



ArcMUN

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

# **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)**

**"Children in Peril: The Humanitarian Crisis in  
the Middle East"**

**Study Guide**

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# 1. Welcoming letter

Honorable delegates,

We are delighted to welcome you to the Aristotelio College Model United Nations. It's our great pleasure to chair this year's UNICEF committee, a council with a big impact on the United Nations. We are honored not only to participate in this instructive conference but also because, on this year's topic, we are going to investigate the Humanitarian Crisis in the Middle East and how this problematic situation affects children's safety.

This study guide aims to help you delve deeper into the topic that our committee will engage with. Through this overall information and various key terms, you will be able to understand the committee's topic and acquire knowledge that will assist you in your research.

We hope that you get involved in this theme and do your research wisely so that you are prepared to join every debate with active argumentation. This way, you will get to discover the purpose of MUN and enjoy your role as a delegate.

We wish you good luck and we are looking forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

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## 2. Introduction to the committee

UNICEF, the United Nations agency for children, is one of eleven United Nations organizations. It operates in over 190 countries and territories, striving to protect the rights and well-being of every child, especially the most disadvantaged and hardest to reach.

Established in 1946 to provide emergency relief to children affected by World War II, UNICEF has since expanded its mandate to address the long-term needs of children and women, particularly in developing countries.

By providing access to clean water, educational resources, and psychosocial support, the organization seeks to alleviate suffering for children and families affected by war, and restore hope. Temporary learning centers and child-friendly spaces have been established to ensure children can continue their education and begin the process of emotional recovery.

Whether before, during, or after humanitarian crises, UNICEF is present on the front lines, delivering vital assistance. 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

**Humanitarian Crisis:** A humanitarian crisis is defined as an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or well-being of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area. There is no universal definition of a humanitarian crisis, and the terms 'humanitarian crises' and 'humanitarian emergency' are often used interchangeably.

**Humanitarian Assistance:** Humanitarian assistance is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for when such situations occur.

**Acute watery diarrhea (AWD):** Acute diarrhea is one of the most commonly reported illnesses in the United States, second only to respiratory infections. Worldwide, it is a leading cause of mortality in children younger than four years

old, especially in the developing world. Diarrhea that lasts less than 2 weeks is termed acute diarrhea. Persistent diarrhea lasts between 2 and 4 weeks. Chronic diarrhea lasts longer than 4 weeks.

**Cholera:** Cholera is an acute diarrheal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. Cholera remains a global threat to public health and an indicator of inequity and lack of social development.

**Child-friendly Spaces (CFS):** Child-friendly Spaces (CFS) are interventions used by humanitarian agencies to increase children's access to safe environments and promote their psychosocial well-being. Some CFS programs may focus on informal education or other needs related to children. However, all CFS try to provide a safe place where children can come together to play, relax, express themselves, feel supported, and learn skills to deal with the challenges they face.

**Routine Immunization:** Routine Immunization is the process whereby a person is made resistant to a disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine. Vaccines stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the person against subsequent infection or disease. Immunization prevents diseases, disabilities, and deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs), such as cervical cancer, poliomyelitis, measles, rubella, parotitis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis A and B, bacterial pneumonia, rotavirus diarrheal diseases and bacterial meningitis.

**Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM):** In 2005, with the adoption of resolution 1612, the Security Council took the unprecedented step of establishing a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations committed against children in times of armed conflict. The purpose of the MRM is to provide for the systematic gathering of accurate, timely, objective and reliable information on six grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

**Pre-positioned Food:** Stock pre-positioning is a preparedness measure that can improve responsiveness. Pre-positioned stock enables response to immediate needs in an emergency and reduces lead time.

**Crossings into Gaza:** Restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza have undermined the living conditions of Gaza's residents for years. Many restrictions, originally imposed in the early 1990s, were intensified in June 2007, following the Hamas takeover of Gaza and the imposition of a blockade by Israel. After gradual ease, they intensified again with the escalation of hostilities in October 2023.

## 4. Introduction to the topic

The Middle East is grappling with one of the most severe humanitarian crises in modern history, where children find themselves at the epicenter of immense suffering. The region's ongoing armed conflicts and socio-economic challenges have created a perilous situation, leaving millions of children deprived of basic needs such as food, pure water, education, and safety. The most affected nations by cascading crises, which threaten to spread to other neighboring countries, include Gaza, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, and Iran.

In Gaza, following the events of October 7, 2023 (the beginning of Hamas' attacks on Israel), escalating warfare has created "the most dangerous place in the world to be a child", according to UNICEF USA. Gaza and the West Bank have witnessed mass displacements, with 1.9 million people forced from their homes multiple times. The area is home to the largest cohort of child amputees in modern history. Malnutrition, mental health challenges, the lack of sanitation, and the absence of security are only some of the main issues children living there face.

Lebanon, already burdened by economic instability, has seen an alarming surge in violence, especially along its border with Israel. Recent hostilities have led to the displacement of over 340,000 people, with more than 100,000 becoming refugees in Syria. This exodus has placed a further strain on Syria, where millions of people are already in need of humanitarian assistance after a decade of civil war within the country. For children, all this means that they continue to experience the weight of a crumbling economic system and are denied access to basic healthcare and education.

In Yemen, nine years of war have pushed the nation to the brink of collapse. A collapsed health system is left to face one of the world's worst child malnutrition cases, with nearly half of all children under five suffering from moderate to severe stunting in growth. Simultaneously, UNICEF reports that about 540,000 people are exposed to acute watery diarrhea (AWD) and cholera.

Similarly, the war in Sudan has displaced 10.7 million people, half of them children, forcing many to seek refuge in neighboring countries like Egypt, which struggles to provide adequate support for these vulnerable populations.

Meanwhile, Iraq continues to bear the scars of decades of conflict. Explosive remnants of war remain a significant threat, claiming mostly young lives and causing severe injuries. Due to acute levels of poverty and insecurity, and low education, child marriage rates have risen steadily over the last 20 years,

further depriving girls of educational opportunities and perpetuating cycles of inequality.

The situation in Iran and across the broader region of the Middle East and North Africa is equally dire. Pre-existing protracted armed conflicts and recent public health emergencies place children in a highly vulnerable position, since millions are facing food insecurity, water shortages, and inaccessibility to health care and sanitation.

Armed conflict in general inflicts the most severe and heinous harm on children. Deprived of fundamental human rights, children living through war are also exposed to unconscionable forms of violence, including sexual violence, unlawful arrest, and detention.

## 5. Points to be addressed

- Which causes have led to a humanitarian crisis in the Middle East?
- How does this controversial situation affect children's safety and lives and how can the media raise public awareness under the observation of the states?
- What actions have been taken by UN organizations and the member states to address the issues of
  - a. food poverty and clean water scarcity,
  - b. lacking education,
  - c. the psychological impact of war on children, and
  - d. the abuse of minors?
- How can the states aid the neighboring countries that foster most refugees of war?
- How can the states prevent such a crisis from spreading to other parts of the world that are currently at war?

## 6. Actions already taken

In response to the grave humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, UNICEF and other UN organizations have taken significant steps to address the pressing needs of children. These efforts are rooted in international humanitarian law, including the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **General Measures**

Humanitarian Ceasefire: UNICEF and other UN entities have demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow the delivery of critical aid and prevent further loss of life.

Protection of Infrastructure: Advocacy has included repeated calls for an end to the targeting of schools, hospitals, and other critical civilian structures. UNICEF has also demanded the safe and unhindered movement of humanitarian workers and supplies.

### **Efforts in Gaza**

Since the 1980s, UNICEF has protected children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 1994, a Special Representative was appointed in the region after the Palestinian Authority was established. Following the recent escalation, UNICEF has worked tirelessly to deliver emergency supplies, water, medicine, and critical equipment. Most importantly, it has called for the opening of all crossings into Gaza to allow the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. After 25 years of the Gaza Strip being polio-free, the virus has reemerged and efforts are underway to strengthen surveillance and routine immunization.

### **Efforts in Israel**

UNICEF has prioritized the release of abducted children, issuing multiple statements in order to highlight this critical issue. Senior officials have traveled to affected areas to press for action for child survivors of all violations and to meet with victims' families.

### **Support from Partner Organizations**

The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides food, healthcare, and education to Palestinians, including millions displaced within Gaza. UNRWA shelters are currently operating at over four times their capacity.

The World Food Programme (WFP) delivers pre-positioned food to displaced communities. However, the escalating conflict has severely hindered these efforts, since safe access, fuel, and connectivity are limited.



The World Health Organization (WHO) supplies life-saving medical equipment and trauma kits. WHO has raised alarms about attacks on healthcare facilities, overcrowded shelters, and the worsening health crisis across Gaza and the West Bank.

## 7. Conclusion

The ongoing armed conflicts in the Middle East have directly resulted in millions of children being at risk and deprived of basic goods such as food, water, and medicines. More specifically, the war in the Middle East and especially the hostilities in Gaza, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, and Iran have cost millions of children their homes, family, safety, health, and even their lives. Important and effective actions have been carried out from nonprofit organizations such as UNICEF, UNRWA, WFP, WHO, and people from all over the world, where a huge effort is made to protect children living there. Nevertheless, nothing is really resolved yet. To this day, every child in the Middle East is constantly at risk, for this reason must be taken immediately measures to stop this situation. Because no child in this world should fear for their life.

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