MACMUN 2026 - United Nations Children's Fund

Staff Letter

Dear delegates,

On behalf of MACMUN, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to the United Nations Children's Fund. My name is Jolin Zhang, and I'm truly honoured to be one of your chairs for UNICEF at MACMUN 2026.

To introduce myself a bit beyond my name, I am currently in my first year at McMaster University studying Integrated Biomedical Engineering and Health Sciences. Similar to you all, I hold a deep interest in global affairs, world events, public speaking, and the collaborative process of seeking meaningful solutions. My Model UN journey began when I was in Grade 10, with opportunities to travel internationally and compete as a delegate, later taking on leadership roles. In my junior year, I accumulated more experience by co-chairing the World Health Organization committee at the inaugural Yale MUN Singapore 2024 and co-directing the European Commission at Oxford MUN Canada 2025. Serving on the dais has shaped the way I think about leadership, diplomacy, and the responsibility we carry when we represent real-world issues.

Outside of Model UN, I have a deep passion for the integration of biology and tech, and the ways in which innovation can improve the way we diagnose, treat, and understand human health. I enjoy doing research,with my current focus being medical cannabis and its effect on cancer symptom management. Beyond academics, I also play on the McMaster Badminton Varsity Team, which keeps me grounded, active, and surrounded by a community I really value.

As we prepare for our time together, I want to emphasize this: you matter here. MUN is about building a comMUNity and your voice, your questions, your creativity, and your willingness to step into a room full of strangers to tackle global challenges is what makes MUN meaningful. Whether you're here to push your speaking skills, dive deep into policy, or simply try something different, I want UNICEF to be a place where you feel welcomed and encouraged.

I truly cannot wait to meet each of you, hear your ideas, and witness the incredible discussions you will bring to life. Should you have any questions about anything related to our committee or this background guide, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at zhanq131@mcmaster.ca. We look forward to seeing you at MACMUN 2026!

Sincerely,

Jolin Zhang

Staff Letter

Hello, delegates of the UNICEF Committee!

My name is Nanaki, and I am so excited to be joining you this year as a member of the conference staff. I am a second-year Justice, Political Philosophy, and Law student here at McMaster. This is my second year on staff at MACMUN, having worked on a crisis committee the previous year. I have had the opportunity to attend various Model UN conferences in the past, participating in many committees spanning a vast range of topics. I can't wait to see what this committee will bring!

I grew up in Ancaster, not far from McMaster's campus, and I love the ability to go home often. In addition to my involvement in Model UN, I enjoy reading and have a never-ending TBR list. If you have any book recommendations, feel free to send them over!

I was drawn to Model UN because it offers the opportunity to engage with global issues alongside people who share similar passions. I have found it incredibly fun to have conversations and debate about complex problems. It's interesting to hear different perspectives, and there's no better place to do that than Model UN. I'm looking forward to what will surely be a unique and thrilling experience.

I'm excited to meet you all, and can't wait to see the lively debate in conference! Please feel free to reach out to me at aroran24@mcmaster.ca if you have any questions or thoughts you'd like to share.

Regards,
Nanaki Arora (she/her)

Introduction

UNICEF was established on December 11, 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly to provide emergency relief to children and mothers in countries devastated by World War II. Initially temporary, its mandate expanded as the organization shifted toward long-term support in child health, education, nutrition, and protection.[1] In 1953, UNICEF became a permanent UN agency and adopted the name 'United Nations Children's Fund.'[2]

A major milestone came with the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which laid the foundation for UNICEF's rights-based approach. In 1965, UNICEF received the Nobel Peace Prize for its non-political and humanitarian work.[3]

UNICEF's impact grew significantly in the 1980s through the Child Survival and Development Revolution, which promoted four life-saving interventions—growth monitoring, oral rehydration therapy, breastfeeding, and immunization—collectively known as "GOBI." In 1989, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) cemented UNICEF's central role in global child welfare.[4] The following decades saw the organization expand programs in health, education, gender equality, and emergency response, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

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[1] "What We Do", UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/what-we-do.
[2] UN General Assembly, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (A/RES/802 (VIII)), 1953. https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/documents/resolution-united-nations-childrens-fund-1953
[3] "Emerging from the ashes of war: 1946–1979 | UNICEF", n.d, Unicef, https://www.unicef.org/stories/learning-experience-19461979.
[4] UNICEF, "Convention on the Rights of the Child", *UNICEF*, https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention.

In the 21st century, UNICEF has embraced digital innovation and youth engagement through platforms like RapidPro and U-Report, while continuing to lead humanitarian responses—from the Haiti earthquake and Ebola outbreak to COVID-19 vaccine delivery.

Today, UNICEF remains one of the world's most influential organizations dedicated to protecting and empowering children everywhere.[5]

Committee Mission

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Committee is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of children worldwide by addressing pertinent conditions that place them at risk. This committee provides a collaborative space for delegates to examine specific global challenges affecting children. Further, it allows delegates to confront the intersection of protection, prevention, and access to opportunity in the lives of children worldwide.

At MACMUN 2026, delegates will engage with two vital issues: child trafficking and education quality in underfunded areas. These topics are both urgent humanitarian concerns that highlight long-term development challenges affecting millions of children every day. Delegates are encouraged to explore underlying factors while considering the role of international cooperation and responses.

Through structured debate, the UNICEF Committee seeks solutions that are child-centered, sustainable, and adaptable to diverse regional contexts. Delegates are expected to propose strategies that balance immediate needs with long-term protection. The committee aims to foster

[5] UNICEF, "Becoming the Leading Voice: 2006–2020", *UNICEF Stories*, May 19, 2021, https://www.unicef.org/stories/learning-experience-20062015.

thoughtful dialogue and effective approaches that contribute to improved futures for children worldwide.

Topic 1: Child Trafficking

History

Long before the modern concept of "trafficking" emerged, children were treated as property or economic tools in households, plantations, and industrial settings. With industrialization in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, urbanization, migration, colonialism, and economic inequalities increased child vulnerability. For instance, during the Industrial Revolution in Britain, thousands of children were trafficked from orphanages and poorhouses to work in textile mills and mines, enduring twelve-hour shifts under brutal conditions.[6] Similarly, in colonial contexts such as the Belgian Congo, mixed-race children ("Métis") born to Congolese mothers and Belgian colonial fathers were forcibly separated from their families between 1948 and 1961 to serve as forced labourers in rubber plantations. Many of them lost their identities and were subject to neglect and abuse.[7] During the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved African children were also sold into plantation labour in America, marking one of the earliest recorded forms of large-scale child trafficking.[8]

After World War I, a series of scandals during the early 1920s exposed the existence of organized "white slave" networks that trafficked women and children across Europe and the Middle East. One of the most prominent investigations took place in 1921, when the League of Nations uncovered evidence of large-scale trafficking of Eastern European girls and children to brothels in Egypt, India, and the Dutch East Indies.[9] These revelations prompted the League to draft the

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[6] "Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution." *World History Encyclopedia*. https://www.worldhistory.org/article/2216/child-labour-in-the-british-industrial-revolution/
[7] "'Mixed-Race Kidnappings'—Belgian Congo." *The Guardian*, December 1, 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/dec/01/mixed-race-kidnappings-belgian-congo-belgium
[8] "Children in the Slave Trade (Table)." *World History Commons*. https://worldhistorycommons.org/children-slave-trade-table
[9] "White Slavery: The Origins of the Anti-Trafficking Movement." *openDemocracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/white-slavery-origins-of-anti-trafficking-movement/

International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children. This treaty required signatory states to criminalize the procurement, transport, and exploitation of children under 21 for immoral purposes.[10]

Throughout the 1920s, the League of Nations actively investigated child slavery and forced labour in colonial territories through its Temporary Slavery Commission. A prominent example is the 1930 International Commission of Enquiry in Slavery and Forced Labour in Liberia, which revealed that children as young as five were being pawned to pay debts and were coerced into labour both within Liberia and in foreign territories, notably the Spanish colony of Fernado Pó (now Bioko, Equatorial Guinea).[11] The report also implicated high-ranking officials, including President Charles D. B. King and Vice President Allen Yancy, in facilitating these exploitative practices.

In the postwar period, the United Nations solidified children's rights as a matter of global concern. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)[12] and later the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)[13] recognized children's right to protection from exploitation and trafficking, with the latter remaining the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. Parallel to these, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention No.138 on

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[10] United Nations Treaty Collection. "Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949)." https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=VII-3&chapter=7&clang=_en

[11] *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia*. Geneva: League of Nations, 1930–31.. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112059732252&seq=16

[12] "UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)." Child Rights International Network (CRIN)—Archive. https://archive.crin.org/en/library/legal-database/un-declaration-rights-child-1959.html

[13] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Convention on the Rights of the Child." https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

Minimum Age (1973)[14] and Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)[15] , which explicitly classified child trafficking and forced labour among the gravest human rights violations. Recognizing the globalized nature of trafficking, the General Assembly adopted the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol). The Protocol's definition—recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by coercive or deceptive means for exploitation—presumes a child cannot consent, simplifying prosecution and protection.

As the internet scaled in the mid-1990s, child trafficking and sexual exploitation rapidly moved online. Bulletin boards and early forums of the 1990s gave way to encrypted messaging, social platforms, live-streaming, and dark-web markets. In 1998, the U.S. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children launched the CyberTipline. That year alone, it handled 4,450 reports of suspected online child exploitation, and by 2001 it had forwarded over 38,000 reports to law enforcement.[16] Operationally, UNICEF and partners shifted from awareness to evidence-led programs such as Disrupting Harm, which mapped how grooming, image-based coercion, and monetized exploitation move across borders.[17]

[14] International Labour Organization. "Convention No. 138: Minimum Age Convention, 1973." NORMLEX..
https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312283&

[15] International Labour Organization. "Convention No. 182: Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999." NORMLEX.
https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB%3A12100%3A0%3A%3ANO%3A%3AP12100_INSTRUMENT_ID%3A312327

[16] "CyberTipline Takes Aim at Child Exploitation." Wired, March 1998.
https://www.wired.com/1998/03/cybertipline-takes-aim-at-child-exploitation/

[17] UNICEF Office of Research—Innocenti. "Disrupting Harm." https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/projects/disrupting-harm

Current Situation

Child trafficking remains one of the most severe human rights violations confronting the global community today. The UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons estimates that between 2020 and 2023, global authorities detected 202,478 victims of trafficking, with children representing 38%.[18] Yet, detection statistics reflect only the visible portion of a much larger problem. Advances in digital technology, prolonged conflict, and economic instability have expanded both the methods and markets for child trafficking.

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[18] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024. Vienna: UNODC, 2024.
https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2024/GLOTIP2024_BOOK.pdf

Graphic Analysis

The most recent and comprehensive set of data on child trafficking is from 2014, prior to the surge in refugees and migrants into the European Union and the U.S. However, the proportion of children among detected trafficking victims has significantly increased, as shown in Figure 1.[19] The proportion rose from 12% in 2004 to 28% in 2011 before stabilizing near 30% in 2014. Within that total, the percentage of girls consistently exceeds that of boys, indicating gendered patterns of exploitation. This reflects both the persistence of child sexual exploitation and the feminization of child labor in domestic or service sectors.
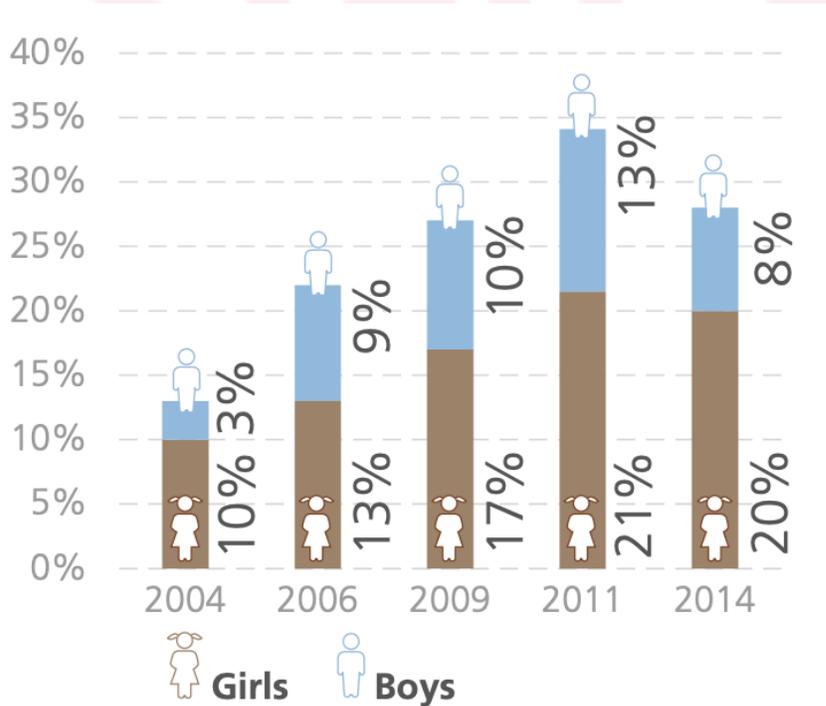

Figure 1: Share of children among detected victims of trafficking in persons, by gender. Adapted from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, UNODC, 2016, p. 11.

There are clear regional differences concerning the detected child victims, as seen in Figure 2.[20] In Sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean, the majority of detected victims are

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[19] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016.* Vienna: UNODC, 2016. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2016_Global_Report_on_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf.
[20] Ibid

children. In contrast, regions such as Europe and Central Asia report a smaller share of child victims. This is due to demographic differences, socio-economic factors, legislative differences, and countries' institutional frameworks.[21] Though there seems to be a relation between a country's level of development and the age of detected trafficking victims, lower detected child shares in high-income regions do not imply the absence of exploitation; rather, they may indicate stronger systems for addressing certain forms of trafficking and differing visibility of online exploitation.
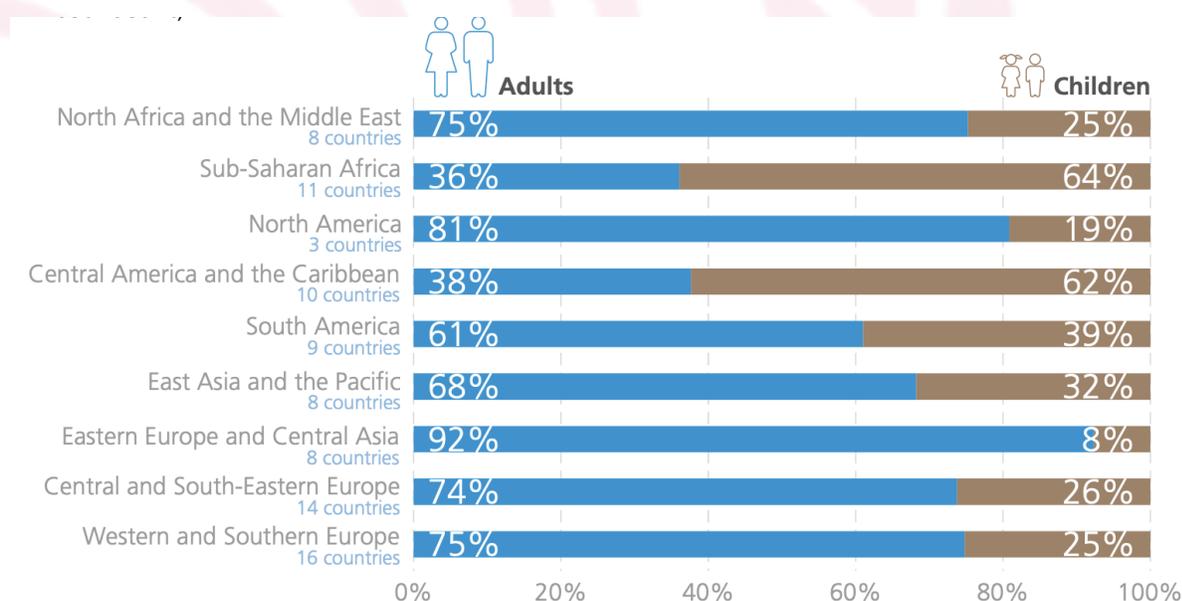

Figure 2: Shares of adults and children among detected trafficking victims, by region. Adapted from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, UNODC, 2016, p. 11.

Digital Trafficking

A newer and rapidly expanding factor is technology-facilitated trafficking. Digital platforms and social media now serve as recruitment, grooming, and exploitation tools. UNICEF's *Child Online Protection Strategy* highlights a dramatic rise in online sexual exploitation, cyber

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[21] International Organization for Migration (IOM). "More than Half of Child Trafficking Victims Are Trafficked within Their Own Countries: IOM–Harvard Report." IOM, 2023.
https://www.iom.int/news/more-half-child-trafficking-victims-are-trafficked-within-their-own-countries-iom-harvard-report

grooming, and trafficking-related scams targeting minors.[22] The growing digital economy has blurred the lines between physical and online forms of trafficking, making detection and prevention increasingly complex.

Data over the past few years illustrate the scale and urgency of this transformation. The WeProtect Global Threat Assessment 2023 documented an 87% increase in online child sexual-exploitation material reports between 2019 and 2022, driven by encrypted messaging and AI-generated imagery.[23] There has also been a significant rise in financial sexual extortion, with reports of the harm jumping from 130 in 2021 to over 10,000 in 2022. This involves perpetrators grooming and manipulating children into sharing sexual images and videos of themselves, then extorting them for monetary gain. Many extorters pose as young girls online and predominantly approach boys aged 15-17 years via social media. This phenomenon has resulted in a string of cases where children have tragically taken their own lives.[24] Furthermore, a study in Cambodia found that 11% of internet-using adolescents aged 12 to 17 had experienced online sexual exploitation or abuse within a single year—equivalent to roughly 160,000 children.[25]

One of the most alarming recent examples is the Europol-led crackdown on the dark-web platform "Kidflix", which revealed the vast scale and profitability of digital exploitation within child trafficking.[26] Between April 2022 and March 2025, Kidflix logged approximately 1.8

[22] UNICEF. *Child Protection Strategy.* New York: UNICEF, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/documents/child-protection-strategy

[23] WeProtect Global Alliance. *Global Threat Assessment 2023 – Press Release.* London: WeProtect Global Alliance, 2023. https://www.weprotect.org/wp-content/uploads/Global-Threat-Asssesment-2023-Press-Release.pdf.

[24] Ibid

[25] UNICEF Cambodia. "UNICEF Cambodia Launches Digital Campaign to Protect Children and Adolescents against Online Exploitation." UNICEF, 2023. https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/press-releases/unicef-cambodia-launches-digital-campaign-protect-children-and-adolescents-against

[26] Europol. "Global Crackdown on 'Kidflix': Major Child Sexual Exploitation Platform with Almost Two Million Users Dismantled." *Europol Newsroom,* 2025. https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/global-crackdown-kidflix-major-child-sexual-exploitation-platform-almost-two-million-users.

million users globally and hosted over 91,000 unique videos containing child sexual-abuse material.[27] The platform enabled users to pay with cryptocurrencies and earn tokens by uploading and encoding new exploitative content, demonstrating how traffickers exploit digital business models to monetize abuse.[28] As a result of the investigation across 35+ countries, around 79 suspects were arrested and nearly 1,400 suspects identified, while 39 children were rescued in the process.[29]

What makes this digital era particularly dangerous is its invisibility. Unlike traditional trafficking routes, which can be disrupted through physical intervention and border control, online exploitation operates silently across jurisdictions. Traffickers exploit encrypted messaging, anonymous browsers, virtual private networks (VPNs), and cryptocurrencies to hide their identities and profits. As a result, national law enforcement agencies—often constrained by territorial boundaries—struggle to investigate and prosecute online offenders. Many countries still lack legal frameworks that clearly define online child trafficking or regulate corporate accountability in digital spaces. Moreover, the spread of AI-generated content and deepfake technologies allows offenders to generate realistic synthetic images of children without direct contact, making digital literacy and corporate transparency essential components of prevention. Any policy response must therefore include digital protection measures, such as stronger online safety laws, corporate accountability and international data-sharing to detect and prevent technology-facilitated trafficking.

[27] *Eucrim.* "Pedophile Platform 'Kidflix' Shut Down." *Eucrim News,* 2025. https://eucrim.eu/news/pedophile-platform-kidflix-shut-down/.
[28] *NewsTarget.* "Kidflix Shut Down in Landmark Europol Operation." April 6, 2025. https://www.newstarget.com/2025-04-06-kidflix-shut-down-in-landmark-europol-operation.html.
[29] Ibid

Systemic Gaps and Policy Challenges

Despite global recognition of child trafficking as a major human rights crisis, vast disparities persist in how countries detect, report, and respond to it. Globally, the number of convictions for trafficking offences fell by 27% in 2020 from the previous year, with sharper decreases registered in South Asia (56%), Central America and the Caribbean (54%), and South America (46%) – accelerating a longer-term trend registered by UNODC since 2017.[30]

In one illustrative case, a detailed study of the border-region of Spain found that although 1,466 trafficking victims were identified during 2023, only 18 of them were minors — prompting criticism of weak identification at entry points and insufficient resources for child-victim referral. This implementation gap is mirrored in many lower-capacity states where legal frameworks may exist on paper, but enforcement, data-sharing, and victim protection remain highly inconsistent.[31] Moreso, Spanish reports indicate that the number of identified child victims is disproportionately low compared to neighboring countries, with only 2% of trafficking victims identified as minors, compared to 29% in Portugal and 28% in France.[32] Factors contributing to this under-identification include a lack of awareness regarding non-sexual exploitation forms, misclassification of cases, and a focus on organized criminal groups rather than individual traffickers. Without synchronized legislation and technology-enabled monitoring systems, children—especially those on the move, displaced by conflict, or living in digital

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[30] United Nations Turkmenistan. "UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: Crises Shift Trafficking Patterns and Hinder Victim Support." UN Turkmenistan, 2024.
https://turkmenistan.un.org/en/217170-unodc-global-report-trafficking-persons-crises-shift-trafficking-patterns-and-hinder-victim

[31] Briones, Alicia, and David Caballero. "Child Trafficking in Europe: Legal Frameworks and Implementation Gaps." *Social Sciences* 13, no. 11 (2024): 566. https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/13/11/566.

[32] Council of Europe. *GRETA Evaluation Report on Spain: Third Evaluation Round.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2023.
https://rm.coe.int/greta-evaluation-report-on-spain-3rd-evaluation-round-greta-2023-10-ac/1680ab8d0f.

poverty—remain highly vulnerable. Effective solutions must address both legal frameworks and practical implementation challenges to protect children from trafficking.[33]

Bloc Analysis

It is crucial to emphasize that these categorizations are generalized, and individual countries may have diverse approaches, experiences, and responses to child trafficking. Additionally, geopolitical dynamics and national policies can evolve, impacting a country's position in these categories over time.

Global / United Nations

The UN provides the primary legal and normative framework: The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the "Palermo Protocol") frames trafficking as a transnational organized-crime problem while explicitly emphasising children as a special protection category.[34] UN agencies (UNODC and UNICEF) push for victim-centred identification, non-punishment of child victims, and stronger data monitoring systems. Through its *Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons* (2008, updated 2014), UNODC instructs member states to treat trafficked persons as *rights-holders* rather than as immigration or criminal offenders, urging that children must always be treated first as victims of exploitation, regardless of consent or circumstance.[35] In July 2025, UNICEF released *UNICEF's Action Against Child Trafficking*, a global white paper outlining four priorities; Prevention, Protection,

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[33] Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). *Call to Action on Child Trafficking.* New York: United Nations, 2023. https://icat.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl461/files/publications/call_to_action_on_child_trafficking.pdf

[34] United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. "*Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.*" https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons

[35] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Human Trafficking Toolkit*. https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/HT-toolkit-en.pdf

Prosecution support, and Partnership—with a call to strengthen digital-age monitoring as online recruitment rises.[36]

Western Bloc: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Romania, and the European Union (EU)

The Western Bloc consists of industrialized democratic nations that have long prioritized child protection as a core human rights issue and have taken leadership roles in the development of global anti-trafficking mechanisms under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* and the *Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*. The United States leads global anti-trafficking diplomacy through its *Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)* and *TIP Report*, funding programs across 80+ countries and operating child protection task forces within the Department of Homeland Security.[37] The EU has moved toward harmonised minimum rules that emphasize child protection. The revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, adopted in 2024, tightens obligations on member states for identification, non-punishment, child-sensitive care, and refunds of costs to victims[38] France has adopted a multi-pronged approach, including victim protection, awareness-raising among youth, and international cooperation. Under its *National Plan to Fight Exploitation and Human Trafficking*, the government pledged to guarantee unconditional protection to minors who are victims of trafficking and to speed up the dismantling of criminal networks.[39] It also calls for the establishment of a National Observatory on Exploitation and Human Trafficking to improve data

[36] UNICEF. *UNICEF's Action Against Child Trafficking*. Accessed November 2025.
https://www.unicef.org/reports/unicefs-action-against-child-trafficking.
[37] U.S. Department of State. *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report*. Accessed November 2025.
https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report.
[38] European Commission. "Legal and Policy Framework." *Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. Accessed November 2025.
https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime/together-against-trafficking-human-beings/legal-and-policy-framework_en
[39] Ministère chargé de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes. *Plan de lutte contre l'exploitation et la traite des êtres humains 2024–2027*. Accessed November 2025.
https://www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/sites/efh/files/2024-02/Plan-de-lutte-contre-exploitation-et-traite-des-etres-humains-2024-2027-PDFaccessible.pdf.

collection and policy coordination. France partners bilaterally with Sweden through a "French-Swedish initiative" to combat human trafficking for the sexual exploitation of minors.[40] In addition, France's reporting notes that a new national plan (2024-2027) was prepared after broad consultation, showing a willingness to engage civil society and inter-ministerial cooperation.[41]

Romania has positioned itself as a source country for child trafficking. Romania amended its Criminal Code in 2020 to increase the minimum punishment for child-trafficking offences and introduced aggravating factors such as where the perpetrator is a family member, guardian, or in a position of authority over the minor.[42] In September 2024, Romania entered into a five-year Child Protection Framework Partnership with the United States Department of State (USD 10 million) to create two national units focused on digital child safety and online exploitation, as well as the prevention of child trafficking.[43] Similarly, Germany developed a robust and multifaceted strategy to address child trafficking. In December 2024, Germany introduced its first National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. This plan encompasses all forms of human trafficking, including sexual and labor exploitation of children.[44]

Critical States: Russia, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, and North Korea

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[40] Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (France). "Fight Against Human Trafficking." Accessed November 2025.
https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/human-rights/fight-against-human-trafficking.

[41] Ibid

[42] European Commission. "Romania." *Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. Accessed November 2025.
https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime/together-against-trafficking-human-beings/eu-countries/romania_en

[43] Romania Insider. "Romania, U.S. Sign Child Protection Framework Partnership." Accessed November 2025.
https://www.romania-insider.com/romania-us-child-protection-framework-partnership-2024.

[44] European Commission. "Germany." *Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. Accessed November 2025.
https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime/together-against-trafficking-human-beings/eu-countries/germany_en.

The Critical Bloc includes states that have faced repeated international condemnation for inadequate protection of children or complicity in trafficking-related practices. These countries often treat trafficking as a national security or migration issue rather than a child rights concern. Russia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. The UN Security Council reported that more than 1,800 Ukrainian children were transferred from Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine to Russia in July 2022 as part of a large-scale forced relocation and deportation programme.[45] Investigations by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch describe how children were separated from their families during "filtration" operations, placed in foster families or institutions in Russia, had their personal identity documents substituted or changed, and in some cases were enrolled in re-education camps or militarised programmes.[46]

In Northeast Syria, the Revolutionary Youth Movement of Syria (linked to the de facto governing authorities) is actively recruiting children as young as 12 years old. These children have been removed from their homes and schools, as well as transferred to armed groups such as the People's Protection Units.[47] Despite a formal commitment by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2019 to end child recruitment, the number of verified cases surged to 637 in 2022 while demobilisations plummeted to 33, indicating a severe implementation breakdown.[48] Iran has been documented as a destination for trafficked Afghan children who face forced labor, domestic servitude, and recruitment into armed groups.[49] Beyond exploitation in labour, credible sources

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[45] Al Jazeera. "UN Says 'Credible Reports' Ukraine Children Transferred to Russia." September 8, 2022. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/8/un-says-credible-reports-ukraine-children-transferred-to-russia.

[46] Amnesty International UK. "Ukraine: Russia's Forcible Transfer and Deportation of Ukrainian Civilians Is a War Crime." Accessed November 2025. https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/ukraine-russias-forcible-transfer-and-deportation-ukrainian-civilians-war-crime-new.

[47] Human Rights Watch. "Northeast Syria: Military Recruitment of Children Persists." October 2, 2024. https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/10/02/northeast-syria-military-recruitment-children-persists.

[48] Ibid

[49] United States Institute of Peace. Iran Primer Blog: U.S. Report on Human Trafficking in Iran. June 26, 2020. https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/jun/26/us-report-human-trafficking-iran

report that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and affiliated paramilitary bodies, including the Basij Resistance Force, have coerced Afghan minors—some as young as 12 or 13—into fighting in Iran-backed militias in Syria.[50]

Neo-Western Bloc: Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and the Philippines

The Neo-Western Bloc consists of democratic allies outside Europe and North America that align ideologically with the Western Bloc's human rights standards but tailor their policies to regional contexts, particularly in the Asia-Pacific. Australia's National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery (2020–2025) integrates child protection into migration and education policy, focusing on reducing child labor and forced marriage through partnerships with NGOs and Pacific nations.[51] The Philippines, as a regional leader, established the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), combining law enforcement and community-level prevention with UNICEF's Child Protection Compact Partnership.[52] The government of Japan increased efforts to identify victims of exploitation and initiated more prosecutions related to trafficking, including children, although prosecutions for child-sex trafficking remain low relative to the problem.[53] Japan amended laws-and regulations and introduced protections such as special residence status for trafficking victims, with the aim of strengthening penalties and extending safeguards to children exploited in commercial sex or forced labour.[54]

Neutral Bloc: India, China, South Africa, Brazil

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[50] Ibid

[51] Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs. *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–25.* https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/files/nap-combat-modern-slavery-2020-25.pdf.

[52] Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (Philippines). Accessed November 2025. https://iacat.gov.ph/.

[53] ecoi.net. "Country Report." Accessed November 2025. https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2130632.html.

[54] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. "Japan's Action Plan." Accessed November 2025. https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/i_crime/people/action0508.html.

The Neutral Bloc consists of populous developing states that formally support the CRC and Palermo Protocol but often balance international cooperation with national sovereignty and development priorities. These countries frequently serve as both source and destination nations for trafficked children and emphasize socioeconomic development, poverty reduction, and education reform as root-cause solutions rather than focusing primarily on criminalization. India operates *Operation Smile* and *Operation Muskaan*, large-scale national missions that have rescued over 76,000 trafficked and missing children since 2015.[55] At the same time, its Trafficking *in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill (2021)* aims to standardize victim services nationwide.[56] China's Natio*nal Action Plan Against Trafficking in Women and Children (2021–2030)* integrates trafficking prevention with poverty alleviation and rural child registration reform, though limited transparency and media restrictions hinder external monitoring.[57] Brazil's Operation Light of Childhood targets online child sexual exploitation and coordinates across Latin America through INTERPOL

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[55] Vikaspedia. "Operation Smile." Accessed November 2025.
https://socialwelfare.vikaspedia.in/viewcontent/social-welfare/women-and-child-development/child-development-1/handling-missing-children/operation-smile?lgn=en.

[56] *International Journal of Law, Legal Research.* "Critical Analysis of the Anti-Trafficking Bill 2021…" Accessed November 2025.
https://www.ijllr.com/post/critical-analysis-of-the-anti-trafficking-bill-2021-and-its-likely-impact-on-human-trafficking-in-i

[57] China Law Translate. "Counter-Trafficking Plan 2021–2030." Accessed November 2025.
https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/countertraffickingplan2021thr2030/.

Research and Preparation Questions

1.   How should child trafficking be understood differently from adult trafficking in law, policy, and practice? When trafficked children are treated as migrants, offenders, or "runaways", what rights are denied, and why does this misclassification persist?

2.   What role should families and local communities play in preventing trafficking, and where do they fall short? Where should the line be drawn between community responsibility and state accountability?

3.   How can online safety measures protect children without restricting access to information? How can we regulate emerging technologies, such as AI and encrypted payments, that pose a disproportionate threat to child safety despite widespread use?

4.   How can UNICEF act effectively in countries where governments are unwilling or unable to protect children? What practical and ethical constraints does state sovereignty place on UNICEF's interventions?

5.   How can policies address immediate harm without reinforcing long-term dependency or stigma? What trade-offs must be made between prevention, protection, and prosecution?

Topic 2: Education Quality in Underfunded Areas

History

Education as a Human Right

Historically, climates of economic disparity and unequal access have painted education as inessential. However, current international development goals center upon securing universal and quality education for all. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes education as a basic right, asserting that it should be "free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.[58]" This has laid the groundwork for significant international action and progress in recent years. Yet, developing countries subject to colonial legacies of economic instability struggle to secure quality education access for millions of children.

Education for Peace and Reconstruction

The postwar period, 1945 and onwards, was pivotal for thoughts surrounding education equality. In a time when many countries were rebuilding, individuals began to see education as a tool for peace and continued development in their nation. There existed a widespread belief that education could promote peace after mass conflict, which would further democracy and collaboration between nations. The core idea behind this was, if people were educated, they would be less likely to turn to extreme actions, lessening the possibility of conflict. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF both played central roles in this shift, promoting education for all individuals. UNESCO's Convention

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[58] United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

Against Discrimination in Education, adopted in 1960, became a vital framework to guarantee equal access to education regardless of factors such as race, gender, or income.[59]

Although these advances were significant, less developed regions continued to struggle with finding teachers, a lack of infrastructure, and small attendance rates. This proved that there was still much to be done. In the 1980s, UNICEF declared there was an "education crisis" in less developed nations.[60] The lack of economic progress caused by the debt crisis was a large factor in this, forcing many governments to resort to cuts on education budgets. In turn, this deepened inequality, even setting back previous progress. The 1989 UNICEF State of the World's Children highlighted that although children's rights were being recognized in theory, they were not in practice. Millions of children still dealt with violations to their education, while a disproportionate amount lacked access to basic education in less developed nations.[61] This highlighted the importance of improving children's lives through education, while addressing a variety of issues that affected them.

Global Recognition for Universal Education

1990 marked a vital turning point, with the World Conference on Education for All. Held in Thailand and led by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, it produced the World Declaration on Education for All, calling for universal access to education and furthering learning outcomes.[62] That being said, the goals were seen as too optimistic, outpacing the available

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[59] UNESCO, *Convention Against Discrimination in Education*, 1960,
https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-against-discrimination-education
[60] UNICEF, *Sixty Years for Children: UNICEF 1946–2006*, 2006,
https://www.unicef.org/media/85551/file/1946-2006-Sixty-Years-for-Children.pdf
[61] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children: Special Edition Celebrating 20 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989,
https://www.unicef.org/media/61751/file/SOWC%20Spec.%20Ed.%20CRC%20Main%20Report_EN_090409.pdf

[62] UNESCO, *World Declaration on Education for All*, 1990, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127583

funding. Due to this, many classrooms in less developed countries were overcrowded, dealing with an immense lack of teachers. Further, the teaching materials were grossly outdated.

Sustainable Development Goal

In 2000, the Dakar Framework for Action was implemented, emphasizing the need for universal elementary education.[63] This maintained the goals from the World Conference on Education for All. This push led to enrollment increases, which was a major challenge in earlier years– particularly for young girls. It was highlighted that "an estimated 34 million more children will have attended school as a result of faster progress since Dakar.[64]"Yet, as mentioned, the quality of education remained inadequate, which left many children without basic skills. One of the main barriers illustrated was conflict, which forced children to leave their schooling.

Adopted in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals broadened the scope beyond just access to education. It aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.[65]" This shift of breadth recognized that education systems should provide students with more than just access to the classroom, but also basic skills. Also implemented was the emphasis on data-driven accountability to see tangible results. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in the progress, particularly with low-income countries. Nations that have persistent conflict, such as Yemen and Sudan, grapple with destroyed schools and displaced individuals.

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[63] UNESCO, *Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All*, 2000, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000121147
[64] UNESCO, *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges*, 2015, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232205
[65] United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education," 2015, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4

COVID's Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic furthered global inequalities, impacting nearly 1.6 billion learners across the world. Underfunded areas suffered disproportionally from learning losses, with "at least 463 million children worldwide…unable to access remote learning during COVID-19 school closures in 2020.[66]"

The history of education quality in underfunded areas reveals a continuing divide between ideal goals and actual implementation. Education has evolved to be recognized as a necessity. That said, without funding and sustained investment, millions of children in lower-income nations continue to be excluded from the opportunity for quality learning. UNICEF continues to grapple with this challenge and places it at the forefront of its mission.

Current Situation

Global State of Education

Although many international commitments have been made over the span of decades, the current state of education quality in underfunded areas remains deeply concerning. According to UNESCO, around 251 million children are still not enrolled in school worldwide.[67] Lower-income countries experience disproportionate rates of unenrolled children, with one-third of school-aged children out of school. This is compared to only 3% in high-income countries.[68]

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[66] UNICEF, "COVID-19 and Children," 2020, https://data.unicef.org/covid-19-and-children/

[67] UNESCO. *"251M Children and Youth Still Out of School, Despite Decades of Progress (UNESCO Report)."* UNESCO, October 31, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/251m-children-and-youth-still-out-school-despite-decades-progress-unesco-report

[68] Ibid.

Access to schooling has improved in many regions, partly due to global efforts under pertinent frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 4. The goal aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. Although access has improved, the quality of what children are learning is still severely inadequate. According to UNICEF, over 600 million children in school are still unable to accomplish the minimum level of proficiency in reading and mathematics.[69] Thus, the problem is bigger than merely getting children into classrooms, but ensuring that their time in school is put towards genuine learning.

Funding Gaps and Unequal Investment

One continuous obstacle to improving education quality is the lack of funding in under-resourced areas. It is noted that four in ten countries spend less than the previously agreed-upon 15% of public expenditures on education.[70] This equates to USD$55 per learner in 2022, in comparison to over USD$8,500 in high-income countries. UNICEF's analysis also projects a decline in developmental education by a substantial amount of US$3.2 billion by 2026. This is a 24% drop since 2023 and could cause an additional six million children to be taken out of school.[71] These deficiencies directly undermine teacher recruitment and training, infrastructure investment, and overall resources, largely impacting marginalized areas.

Underfunded education systems often have large teacher-to-student ratios, outdated curriculum, and weak evaluation frameworks. In areas marred by crisis and conflict, the situation is increasingly dire. The Education Cannot Wait 2025 Global Estimates report reveals shocking

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[69] UNICEF. "Education." https://www.unicef.org/education.

[70] UNESCO. *"251M Children and Youth Still Out of School, Despite Decades of Progress (UNESCO Report)."* UNESCO, October 31, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/251m-children-and-youth-still-out-school-despite-decades-progress-unesco-report

[71] UNICEF. *"Global Funding Cuts Could Force 6 Million More Children Out of School in the Coming Year – UNICEF."* UNICEF Press Centre, September 2, 2025. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-funding-cuts-could-force-6-million-more-children-out-school-coming-year

realities: children may be enrolled and still suffer from extremely poor learning outcomes, primarily because of underfunded systems.[72] UNESCO's GEM report assessed learning rates across seventy countries and found declining literacy and mathematical abilities, even in well-resourced countries.[73] This illustrates that education funding is not being prioritized to the extent that it should be.

Conflict and Climate Impacts

The issue of under-funding is directly connected to other structural vulnerabilities. For example, children in conflict zones or individuals hit by a climate disaster are forced to endure a disproportionate burden. The Education Cannot Wait Analysis points to roughly 234 million children affected in crisis settings.[74] Due to this, around 85 million children are out of school entirely, or lack quality instruction.[75] In many low-income countries, a significant amount of budgeting is often devoted to repaying external debt, which can equal or surpass the amount spent on education itself. This limits the resources available for improving learning systems.[76] Furthermore, the variation in resources from region to region is considerable, with sub-Saharan Africa continuing to face the greatest proportion of children out of school, leading to the most learning deficits. More than half of all children not in school globally are located in this region.[77]

Effects of the Pandemic

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[72] Education Cannot Wait. *State of Education for Crisis-Affected Children and Adolescents: Access and Learning Outcomes – Global Estimates 2025 Update.* ECW, January 2025. https://www.educationcannotwait.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/global_estimates_report_2025.pdf

[73] UNESCO. *Leadership in Education: Global Education Monitoring Report.* UNESCO, 2025. https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/leadership

[74] UNICEF USA. *"Sounding the Alarm on the Global Education Crisis."* UNICEF USA. https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/sounding-alarm-global-education-crisis

[75] Ibid.

[76] UNESCO. *"251M Children and Youth Still Out of School, Despite Decades of Progress (UNESCO Report)."* UNESCO, October 31, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/251m-children-and-youth-still-out-school-despite-decades-progress-unesco-report

[77] Ibid.

It is important to note that the pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities for underfunded regions. School closures worldwide highlighted how the divide in digital access and resources impeded remote learning.[78] For children already in under-resourced systems, these disruptions have a greater impact, producing generations of lost learning. Individuals may be enrolled formally in school but have not developed foundational competencies, further entrenching the nation in poverty.

International Responses and Solutions

Due to the crisis in education quality, interventions are gaining traction worldwide. Flexible funding systems, such as Education Cannot wait aim to connect humanitarian and development responses, focusing on children in conflict areas and other underfunded settings.[79] Initiatives focus on different aspects, with some highlighting strengthened school leadership, better teacher support, and digital learning where possible. UNESCO's GEM report stresses the importance of leadership in education, highlighting the need for leaders to drive quality improvement in schools in spite of resource constraints.[80] Despite efforts and statistics, monitoring systems in many low-income nations are weak. Thus, data generation on actual learning outcomes is often delayed. There is an overemphasis on enrollment numbers compared to learning outcomes, with UNICEF briefs noting that schooling without learning is an empty victory.[81]

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[78] UNICEF. *"Global Funding Cuts Could Force 6 Million More Children Out of School in the Coming Year."* UNICEF Press Centre, September 2, 2025. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-funding-cuts-could-force-6-million-more-children-out-school-coming-year

[79] UNESCO. *"Education Cannot Wait and Global Education Monitoring Report Call for More Coherent and Transparent Data"* UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/articles/education-cannot-wait-and-global-education-monitoring-report-call-more-coherent-and-transparent-data

[80] UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024.* UNESCO, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/reports/gem-report/en/2024

[81] UNICEF. *Addressing the Learning Crisis: Advocacy Brief 2020.* UNICEF, 2020. https://www.unicef.org/media/63896/file/Addressing-the-learning-crisis-advocacy-brief-2020.pdf

In sum, although access to education has improved in many under-resourced regions, the quality of said education remains neglected. Underfunded systems do not have the luxury of simply building more classrooms. For UNICEF and other international partners, meeting the challenge of educational quality involves more than just the technicalities. It is essential for children's rights and for building a more equitable society.

Bloc Analysis

Global/United Nations

The United Nations provides the foundations for addressing education quality globally. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is key to this topic, conveying a shared commitment to inclusive and equitable education for all. Within this, member states are urged to prioritize learning outcomes, the development of teachers, and equal access for all. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Reports work to evaluate disparities in funding, infrastructure, student learning, and more. It calls on governments to strengthen accountability to move beyond merely enrollment metrics, recognizing the nuance of the issue.[82] UNICEF has addressed a "global learning crisis," emphasizing the need for child-centered policies, digital access expansion, and comprehensive learning models.[83] Education Cannot Wait (ECW) supports education in emergencies, aiming to deliver funding to conflict-affected regions. Together, the UN bodies shape the global narrative around education, pushing for long-term investment in systems.

Western Bloc: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the European Union

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[82] UNESCO. *2025 Spotlight on Education: In Support of Every Learner.* UNESCO, 2025.
https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/2025spotlight
[83] UNICEF. *Education.* UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/education

Western nations typically adopt rights-based approaches to education development, placing an emphasis on measurable learning outcomes. For example, the United States USAIF Education Policy prioritizes literacy and numeracy, improving teacher training, and continuing education in fragile states.[84] Canada has placed gender equality and Indigenous inclusion at the center of its mission, also working to finance teacher development, particularly in low-income regions.[85] Further, the United Kingdom emphasizes learning for marginalized groups, notably in crisis zones. The European Union, under the European Consensus on Development, prioritizes digital learning, teacher professionalism, and climate-resilient schooling systems.[86] In addition. Germany reinforces its position by promoting education as a "global public good," prioritizing long-term mechanisms over short-term solutions.[87] Across the Western bloc, the emphasis on accountability and evidence-based improvement remains.

Less Developed Countries

Less developed countries, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa, face some of the most severe education challenges globally. These obstacles include a lack of funding, weak infrastructure, and severe teacher shortages.. The region alone accounts for more than half of the world's out of school children as well.[88] Many states in the region assert that structural barriers, such as climate shocks and insufficient national revenue, make quality improvements to education nearly impossible. Thus, less developed nations require significantly higher levels of international

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[84] *Digital Learning and Engagement for K–12 Students: A National Survey on Preparedness and Practices*, ED609724. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2021. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED609724.pdf

[85] Global Affairs Canada. *"International Development: Priorities and Policy."* Government of Canada. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=en
[86] European Commission. *Digital Education Action Plan.* European Commission. https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/plan
[87] Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). *Education.* BMZ. https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/education
[88] UNESCO. *"251M Children and Youth Still Out of School, Despite Decades of Progress (UNESCO Report)."* UNESCO, October 31, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/251m-children-and-youth-still-out-school-despite-decades-progress-unesco-report

assistance than most. Their positions reflect one major concern: without addressing the financial and structural roots of education inequality, global commitments to SDG 4 are unattainable.

Conflict-Affected Nations: Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, and more

Nations experiencing ongoing conflict have consistent educational instability. Schools in these areas prioritize rebuilding and protecting education systems as they face widespread destruction and displacement of teachers. Millions of children are affected by crisis conditions worldwide, with many out of school entirely.[89] The primary goals of conflict-affected states include rebuilding damaged schools, blending education in humanitarian responses, and working to develop mobile or community-based learning models that can function in unstable environments. Some of these nations also present additional gendered barriers.[90] Restrictions on young girls' education reduces the quality and access, especially for individuals above primary grade levels. These states consistently call for international funding, education planning that takes crisis into account, and humanitarian support.[91]

Asia-Pacific Bloc: India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, and Pacific States

The Asia-Pacific bloc includes diverse economies with rapid education expansion and persistent quality challenges. India's National Education Policy promotes skill-based learning, curricular reform, teacher recruitment, and more. This is in an attempt to modernize their education system.[92] Bangladesh has also made improvements in primary enrollment, but faces consistent issues of overcrowding, leading to learning gaps. Improving literacy at the foundational level is

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[89] Ibid.

[90] UNESCO. *"251M Children and Youth Still Out of School, Despite Decades of Progress (UNESCO Report)."* UNESCO, October 31, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/251m-children-and-youth-still-out-school-despite-decades-progress-unesco-report

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ministry of Education, Government of India. *"National Education Policy 2020 (Final Draft)."* Government of India, 2020.. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

one of the central focuses of this bloc. Indonesia's system places responsibilities mostly on local communities, leading to uneven quality in education at times. Meanwhile, the Philippines prioritizes teacher training and measurable reforms.[93] Islands such as Samoa and Fiji emphasize climate resilience measures and the implementation of remote learning infrastructure. Due to geographic isolation, the nations highlight island-appropriate solutions. Across the bloc, the priorities are literacy improvement, teacher development, and cost-effective learning interventions.

Middle East and North Africa

Middle East and North African countries face distinct challenges, including large refugee populations and political instability. Jordan and Lebanon host millions of displaced children, focusing on the need for complex integration strategies in education. States such as Qatar and the UAE have greater financial resources and invest heavily in digital learning platforms while also focusing on school modernization and development of teachers. Across the regions, policies focus on expanding early childhood education and improving language literacy.[94] That being said, regional disparities and conflict spillovers can constrain large-scale improvements at times. Many states emphasize that sustainable, long-term progress requires international actors to work together and use targeted aid to alleviate the burden on public systems working to serve refugee populations.[95]

Latin America and the Caribbean

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[93] UNICEF Philippines. *UNICEF Philippines*. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/philippines/
[94] UNHCR. "Education." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education
[95] Ibid.

Latin American countries typically have high enrollment rates but struggle with inequality, outdated curriculum, and frequent teacher strikes. Governments across the region, such as in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, are highlighting reforms focused on teacher pay and digital learning platforms.[96] Attempts to overcome disparities are implemented, such as school meal programs and free textbook initiatives, but they remain insufficient.[97] Caribbean nations face unique vulnerabilities related to climate challenges. This often results in repeated school closures and damage to infrastructure. These states advocate for climate resilient learning systems and expanded digital connectivity to ensure individuals are able to continue their learning in wake of disasters.

Research and Preparation Questions

1. How effective have international frameworks, such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, been in improving education quality in underfunded regions?

    a. What barriers have limited the success?

2. What are the primary causes of poor learning outcomes in under-resourced education systems? How can they be combated?

    a. What role do high income countries play in alleviating poor learning outcomes in developing nations?

3. How does insufficient and unequal education financing affect teacher availability, training, and curriculum quality?

    a. What are the long-term consequences?

4. How do gender, poverty, and location intersect to further disparities in education quality?

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[96] UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean. UNICEF LAC. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/lac/en.
[97] Ibid.

    a. What approaches can help address these intersectional inequalities?

5. What can the international community do to strengthen accountability and ensure progress is measured meaningfully, taking all factors into account?

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    https://www.educationcannotwait.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/global_estimates_report
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    ades-progress-unesco-report.

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    https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/leadership.

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https://www.unicef.org/media/61751/file/SOWC%20Spec.%20Ed.%20CRC%20Main%20Report_EN_090409.pdf.

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