Inspiring youth
—to—
create a better world

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 Children's Fund

UNICEF's mission statement

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress.

UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities.

UNICEF responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children and those who provide their care.

UNICEF is non-partisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.

UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities.

UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Source: http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html

Children in Armed Conflict

Topic Background

Armed conflict is the fighting between two or more groups involving the use of weapons. Armed conflict can cause children to suffer serious physical injuries and psychological trauma, to lose family members, to become displaced from their homes, or even die. In the past decade alone, over one million children in conflict zones were separated from their families or orphaned, around four million children have undergone some type of physical mutilation. In armed conflict, children can suffer wounds from knives, bullets, bombs, and landmines, and more than two million children have been killed.

Governments and military groups recruit children because they are cheaper to feed and clothe than adults. They are also more vulnerable to being exploited and manipulated by false promises, easier to abduct, and easier to recruit than adults. Children are often versatile enough to serve many roles in the military. Child soldiers are taken to the front lines of battle but children can also serve as spies, messengers, or decoys.

There are an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 child soldiers worldwide according to the Human Rights Watch. Children are being or have been recruited to be soldiers in many countries including Sri Lanka, Colombia, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Sudan. According to Save the Children, roughly half of the child soldiers in the world are girls. These girl soldiers can become forced to marry older soldiers. [i]

If children are not forced into battle during conflict, they are often forced out of their homes and into refugee camps in neighboring cities or bordering countries. Once in refugee camps, conditions are often poor for children, where they often face exploitation, lack of food, denial of education, and cross-border attacks. If children are internally displaced, they do not fit the internationally accepted definition of a refugee and therefore do not receive the same protection as those who have crossed international borders[ii]. The biggest danger is malnutrition, and children are often sent outside the camps to look for work, where they risk being abducted, or murdered by those fighting within a conflict. Furthermore, drugs may also be used on child soldiers to curb their hunger that can lead to drug addiction as well as psychological and emotional problems.

When a conflict ends, soldiers need to be disarmed and demobilized. After that, children must be reintegrated into society. This includes ensuring that the children receive primary education again. Children can also become desensitized to extreme violence and need assistance is separating their identity from their former violent one that they developed as soldiers. Being in armed conflict also creates psychological and emotional pain, especially for children who lose family members, and even more so for children who are forced to kill others. Finally, girls ,if they were not combatants, are unable to receive the same reintegration services from NGOs.

Past Actions

In 1989, the UN introduced the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This defined children as any individual under the age of 18 and stated that children have the right to be protected from physical and mental violence. However, it also said that children over 15 could volunteer for positions in armies. Besides Somalia and the United States, all nations have ratified or agreed to follow this convention. However, several countries continue to violate the convention's principles even after they have signed. [iii]

In February 2002, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict went into force. It stated that anyone under the age of 18 cannot be involuntarily recruited or drafted into the military. It requested nations to do everything they can to raise the minimum age for volunteering for the military to 16. Many nations opposed it and insisted that 15 is not too young for people to serve as soldiers, while some countries and many human rights groups believed that even 16 is not old enough to be a volunteer in the military. [iv]

In 2005, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1612. This resolution strongly condemns the recruitment of child soldiers in armed conflict and calls for a method to monitor and report the use of child soldiers. It also provides specific mandates for the protection of children by United Nations peacekeeping units and encourages regional organizations to take appropriate measures to prevent the exploitation of children. [v]

UNCIEF and many NGOs help set up refugee camps during armed conflict and participate in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration services during post-conflict. This includes psychological services and reestablishing the children's educational attainment. However, children who are internally displaced usually do not qualify for refugee status and thus may not receive NGO services. Also, many NGOs tend to focus their efforts on combatants, and children who did not fight would not receive the services from such NGOs. Finally, UNICEF and NGOs also need to provide adoption services for children who lost their family as well as special reintegration services for those who were exploited or were permanently injured.

One particularly active but controversial NGO is Invisible Children. This NGO produced films about children in armed conflict in Uganda and asked the international community to take action against the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony, for recruiting child soldiers. [vi]However, action is complicated, as many countries do not want to intervene in internal armed conflicts.

Possible Solutions

The solutions to address children in armed conflict are normally summarized by the acronym DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-Integration. Disarmament means removing the weapons from the child soldiers. Demobilization means disbanding entire armed groups so that the children no longer see themselves as part of the army and that other children are no longer threatened by these groups. Finally, re-integration is the process of transitioning these children back into civil society. This includes finding their families, finding housing for those who have been displaced or become refugees, and putting children back into schools. It also includes providing healthcare to counter the physical injuries, sexual abuse, and psychological damage that

armed conflict may have caused on children. United Nations peacekeepers, cooperative governments, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can all contribute to DDR in some way. Re-integration applies for all children in armed conflict and not just child soldiers.

Another issue to address is preventing the use of child soldiers in armed conflict. This could mean increasing the minimum age that is legally allowed for children to join an army. Not all governments agree on the minimum age and cite national sovereignty over this issue. Furthermore, many armed groups are not part of the government and may not feel compelled to follow an international treaty. More practically, prevention methods could mean rapid reaction forces or peacekeepers sent in by the United Nations or regional organizations right when there is an outbreak in the conflict. These forces or peacekeepers can set up protection zones such as refugee camps. They can also assist in trying to counter or disarm child soldiers during the conflict.

More broadly, the international community can address the root causes to children in armed conflict. This includes political issues, territorial issues, economic issues, and religious or cultural issues that causes armed conflict in the first place.

Further Research

Guiding Questions
- Has your country signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child? What does it think about child soldiers?
- What programs and services, such as DDR, are needed to address children in armed conflict?
- How can children be better protected from the physical and psychological effects of armed conflict, including being recruited as child soldiers?

Research Sources:
- UNICEF Children in Armed Conflict: http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_childsoldiers.html
- Human Rights Watch page on Child Soldiers: http://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-soldiers
- Amnesty International page on armed conflict: http://www.amnesty.org/en/armed-conflict
- Convention on the Rights of the Child: http://www.unicef.org/crc/
- UN Conference on DDR and Stability in Africa: http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/ddr2.htm
- Invisible Children: http://invisiblechildren.com/

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i Human Rights Watch: Child Soldiers Worldwide: http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/12/child-soldiers-worldwide

ii UNICEF in emergencies: displaced children: http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_displacedchildren.html

iii UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child: http://www.unicef.org/crc/

iv UNICEF Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_protocols.html

v United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612: http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/439/59/PDF/N0543959.pdf?OpenElement

vi Kony 2012. http://www.kony2012.com/

Website: www.montessori-mun.org
Email: info@montessori-mun.org