



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

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The UN Refugee Agency

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people.

In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. Today, a staff of some 7,685 people in more than 125 countries continues to help some 33.9 million persons.

Source: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c2.html>

Refugee Children

Topic Background



Refugees are individuals who have been forced out of their homes and their countries due to conflict or natural disasters. Refugees are vulnerable and face challenges to their personal security, livelihood, and health – but the children of refugees are especially vulnerable.

Refugee children are affected by various factors including disease, natural disasters, and violence, which harm their physical and psychological wellbeing. The vulnerability and dependent nature of children creates the need for immediate aid and assistance for unaccompanied minors. The absence of a family structure disrupts their sense of security, and in order to help them, it is imperative to protect and educate them. Refugee children not only are deprived of a permanent home, but are also deprived of a permanent lifestyle.

One of the main issues regarding refugees is the lack of concrete legislature that has guidelines for asylum and direct aid programs. Many nations do not have concrete action plans or resources allocated to account for the increasing number of refugees seeking asylum in their countries. It is imperative for governments to set aside funds and resources to provide refugees with food, water, shelter, medical assistance and education. Refugee children specifically need therapy and counseling to cope with the conflict and danger they experienced in their past. Mercy Corps discovered that 55% of the refugee children in Lebanon experience fear that something may hurt or harm them in the future, and cannot verbally express this thought.ⁱ

Many places like South Africa have several refugee children with limited basic needs and resources. The United Nations has created several programs within South Africa to promote education for refugee children. Funding from this program was directed towards education regarding rights, school supplies, uniforms, and transportation to schools.ⁱⁱ By incorporating refugee children into national school programs, they are no longer isolated from the general population, which encourages their reintegration into society. By relying on the United Nations to fund education programs, South Africa has made progress with providing refugee children with basic needs.

Many organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) exist to provide refugee children across the globe with basic necessities such as healthcare, nutrition, education, shelter, and emergency relief. The ultimate goal is to provide permanent shelter and a stable lifestyle to refugee children and their families.

Past Action

To help provide refugees with basic needs such as food, water, and shelter, the United Nations formed an agency known today as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950. To better address the issue of refugee minors, the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children was established in 1993 and covered topics such as healthcare, nutrition, and education.ⁱⁱⁱ Donations and suggestions from the United Nations and third party organizations fund resettlement and reintegration programs. Volunteer programs and organizations are extremely helpful for children, who are uneducated and vulnerable to dangerous conditions.

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The UNHCR aids migrants that flee their homeland because of persecution, armed conflict and natural disaster.



The main treaty that sets standards concerning children is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although it is not a treaty specific to refugees, it applies to all children under the age of 18 years. This particular convention is the only international human rights treaty that permits non-governmental organizations (NGOs) the power to partake in its implementation.^{iv} Guidelines consist of non-discrimination, best interests of children, and the basic rights to life survival, and development. The CRC is also monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which requests reports from governments taking initiative, organizes workshops to discuss appropriate action plans, and issues recommendations regarding the safety and wellbeing of children to governments and the General Assembly.

In addition to United Nations agencies, NGOs assist in protecting refugee children. For example, Refugees International is an NGO based in Washington, DC, which promotes support for refugees through their reports and media outreach. This organization, completely independent of funds from governments and the United Nations, identifies the basic needs of refugees such as food, water, medical assistance, shelter, and safety.^v Though Refugees International does not address refugee children specifically, the organization addresses refugees as a whole. Climate displacement, humanitarian response, protection and security, statelessness and women and girls are five of the pillars on which Refugees International is based on. Currently, Refugees International has projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America. Its goal is to expand aid across the globe, so that refugees can be assisted, educated, and ultimately return to a stable home.^{vi}

Possible Solutions

Refugee children are exposed to dangerous conditions, and are deprived of basic needs including food, water and shelter. Because of psychological and physical abuse, it is important to counsel and guide them towards a normal and healthy lifestyle. Protection, aid, and reintegration are steps to ensure that refugee children return back to a safe and opportunistic environment.

There are 3 main areas in which this committee can develop possible solutions:

- **Protection.** Many refugee children come from areas with poverty, conflict and disaster, and it is necessary to provide them with food, water, and medical attention. It is also imperative that the children receive therapy to subdue the psychological effects of a difficult childhood. How can we make sure that there are adequate supplies for all refugees? In what ways can we alleviate post-traumatic stress in young children?
- **Aid.** After immediate medical attention is given to children, they must be educated regarding primary subjects and the legislature of the nation where they are temporarily housed. By becoming socially and politically aware, refugee children will gain independence as they age, and it will be easier for them to return back to their homelands or a safer nation to restart their lives. Do refugee children have access to social services? Are the teachers, medical staff and program directors trained to support children with severe distress?



- **Reintegration.** Refugee children should be reintegrated back into society after receiving aid and education so they can become independent and self-sufficient. Returning back to society without constant attention and care can be difficult, and there must be facilities assisting with relapse and distress to aid former refugees as well. How can we encourage former refugee children to further their education or continue with vocational training? In what way can we encourage nations to take in former refugees and treat them with equal rights? What opportunities can we provide for refugees for jobs, shelter, recreation, and other areas?

By addressing the basic needs and rights of children, the international community can progress towards a more safe and equal environment for all individuals. Refugee children have consistently suffered through unfair circumstances such as war, natural disasters, and abuse, and it is the job of the United Nations to take steps that encourage other nations to take action as well.

Further Research

Guiding Questions

- Is there a refugee community in your country? How are refugees and their children treated?
- How can we create a sense of security within refugee children who have been separated from their homes and families?
- In what ways can we provide direct protection and medical assistance to children in conflict?
- What measures can be taken to educate children about their surroundings?
- How can we provide opportunities for refugee children to assimilate to society after their isolation?

Research Sources

- UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>
- UNHCR's policy and guidelines on refugee children: <http://www.unhcr.org/3ae68bf60.html>
- UNICEF – Refugee children, guidelines on protection and care: http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/pdf/refugee_children_guidelines_on_protection_and_care.pdf
- Convention on the Rights of the Child:
- <http://www.crin.org/resources/treaties/CRC.asp?catName=International+Treatie>

ⁱ CNN- "Syria's traumatized refugee children will be the ones to rebuild their country" <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/23/opinion/syria-million-child->

ⁱⁱ South Africa refugee children miss out on school <http://www.irinnews.org/report/94766/south-africa-refugee-children-miss-out-on-school>

ⁱⁱⁱ UNHCR on Refugee Children <http://www.unhcr.org/3ae68ccc4.html>

^{iv} Convention on the Rights of the Child <http://www.crin.org/resources/treaties/CRC.asp?catName=International+Treatie>

^v Refugees International- Humanitarian Response <http://refugeesinternational.org/what-we-do/humanitarian-response>

^{vi} Refugees International- Where we work <http://refugeesinternational.org/where-we-work>