



**THE 71ST SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF
THE FAR WEST**

**UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD
ISSUES BOOK**

1. Addressing Child Trafficking
2. Promoting Maternal and Newborn Health
3. Ensuring Education for All



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. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), UNICEF strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behavior towards children. 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. The agency 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 also 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.

The Executive Board is the governing body of UNICEF, providing intergovernmental support and oversight to the organization, in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Executive Board reviews UNICEF activities and approves its policies, country programmes and budgets. It comprises 36 members, representing the five regional groups of Member States at the United Nations. Its work is coordinated by the Bureau, comprising the President and four Vice-Presidents, each officer representing one of the five regional groups. (unicef.org)

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ADDRESSING CHILD TRAFFICKING

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In 2000, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights defined human trafficking as, “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.”¹ According to UNICEF, approximately 28% of all identified trafficking victims are children, with numbers as high as 64% of total cases in regions such as Central America and the Caribbean. UNICEF and the Inter-agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) believe that the numbers could be even higher, as not all victims know they are being trafficked, or are afraid to report their circumstances to the police out of fear of retribution from their trafficker.² It is well documented that traffickers target those in unstable circumstances, such as individuals residing in conflict zones, refugees, and those below the poverty line. Additionally, with the economic uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more individuals are in vulnerable positions.

Of greatest importance to this topic for our committee, women and girls are at the greatest risk for becoming a victim of human trafficking. In 2018 it was found that for every ten globally detected victims, roughly five were adult women, and two were young girls.³ With such staggering numbers, it is clear to see that women and girls require more support on a global scale.

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Human Trafficking”
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/human-trafficking.html> [accessed October 31, 2021].

² UNICEF, “Press Release”
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/children-account-nearly-one-third-identified-trafficking-victims-globally> [accessed October 31, 2021].

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons”
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html> [accessed October 31, 2021].

Push and Pull Factors

To understand why child trafficking occurs, one must identify the supply and demand, or push and pull factors that drive this crime. Push or supply factors are the reasons why someone is trafficked. For example, poverty is a major cause. Pull or demand factors are the reasons why someone is eager to purchase someone who has been trafficked such as cheaper labor or sex trafficking. Those who purchase children are exploiting and profiting from those children.

Children are trafficked in multiple ways. The two largest forms of child trafficking are sex trafficking and forced labor, with 72% of young girls being trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 66% of young boys being trafficked into forced labor. The average income of the geographical location, or source country, in which the child was initially recruited by traffickers is another contributing factor. In high-income regions such as Europe and North America, forced labor trafficking only accounts for roughly 1% of all child trafficking cases, whereas in low-income states those sent into forced labor constitute around 46% of all cases.⁴

There are numerous reasons why children are sold and purchased by traffickers. One of the most unfortunate reasons for trafficking is family poverty, where the parents or guardians of the child will “sell” their children to traffickers in exchange for money, valuables, or even drugs. Eliminating poverty and by continuing to address Sustainable Development Goal #1, “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”, we can begin to eradicate this push factor of child trafficking.

It is also important to recognize a common misconception of trafficking, that the victims are often abducted by strangers and smuggled across borders. In reality, many victims know their traffickers beforehand, and the traffickers use a tactic known as grooming. Traffickers will make their victims feel safe around them, offering financial support, meals, drugs, etc. in order

⁴ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Global Report on Trafficking in Persons - 2020” <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-report-trafficking-persons-2020> [accessed October 31, 2021].

to gain their trust before attempting to traffic them. As the victim becomes more and more comfortable around the trafficker the need for kidnapping becomes obsolete, as the victim feels they are helping a friend.⁵

Conflict zones and migration serve as additional sources for children to be trafficked. As recently as October 2021, UNICEF was reporting on the high level of children who are being kidnapped in Haiti amongst the violence and political unrest.⁶ This pattern is found in all places experiencing conflict and unrest where women and children are the most vulnerable for exploitation due to the breakdown of political order, and often are lacking resources that are essential for legal migration. For example, Rohingya refugees have often been the focus of child trafficking as they languish in refugee camps.⁷ Likewise,

Virtually every country in the world is used by profit-seeking criminals for smuggling migrants—either as a country of origin, a transit country or a country of destination (or a combination thereof). Smuggled migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and their lives are often put at risk: thousands of people have suffocated in containers, perished in deserts or drowned at sea while being smuggled to another country. The smuggling of migrants and the activities related to it generate enormous profits for the criminals involved and fuel corruption and organized crime.⁸

Our committee must recognize that human trafficking, and in particularly child trafficking, occurs in every Member State and all bear the responsibility to end this heinous crime.⁹ For example, the United States reports some of the highest rates of child trafficking, but has been actively

⁵ Polaris Project, “What we know about how child sex trafficking happens” <https://polarisproject.org/blog/2020/08/what-we-know-about-how-child-sex-trafficking-happens/> [accessed October 31, 2021].

⁶ UNICEF, “UNICEF sounds alarm over abduction of women and children in Haiti” https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/UNICEF_sounds_alarm_over_abductions_of_women_and_children_in_Haiti [accessed October 31, 2021].

⁷ UNICEF USA “Children are disappearing in Bangladesh” <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/children-are-disappearing-bangladesh/36868> [accessed October 31, 2021].

⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Toolkit to Combat Smuggling of Migrants” https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/SOM_Toolkit_E-book_english_Combined.pdf [accessed October 31, 2021].

⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons” <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html> [accessed October 31, 2021].

documenting the causes and cases of human trafficking worldwide in its Trafficking in Persons Report.¹⁰ It is essential for all Member States to take human trafficking seriously, and work diligently and in conjunction with other Member States, other civic society and international organizations towards finding solutions for the victims.

United Nations Actions

Many important agreements and actions in the fight against child trafficking have been agreed to and taken by the United Nations. The definition of human trafficking was formally agreed-upon by the UN in the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime in the year 2000 when the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Girls was adopted by the General Assembly.¹¹ The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) includes an Optional Protocol (2000) prohibiting the “sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography”.¹² The Commission of Human Rights, and today the Human Rights Council, has also been active in raising awareness about child trafficking and pressuring Member States to take concrete steps to eradicate the push and pull factors within their own borders. The Commission appointed a Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in 2004. More recently in 2019 and 2020, efforts to combat “modern slavery” by the United Nations Human Rights Council have included identifying and eradicating “traditional slavery, forced labour, debt bondage, serfdom, children working in slavery or slavery-like conditions, domestic servitude, sexual slavery, and servile forms of marriage.”¹³

¹⁰ United States State Department, “2020 Trafficking in Persons Report” <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. “United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime and Protocols Thereto” <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opsccrc.aspx> [accessed October 31, 2021]

¹³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences”

Other actions include the General Assembly in 2010 adopting A/RES/64/293, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The International Labour Organization has also actively addressed child trafficking for cheap labor including its 2002 Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182).¹⁴

Of significance to this committee are Sustainable Development Goals and actions by UNICEF to protect children. “The SDGs specifically mention human trafficking in the targets of three goals: 5, 8 and 16” and achieving the SDGS represent one of the best means of achieving the end of human trafficking by eliminating many of the push factors by empowering women and girls, economic growth and peaceful and inclusive societies.¹⁵ For example,

SDG target 8.7 is to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.¹⁶

UNICEF is providing research to inform decision making such as its Innocenti Research Centre¹⁷ as well as providing aid and expertise to protect children in conflict zones, and providing the resources to eradicate poverty and quality education for all children.¹⁸ UNICEF affiliates, such as UNICEF USA are actively bringing awareness, providing information and encouraging political actions within Member States.¹⁹ On the domestic level, states such as the United Kingdom have

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/slavery/srslavery/pages/srslaveryindex.aspx> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹⁴ International Labour Organization, “Unbearable to human heart”

<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/childtrafficking.pdf> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹⁵ UNICEF USA, “The Sustainable Development Goals that Aim to End Human Trafficking”

<https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/sustainable-development-goals-aim-end-human-trafficking/29864> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹⁶ UNICEF Data “Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth”

https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/goal-8-decent-work-economic-growth/#pt_chld_5-17_lbr_econ [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹⁷ UNICEF, “Research on child trafficking”

<https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/research-on-child-trafficking/> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹⁸ UNICEF, “Where we work” <https://www.unicef.org/where-we-work> [accessed October 31, 2021].

¹⁹ UNICEF USA “How to Help Stop Child Trafficking”

<https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/protect/trafficking/end> [accessed October 31, 2021].

taken actions to identify cases of modern slavery/human trafficking with it UK Modern Slavery Act, requiring “supply chain transparency” to identify if companies may be exploiting humans for cheap labor.²⁰ Countries such as Thailand have created stringent laws to combat trafficking and yet need further resources to be able to protect migrants, and enforce laws to limit sex trafficking.²¹ While there are many actors working to lessen child trafficking and provide support to the victims, the rate of conviction remains far too low globally, and individual states often fail to provide victims with the necessary protection and services.

Future Steps

As noted above many actions have been taken but echoing what the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasized in its 2009 Trafficking in Persons report:

in the past few years the number of Member States seriously implementing the Protocol has more than doubled (from 54 to 125 out of the 155 States covered). However, there are still many countries that lack the necessary legal instruments or political will.²²

Clearly the steps to reduce the push and pull factors of child trafficking are important as discussed above. There are many effective actions that can be taken. Member States can add to the collection of knowledge by participating in UNODC’s Human Trafficking – Knowledge Portal.²³ As noted above, eradicating poverty and achieving the SDGs would dramatically reduce human trafficking.²⁴ In addition, those same laws should not punish children who have been the

²⁰ RELX, “Human trafficking – Sustainable Development Goals”
<https://sdgresources.relx.com/tags/human-trafficking> [accessed October 31, 2021].

²¹ ECPAT International “Trafficking in Thailand”
<https://ecpat.org/story/trafficking-in-thailand-the-demand-fuels-child-trafficking-for-sexual-purposes/> [accessed October 31, 2021].

²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “2009 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons”
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html> [accessed October 31, 2021].

²³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Human Trafficking – Knowledge Portal”
<https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/en/v3/htms/index.html> [accessed October 31, 2021].

²⁴ For additional ideas, see Patrick Kerr, 2014, “Push and Pull: The Intersection of Poverty, Health Disparities and Human Trafficking”
<https://www.cancerincytes.org/push-and-pull-the-intersections-of-pove> [accessed October 31, 2021].

victim of trafficking.²⁵ Member States must strive to strengthen existing laws and criminal justice systems to punish those who profit from the trafficking of children, while providing support to the victims as they adjust to their new lives.

All Member States must focus their attention on reducing the causes within their own borders and bringing awareness to the issue. The United Nations and UNICEF cannot act alone and must work in coordination with other international organizations, such as Interpol to share information and databases, Civil Society Organizations such as Save the Children or End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism who bring local and international attention to the plight of trafficked children, and within Member States to create and enforce laws to protect and help rehabilitate children who have been trafficked.

²⁵ UNICEF, “Justice for children” <https://www.unicef.org/protection/justice-for-children> [accessed October 31, 2021].

Questions To Consider

1. What is the rate of child trafficking in your state? What are the push and pull factors that contribute to this rate?
2. What steps has your state taken to reduce child trafficking in your state?
3. Has your state ratified the conventions and protocols related to child trafficking?
4. Has your state entered into agreements with CSOs and other international organizations to reduce child trafficking?
5. What programs (if any) does your state have to support victims of child trafficking?

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https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/UNICEF_sounds_alarm_over_abductions_of_women_and_children_in_Haiti [accessed October 31, 2021].

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https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/SOM_Toolkit_E-book_english_Combined.pdf [accessed October 31, 2021].

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ENSURING EDUCATION FOR ALL

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While the United Nations is commonly known for its aim of maintaining and sustaining peace and security, education has been a key aspect of its mission since its founding. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states under Article 26, “everyone has the right to education.”⁴⁹ Over the 76 years of the United Nations’ existence, numerous sectors of the United Nations, especially the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), have maintained a strong focus on education. Recently, Education For All has become a focal point. The concept was conceived by several United Nations organizations and “launched at the World Conference on Education for All” in 1990 to help bring education to all citizens of every society.⁵⁰ The effort is now part of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals - “Quality Education” to “insure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities.”⁵¹

UNICEF remains focused, as does the United Nations, on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, as it provides the framework with which states can compare their state and set achievable goals. The principles of Education for All, a key focus of UNICEF in its support for children and adolescents, push for universal access to education for all children no matter their status such as gender, societal position, location, or disability. UNICEF focuses on proficiency in literacy (basic and advanced) and mathematics, all the while having the necessary materials to teach such topics within a classroom setting (each covering primary, upper-primary, and secondary). Even so, actions to ensure Education for All face hurdles such as access to quality education, access to and continuing education during crisis,

⁴⁹ United Nations, United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

⁵⁰ UNESCO, Education for All (EFA) <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Education+For+All>.

⁵¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Number 4 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

and gender disparities within education itself. These three issues stand in the way of making education accessible to all, and every Member State must find a way to create positive change or such issues will undermine the goals of Education for All.

Quality of education

Past efforts by the United Nations focused on the first step of providing access to education, for example Millennium Development Goal 2's emphasis was to "Achieve Universal Primary Education."⁵² However, since the early 2010s quality of education has become a central focus for the United Nations (see for example Target 4.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 4). It is important to understand what a quality education is, because a low quality of education can be equal to no education at all. Quality education is the accessibility to both high quality materialistic tools for education and paths to explore different educational avenues which open opportunities to vocational and higher education.⁵³ One key to understanding how to address the quality of education is providing greater monetary support; however, this is not always the solution. While it does help, monetary investment is not always the best indicator of the quality of an education. For example, according to the World Population Review 2021, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany rank as the top three. Ironically when quality of education is factored in (access to resources and educational opportunities) according to the Global Citizens for Human Rights report in 2020, only Germany is ranked in the top ten, with both the United Kingdom and the United States not in the top ten. Instead, Denmark and Finland take their places.^{54,55} How does the United States rank so high in money spent for education, yet is

⁵² United Nations, Millennium Development Goal #2, <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>.

⁵³ UNICEF, Quality of Education, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/quality-education>.

⁵⁴ World Population Review, Education Rankings by Country 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/education-rankings-by-country>.

⁵⁵ Interestingly for 2021, the Global Citizens for Human Rights ranks countries based on their "returning students back to school" <https://worldtop20.org/worldbesteducationsystem>, lack of access to education because of COVID has had a significant impact on students worldwide (see discussion below on the impact on crises).

not even top ten for quality of education, and why does Denmark rank so high? Simply put, the education services in Denmark educate all communities more equally than in the United States and provide an equal opportunity for learning opportunities. The United States, while having better funded higher levels of education and generally speaking greater opportunities for students, has not successfully found the means to promote primary, upper-primary, and secondary education in comparison to Denmark. For example, in the United States, early childhood education (pre-kindergarten) often requires parents to pay for such services. The result is a severe drop in quality of education, as those who have wealth can afford to send their children to better schools, while those with lower incomes do not have access to early opportunities.⁵⁶

Quality of education has such an important impact on education as it has a direct impact on students' knowledge and their future success. Currently, an estimated 670 million children and adolescents around the world fail to reach the minimum reading and mathematical skills required for their grade level. Once more, two-thirds of these are currently students who are enrolled in school. Meaning that for some students their quality of education is so poor that they are equal to students who do not receive an education at all.⁵⁷ This alarming statistic highlights the key issue of quality of education. How should Member States try to solve the issue of quality of education? Obviously, there is not a simple answer, but instead many parts which can affect the quality of education. For example, going back to Denmark, the Danish education system makes it so education for young people is relatively free of charge and is accessible to everyone no matter their location or societal status.⁵⁸ Japan education's structure places "emphasis on the holistic development of children. . . . and still embodies the values of egalitarianism,

⁵⁶ Halley Potter, 2017, The Benefits of Universal Access in Pre-K and "3-K for All"
<https://tcf.org/content/commentary/benefits-universal-access-pre-k-3-k/?session=1>

⁵⁷ UNICEF, Education, <https://www.unicef.org/education>.

⁵⁸ European Commission, Denmark Overview
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/denmark_en.

harmony, and social equality.” However, the Japanese are facing many issues including “discontent” and a “gap in access to higher education between the upper and lower classes.” They are now developing interesting initiatives such as “cross- border mobility of students” to accelerate education reform and maintain their high ranking in educational quality.⁵⁹ These are small but effective ways in which Member States can improve the quality of education.

Access to education during crisis

Quality of education is key to helping deliver Education for All; however, the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought attention to another significant issue: education during a crisis. Education is one of the first services to disappear during a crisis and the last to reappear. No matter the crisis whether it is a natural disaster, conflict, pandemic, or famine, children most often are not able to attend school. Currently more crises are taking place than in the last thirty years, and many have spanned whole childhoods. Simply put, many children have missed so many years of schooling that their current education level is equivalent to a preschooler, or in some cases nonexistent. “Between 2015 and 2019 ... An estimated 35 million children have been forcibly displaced with nearly half of school aged children out of school. Girls are nearly 2.5 more likely to be out of school in conflict-afflicted countries compared to girls in other places”⁶⁰. Education is not just a tool to help lift children and families out of poverty. It is a tool that can be used during crises to help students escape the harsh realities of such disasters. It cannot be understated how important it is for students to have access to education during a crisis. Schools are a place in which students can emotionally and physically feel safe, away from the crisis itself. Schools can help students by providing a physical escape from abuse at home, being exploited during said crisis, and providing both hygiene and food that they may not have at home. Schools also provide a mental sanctuary for students away from the emotional and

⁵⁹ World Education Services, Education in Japan, <https://wenr.wes.org/2021/02/education-in-japan>.

⁶⁰ UNICEF, Education in Emergencies, <https://www.unicef.org/education/emergencies>.

traumatizing nature of a crisis. Firstly the consistency of school helps students be able to process the trauma of living in a crisis. Often taken for granted, the consistency of school can help students to step away from and process their circumstances, and provide structure for them to set up their own future success. Secondly schools help students prepare for their future, even when psychologically it does not seem likely they might have one.⁶¹

It cannot be understated the importance of education during a crisis, and yet education is often neglected when it comes to humanitarian aid. With education making up less than 3% of humanitarian aid, funding is not the only issue at hand. Another is supplying teachers and educators in areas of conflict. Without a quality educator to provide classroom education, students will lack access to quality education.⁶²

With the recent outbreak of Covid-19, the issue of education during the crisis has come to the forefront of everyone throughout the world. How can we help provide a future for children during this and all crises? Some states have found different ways of providing educational services that have helped students remain in school even during such a crisis. The advancement of technology has allowed for remote learning to become the new norm, allowing students to continue their education from home. For example, Indonesia is ranked #54 in education,⁶³ even after two major tsunamis within the last 17 years, and they have increased their level of preparedness to provide education during a crisis. What has been adopted is not simply preparedness for another disaster such as disaster drills, but how to respond to the disaster. In 2004 when a Tsunami struck Indonesia, educational services were not able to return until almost a full year after the Tsunami. In comparison it took only a month after the Tsunami in 2018 for educational services to return (note however that the 2018 tsunami was not as

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ World Population Review, Education Rankings by Country 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/education-rankings-by-country>.

destructive as the one in 2004).⁶⁴ The ability to mobilize educational services after the 2018 Tsunami highlights a level of preparedness that in many developing states are not able to match. Clearly, strengthening the educational system to prepare and respond to crises, and to provide quality of education matter and deeply impact the ability to provide Education for All by UNICEF.

Gender Disparities in Education

Efforts to advance Education for All, even beyond crises and quality, must focus on one group who is often neglected. Education plays a major role in the lives of girls, and has proven to help the lives of girls and boys as well. Educating girls strengthens economies and reduces inequalities, contributing to a more stable and resilient society. These effects are amplified as girls progress through school. When the proper investments are made, education of girls helps dramatically increase the lifetime earnings of girls, the national economic growth rate increases, and child marriages, mortality, and maternal mortality rates both fall and decline. These benefits to girls and society as a whole, however, are often ignored or neglected. Consequently, “around the world, 129 million girls are out of school, including 32 million of primary age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age and 67 million of upper-secondary school age.” Such data highlights the issue of gender disparities within education. There are so many benefits to girls earning their education that many states fail to achieve. Globally, “[o]nly 49 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education. At the secondary level, the gap widens: 42 per cent of have achieved gender equality in lower secondary education, and 24 per cent in upper secondary education.” Such disparities have dire consequences for girls, many of whom fall into poverty, child marriages, and gender based violence.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ UNICEF South Asia, Back to school one month after Indonesia’s earthquake and tsunami, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/back-school-one-month-after-indonesias-earthquake-and-tsunami>.

⁶⁵ UNICEF, Girls’ Education, <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

As stated before, the benefits for a society cannot be overstated for gender equality within education. For example, Iceland is ranked number one for equality within education. This has influenced a large number of women who have achieved basic and also higher levels of education. While not reaching complete parity in earnings, women earned about 6.7 million (ISK - Icelandic Krona) while their male counterparts earned 9.3 million. Iceland has closed the gender gap to “82%” (the gap between a male-identify gender and female-identify gender in specific categories such as education or salary, Iceland ranks #1), and this has created important opportunities for Icelandic women. In Iceland, women make up about “45% of official committees and councils.”⁶⁶ This has had a dramatic impact on the legislation that has come forward and helped with women having a positive impact upon their society.⁶⁷ In comparison to Yemen who ranked last in education gender equality,⁶⁸ only 8% of women are able to even be able to go to university. While Yemen had 86% of primary aged girls enrolled in school, only 43% are enrolled in secondary education. This number, while decent, pales in comparison to their male counterparts, with 99% of primary aged boys enrolled in school and 59% enrolled in secondary education.⁶⁹ Such numbers indicate the troubling reality that girls face within Yemen, in comparison to Iceland who puts more effort into education gender equality than Yemen, which saw more women who received their education and were able to advance and contribute to society as a whole. It should be noted, as well, that Yemen has been dealing with the effects of a civil war (a crisis) since 2014.

⁶⁶ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2020, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

⁶⁷ Statistics Iceland, Women and men on the same education level have different average income from work, <https://www.statice.is/publications/news-archive/social-affairs/women-and-men-in-iceland-2019/>

⁶⁸ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2020, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

⁶⁹ Al-Fanar Media, For Yemen Women the Path to Universities Gets Tougher, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2019/08/for-yemeni-women-the-path-to-universities-gets-tougher/>.

Gender disparities simply are not just access to school; they also relate to access to hygiene, safety, or sanitation. This need for hygiene is often due to menstruation cycles, an often taboo topic, especially for patriarchal societies. Menstruations often in these societies are seen as an unnatural process or taboo (as it being a private matter that isn't addressed publicly) and often girls (and boys) don't receive any education at all about menstruation, this leads to girls experiencing menstruation for the first time without any knowledge beforehand about what they're experiencing.⁷⁰ Menstrual hygiene is an important topic and understanding that girls need to have access to menstrual hygiene products in order for their own safety, as unsafe practices can lead to major health hazards.⁷¹ These health hazards can lead to Urinary tract infection and reproductive issues. This accompanied with gender discrimination has made it difficult, but hopefully not impossible, for states to help eliminate gender inequalities. However, as seen with Iceland it is not impossible for states to achieve high levels of education gender equality.

What Has UNICEF Done?

It is important to understand what UNICEF has done to help bring Education for All, and how they have tried to address the current issues facing all Member States. One of the simplest yet greatest assets has been through innovations in education. These innovations are more than just technological advances or greater monetary funding. UNICEF is targeting new forms of education and how they bring about learning and equality. In a sense "innovation in education means solving a real problem in a new, simple way to promote equitable learning."⁷² Examples include, "solar-powered tablets which deliver math lessons to children in remote areas of Sudan. Or digital learning platforms that teach refugees and other marginalized children the language

⁷⁰ UNICEF, Fast Facts: Nine things you didn't know about menstruation, https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fast-facts-nine-things-you-didnt-know-about-menstruation#_edn3

⁷¹ UNICEF, Girls' Education, <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

⁷² UNICEF, Strengthening Education Systems and Innovations, <https://www.unicef.org/education/strengthening-education-systems-innovation>

of instruction in Greece, Lebanon, and Mauritania.”⁷³ As stated before, technology is not the only strategy UNICEF has adopted to promote Education for All. This has been expressed through improvements in the education system itself. A powerful education system brings into alignment families, educators, and decision makers with the key goal of learning being the center of not just local policy, but national as well. Education systems require “data collection and analysis,” which helps identify key issues needing to be addressed and being able to support all students no matter their background. UNICEF has pushed these efforts by developing guidelines and by providing policy makers with the necessary data needed to help drive Education for All.⁷⁴

Another key strategy by UNICEF has been the implementation of “Every Child Learns 2019-2030,” in which:

for ‘every’ child to learn, UNICEF will increasingly promote equity and inclusion. This will include focusing particularly on children excluded on the basis of gender, children with disabilities, the poorest, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and children affected by emergencies. There will also be a shift in focus to expand support for reaching children during their early years (3–5 years old) and during adolescence (10–19 years old). Increased work on pre-primary education will enable countries to benefit from the unparalleled positive return from investing in this area. Providing multiple learning pathways, particularly for adolescents, by introducing and scaling up innovative approaches will enable UNICEF to respond to the increasingly important and critical period in which children transition to adulthood.⁷⁵

Such a strategy will help bring education for all, and in turn reflect UNICEF’s mantra for education: “Every child has the right to learn.”

⁷³ UNICEF, Strengthening education systems and innovation, <https://www.unicef.org/education/strengthening-education-systems-innovation>.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵ UNICEF, Every Child Learns, <https://www.unicef.org/media/59856/file/UNICEF-education-strategy-2019-2030.pdf>.

Questions to Consider

1. Of the three main issues, which affect your state the most and how?
2. How has your state taken steps to address the issue? What has or has not worked?
3. How does your state's education system help address the issue of inadequate materials for students' and teachers' needs?
4. For gender equity, what steps has your state taken to reduce the gender gap and end disparities in education?
5. Does your state have plans in place for educational services during a crisis? If so, what are they, and if not what can your state create to help during the crisis? Has it been able to maintain its educational standards during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. What factors are hindering your state's ability to help address the three issues (either separately or collectively)?

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