



United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

**"Water scarcity and unsanitary water
conditions in children's lives"**

Study Guide

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1. Welcoming letter

Honorable delegates,

It is our sincere pleasure to welcome you to Arc MUN 2024! We are honored to be chairing this year's UNICEF committee, a council very important for the United Nations. Our topic of discussion will be **"Water scarcity and unsanitary water conditions in children's lives"** and we will analyze the causes, the factors and finally the results of this situation.

The aim of this study guide is to provide you with basic information and terminology regarding the topic, as well as important decisions and actions already taken. Building up on those resources, you are asked to think critically and conduct your own research in accordance with the points that are to be addressed and your country's national policy.

We hope that you will study and do your research on our topic, so you can participate and discuss appropriately with the other delegates, in order to achieve the best experience of Arc MUN! Feel free to contact us for any questions you might have throughout your research.

We are looking forward to meeting all of you!

Yours Chairs,

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2. Introduction to the committee

UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) operates in some of the most challenging global locations to reach and assist the most marginalized children and adolescents, advocating for the rights of every child worldwide. Their commitment spans over 190 countries and territories, where they tirelessly work to ensure that children not only survive but also thrive, realizing their full potential from early childhood through adolescence.

As the world's leading provider of vaccines, they champion child health and nutrition, facilitate access to safe water and sanitation, promote quality education and skill development, provide HIV prevention and treatment for mothers and infants, and work towards shielding children and adolescents from violence and exploitation.

Whether it is before, during, or after humanitarian crises, UNICEF is present on the front lines, delivering vital assistance and instilling hope in children and families. Operating in a non-political and impartial manner, their stance is unequivocal when it comes to upholding children's rights and ensuring the protection of their lives and futures.

3. Definition of Key Terms

Developed country: A developed country is a sovereign state that has a high quality of life, developed economy and advanced technological infrastructure relative to other less industrialized nations.

Climate change: Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

Water scarcity: is described as a condition where water demand exceeds over available water supply. The detrimental effect caused by nature and human intervention has led to severe water challenges and water scarcity, which is elaborated in the upcoming section.

Unsanitary water conditions: Unsafe water is water that contains germs, parasites, or toxic chemicals. Harmful germs, parasites, and chemicals can get in water from many sources, including human or animal feces (poop), pesticides, and other chemicals. Contaminated water and poor sanitation are linked to the transmission of diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and polio.

4. Introduction to the topic

In many countries with insufficient water resources, water scarcity remains a prevalent issue. This scarcity can be attributed to various factors, including deteriorating infrastructure and distribution systems, contamination, conflicts, and inadequate water resource management. Notably, the impact of climate change, coupled with human-related factors, is increasingly infringing upon children's right to access safe water and sanitation. Water scarcity imposes constraints on accessing clean drinking water and maintaining basic hygiene, whether at home, in educational institutions, or healthcare facilities. In situations of water scarcity, sanitation systems may fail, elevating the risk of diseases. Furthermore, the cost of obtaining scarce water tends to rise significantly.

The burden of water scarcity disproportionately affects women and children, often placed in charge of water collection. When water sources are distant, the time and effort required for collection increase, leaving less time for education, especially for girls. Shortages of water in schools can impact student enrollment, attendance, and academic performance. The arduous task of transporting water over long distances can pose substantial physical and safety risks, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation.

That is why UNICEF struggles to change this situation and provide to all these children, a safer and brighter future.

5. Points to be addressed

This section of the study guide contains important questions about our topic that could be useful for both your studying and for a constructing debate throughout the committee works.

- What are the causes that led a lot of countries to water scarcity and unsanitary water conditions?
- How does this situation affect the state policies of each country?
- How does this situation affect children's lives in all areas? (Health, education, socialization, psychology, etc.)
- What alternatives do people, who suffer from this condition, use so they can cope with it?
- What other social problems regarding children are stimulated by the lack of water? (e.g., exploitation /child labour, child abuse, etc.)
- What are the possible ways to deal (in whole or in parts) with this reality?
- In which ways can the media raise the public awareness regarding this issue?
- How can spiritual people and other international organizations become a part of the solution?

6. Actions already taken

Nowadays, the water scarcity seems like a cruel situation. Regardless of the actions and donations that the International Organizations and volunteers around the world have taken, we can all consider that they are not enough. In this context, more specialized actions that had been taken will be displayed below:

UNICEF'S Water Game Plan

The Water Game Plan has been developed incorporating the key principles of the UNICEF's Global WASH Strategy 2016-2030, and the SDG (sustainable development) agenda. Its objectives are: To set the level of ambition for water services towards 2030. To define and prioritize the most appropriate programmatic pathways, based on context, that country offices can choose to follow, to progressively increase water service levels. To provide UNICEF country offices with a set of up-to-date, evidence-based guidance and resources available.

WHO's (world health organization) actions to cope with drought

In its role as the leader of the health cluster for global emergencies, the World Health Organization (WHO) collaborates closely with Member States and partners to address disasters stemming from drought. This involves mobilizing emergency funding to support healthcare initiatives, deploying mobile healthcare teams for outreach, and ensuring the availability of essential food supplements in affected regions. WHO also provides support for child, maternal, and mental health services to ensure the well-being of the affected population.

Drought conditions can act as a trigger for outbreaks of various diseases, primarily due to reduced access to clean drinking water, proper sanitation, and increased stress on food resources. To combat this, WHO takes action by establishing epidemic surveillance, early warning systems, and response programs. Additionally, preventative immunization campaigns are launched to alleviate the impact of diseases in areas affected by drought.

UNICEF' s general actions about unhealthy water conditions

UNICEF is on the ground in more than 100 countries to provide safe sanitation for the world's most vulnerable communities in rural and urban areas, and during emergencies.

UNICEF mobilizes communities, builds markets for sanitation goods and services, and partners with governments to plan and finance sanitation services.

In emergencies, UNICEF provides urgent relief to communities and nations threatened by disrupted services and the risk of disease outbreak.

UNICEF also supports innovation in sanitation; improves sanitation technology; ensures that basic toilets are affordable, accessible, and safe; and finds effective, sustainable solutions for sanitation challenges that harm children.

OECD (Organization for economic cooperation and development) actions about water scarcity

The OECD Water Governance Principles serve as a framework to establish the fundamental requirements for effective, efficient, and inclusive water policies. They offer a valuable tool that allows countries to assess the functionality of their water governance systems, enabling them to identify areas in need of change, reform, or action. In addition to these principles, the OECD has introduced the Governance Indicator Framework, which assists concerned stakeholders in evaluating the performance of water governance systems at various levels, such as city, basin, region, or nation.

These principles were developed through a collaborative process, drawing on extensive field experience and engaging in a bottom-up approach with the international multi-stakeholder network known as the OECD Water Governance Initiative. Since 2011, the OECD has been actively involved in reviewing the water policies of numerous countries at the behest of their respective governments, offering recommendations for potential water reforms.

European Commission projects about safe and sufficient water amount

The Water Framework Directive, adopted in 2000, provides a suitable framework to address water scarcity and drought. The directive promotes sustainable water use via the long-term protection of available water resources and the mitigation of the effects of droughts, contributing to guaranteeing a sufficient supply of good quality surface water and groundwater and protecting territorial and marine waters. EU countries implement integrated river basin management through River Basin Management Plans required by the Directive, and some have adopted Drought Management Plans for vulnerable river basins. Given that in the longer term, almost all river basins could be exposed to water scarcity and droughts, organizational and technical adaptation solutions are required. EU Member States Water Directors introduced several climate adaptation activities in the 2022-2024 Work Programme for the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) for the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive. An Ad-hoc Task Group on Water Scarcity and Droughts was established, leading to technical discussions on how to improve water management in the changing climate, particularly addressing increasing droughts and water scarcity.

7. Conclusion

Taking all these into consideration, we can easily understand that water scarcity and unsanitary water conditions affect children's lives in many aspects. It is a problem that torments humanity (regardless of age and origin). It deprives children from a healthy future and as a result it deprives society from a future prosperity. Therefore, what UNICEF is asking for, is a global cooperation which will put innovative ideas into effective actions. Every one of us has to stop neglecting the issues of our fellow human beings and be a part of the solution, so that we can give to our children the gift of life.

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