks can be implemented or strengthened to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers?**
- 2. What role can UNICEF play in ensuring member states comply with child protection treaties and conventions?**
- 3. What programs can be developed to reintegrate former child soldiers into society, and how can they be scaled globally?**
- 4. How can education systems and government in conflict-affected areas be supported to protect and provide for at-risk children?**
- 5. What steps can be taken to ensure that solutions are inclusive of gender-specific needs, such as addressing the unique challenges faced by girl child soldiers?**

XII. Positions

1. Presently Involved Countries

- a. Central African Republic
- b. Democratic Republic of The Congo
- c. Somalia
- d. Palestine
- e. Syria
- f. Yemen
- g. Afghanistan
- h. Myanmar
- i. Mali
- j. Venezuela

2. Formerly Involved Countries

- a. The Philippines
- b. Sierra Leone
- c. Colombia
- d. Cambodia
- e. El Salvador
- f. Russia
- g. Rwanda
- h. Chad
- i. South Sudan
- j. Sudan

3. Important Members of UNICEF

- a. Canada
- b. USA
- c. Germany
- d. United Kingdom

- e. China
- f. Japan
- g. Republic of Korea
- h. India
- i. Spain
- j. France

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