



Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2014 Montessori Model United Nations Conference.

The following pages intend to guide you in the research of the topics that will be debated at MMUN 2014 in committee sessions. Please note this guide only provides the basis for your investigation. It is your responsibility to find as much information necessary on the topics and how they relate to the country you represent. Such information should help you write your Position Paper, where you need to cite the references in the text and finally list all references in the Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

The more information and understanding you acquire on the two topics, the more you will be able to influence the Resolution writing process through debates [formal and informal caucuses], and the MMUN experience as a whole. Please feel free to contact us if and when you face challenges in your research or formatting your Position Papers.

We encourage you to learn all you can about your topics first and then study your country with regard to the two selected topics. Please remember that both committee members need to be well versed and ready to debate both topics.

Enjoy researching and writing your Position Papers.

We look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

MMUN Secretariat Team
info@montessori-mun.org



United Nations Environment Programme

UNEP, established in 1972, is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. To accomplish this, UNEP works with a wide range of partners, including United Nations entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society.

UNEP work encompasses:

- Assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends
- Developing international and national environmental instruments
- Strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment
- Facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology for sustainable development
- Encouraging new partnerships and mind-sets within civil society and the private sector.

UNEP's global and cross-sectoral outlook is reflected in its organizational structure, its activities and its personnel. Being based in Africa gives UNEP a clear advantage in understanding the environmental issues facing the world's developing countries.

Source: <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=43&ArticleID=3301&l=en>

Access to Sanitation

Topic Background



The World Health Organization (WHO) broadly defines sanitation as, “the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and feces.”ⁱ Nevertheless, the reality of today is that approximately 40% of the world’s inhabitants live without access to proper waste-disposal facilities.ⁱⁱ Often taken for granted in developed states, basic (or “improved”) sanitation is sorely lacking in their other areas of the world. Even when met, however, this standard may only consist of access to a pit latrine with a rudimentary covering.

Regions of the globe that are experiencing the most pressing sanitary crises include sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, although not for exactly the same reasons. The former suffers from a more serious lack of improved facilities but has been successful in reducing the practice of open-defecation. On the other hand, Southern Asia enjoys a higher (though still unsatisfactory) rate of access to basic sanitary resources but has not been able to sufficiently diminish the practice of open-defecation. The reasons these problems still persist today include overpopulation combined with a lack of technical and education infrastructure. Too many times, a state is simply not equipped with enough funds (or misuses its existing resources) to install proper facilities. Furthermore, the affected communities have not been properly advised about correct sanitary practices. In other cases, a state’s metropolitan centers will receive the most infrastructural attention while rural communities, though not overpopulated, do not receive adequate consideration. This may be due to the difficulty of transporting equipment to these areas or even willful oversight.ⁱⁱⁱ

Certain organizations such as the Better Life Association for Comprehensive Development (BLACD) have been instrumental in developing a “gender-integrated approach” to the issue of sanitation. The Egyptian village of Nazlet Fargallah had been suffering from an extreme lack of potable water and waste disposal systems. Once BLACD was contacted, the organization installed a neighborhood plumbing system, built household-level latrines, and educated the village on not only proper sanitary techniques, but also on the key role women play in the process. This village, like countless others, saw a sharp increase in the average standard of living.^{iv}

Before the advent of modern transportation, disease was relatively easy to weather. Even when automobiles, steamships, and airplanes came about, diseases could not wreak as much havoc as they can today. Now poor sanitation can not only spread disease on a massive scale, but it can also disrupt international trade.^v It is important to note that human migration will often lead to severely unsanitary conditions in certain areas. Refugee camps are historically overpopulated and underfunded, leading to massive disease outbreaks. In fact, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about half of refugee camps are not equipped to provide sufficient water per capita. The situation only worsens for internally displaced persons (IDPs) since there is no fundamental treaty guiding their treatment, even though the UN has indicated that they are equally entitled to proper sanitation.^{vi}



One additional obstacle to the improvement of sanitation is the current legal framework (and in some cases, the lack thereof) surrounding water rights. Water is a crucial element of proper hygiene, which is why its scarcity may spell disaster. Though direct access to sources of water may not be an issue in some regions, in others it is a hotly contested issue. International tensions have risen among states such as Egypt and Sudan, conduits of the Nile River, as well as countries including Israel, Palestine, and Syria, which lie above the same subterranean aquifers. When one nation (usually the most diplomatically and materially powerful) asserts its claims, the populations of the others tend to suffer. Though various treaties govern these issues, their interpretation and implementation often become difficult tasks.^{vii}

Legal issues arise on the domestic level as well. In many situations, large corporations, agricultural centers, or even governments will take advantage of water supplies at the expense of individual citizens. Either they will have physical or legal control of these supplies or they will use diverse methods of legal and/or economic coercion to draw up contracts (signed by the private individuals or small businesses) that effectively relinquish their access to these resources. In most instances, the contracts will not favor the private citizen and might even require that any dispute be resolved by arbitration.^{viii} Depending on the contract, this might mean the private individuals will not have a say in where, when, or for what they may sue (or bring criminal charges against) the corporation. Ultimately, the most affected tend to be women, children, and the otherwise marginalized members of society.

Past Actions

The international community considers access to sanitation and water a human right. It is recognized in several international treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.^{ix} However, there is no international convention that only addresses sanitation and water rights.

To promote and protect this right, the United Nations is helping countries around the world improve access to sanitation and water. One of the most important UN efforts is the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight goals that are intended to lift the world's poor out of poverty. Goal #7 is to "Ensure Environmental Sustainability," specifically by cutting half the "proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation."^x

In addition to the UN, the World Health Organization (WHO) has made tremendous strides in their efforts to reduce disease and increase water access. It has worked with governments and non-governmental organizations implement various sanitation programs and provide clean drinking water worldwide.^{xi}

Non-governmental organizations also play a huge role in improving access to sanitation and clean water. One notable NGO is Charity: Water, which has undertaken over 9,000 projects in 20 countries to provide safe cleaning and drinking water. Charity: Water has also developed eight water purification systems that drastically improve sanitation.^{xii}

Possible Solutions

It is this committee's job to design creative approaches to tackle this pressing issue. In doing so, delegates should take into account the following main sub-topics:



- **Waste Disposal:** As previously mentioned, the proper containment and disposal of human feces is of vital importance in the fight to improve sanitation and eradicate disease. Delegates should be prepared to present ideas on how to expand the production of adequate waste disposal systems and/or implement new technologies. The method of transport used should also be a key discussion topic. In addition to this, ways of educating diverse communities while acknowledging cultural sensitivities should be thoroughly visited during committee.
- **Water Access:** Without water, there can be no sanitation (at least not on a large scale). With that said, delegates should keep in mind the international and domestic challenges to providing free water access to individuals. Both legal and practical measures aimed at achieving this should be evaluated in committee.
- **Legal Options:** An added hurdle in the fight to improve sanitation is the existing international legal framework that surrounds sanitation rights and access to water. The committee should make sure to focus a significant portion of debate on whether further treaties detailing these human rights are necessary. If so, how these rights are framed will be an important discussion topic. Further topics of debate should include unfair contracts struck between governments/conglomerates and private individuals as well as the status of IDPs versus that of refugees, with emphasis on how this distinction affects access to sanitation.

With these areas of discussion in mind, the delegates should be prepared to deal with this increasingly central issue. Though it may seem unlikely, lack of proper sanitation in just one state may have the potential to cause a global crisis in countless others. The prevention of such a crisis is of paramount importance to the United Nations. Though it may seem like a difficult task, this committee might be the most equipped body to attack the problem.

Further Research



Guiding Questions

- What are the main obstacles impeding the increased access to sanitation?
- What has your country done to solve this issue?
- How might existing or entirely new international organizations play a part in this process?

Research Sources

- Water for Life Decade: <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/index.shtml>
- Charity Water: <http://www.charitywater.org/>
- WHO: <http://www.who.int/en/>
- UN Treaty Collection: <http://treaties.un.org/>
- Water Treaties (FAO): <http://faolex.fao.org/watertreaties/>
- International Resource Center WASH Library: <http://www.washdoc.info/docsearch/results?lmt=20&txt=access+to+sanitation>
- Refugees vs. IDPs: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/protected-persons/refugees-displaced-persons/index.jsp>

ⁱ "Sanitation." *WHO.int*. World Health Organization, 2013. Web. 14 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.who.int/topics/sanitation/en/>>.

ⁱⁱ United Nations. "Access to Sanitation." *Water for Life Decade*. United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, 2013. Web. 14 Aug. 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Velleman, Yael, and Slaymaker, Tom. *The Sanitation Problem: What Can and Should the Health Sector Do?* Rep. N.p.: WaterAid, 2011. <http://www.wateraid.org/~media/Publications/the_sanitation_problem_what_can_and_should_the_health_sector_do_3.ashx>

^{iv} Mayanja, Rachel. *Gender, Water, and Sanitation Case Studies on Best Practice*. Rep. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2006. Pg. 13. Web. 6 Sept. 2013. <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/water/casestudies_bestpractices.pdf>.

^v Water Aid Ghana, comp. *Abandoning Open Defecation*. Issue brief. N.p.: European Union.

^{vi} UNHCR. "Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)." *UNHCR News*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 17 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cef.html>>.

^{vii} Watkins, Kevin. *Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*. Rep. New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.

^{viii} For more on arbitration: "International Commercial Arbitration." *ASIL.com*. American Society of International Law, 27 July 2013. Web. 14 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.asil.org/erg/?page=arb>>.

^{ix} O'Hanlon, Lucinda. "UN United to Make the Right to Water and Sanitation Legally Binding." *OHCHR.org*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1 Oct. 2010. Web. 14 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10403&LangID=E>>.

^x <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/environ.shtml>

^{xi} <http://www.who.int/topics/sanitation/en/>

^{xii} <http://www.charitywater.org/>