



VMUN 2024

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

BACKGROUND GUIDE



VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Twenty-Third Annual Session | January 26–28, 2024

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Adele Agenes and I am extremely thrilled to be serving as your director for Vancouver Model United Nations 2024. I have been in Model UN for almost four years now, and I am currently in my grade 11 year at Rockridge Secondary School. For this year's iteration of VMUN, I have the privilege to be staffing alongside Connor Mau, your Chair, and Alexandra Hui and Jessie Shi, your Assistant Directors.

When I first stepped into my school's Model United Nations program, I immediately felt included in a community of hardworking and passionate individuals. Although I was initially reluctant to participate in debate, I learned to enjoy not only the non-spectator sport but the fascinating personalities and faces involved in it as well. My Model UN adventure has been nothing less than educational, extraordinary and rewarding, and I hope that MUN will tether the same impact on you.

With a multilateral and collaborative environment such as the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee, I recommend you to try and speak in order to further your VMUN 2024 experience and improve on countless diplomatic skills. For the twenty-third iteration of Vancouver Model United Nations, SOCHUM will be debating, discussing and negotiating the topics of *Refugee Rights in Host Countries* and *Child Labour*. Furthermore, I encourage you to read over the background guide diligently and conduct your own research on your country to best prepare for the upcoming conference.

On behalf of your whole dais team, we look forward to meeting you and being impressed with the skills and perspectives you bring to committee session. We truly hope that VMUN 2024 will aid you in creating lifelong memories, connections, and learning experiences. If you have any questions, concerns or worries, please contact us at sochum@vmun.com.

Best regards,

Adele Agenes
SOCHUM Director

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, their country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **11:59 PM PT on January 12, 2024**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Researched award.

The email address for this committee is *sochum@vmun.com*.

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Refugee Rights in Host Countries

Overview

Refugee rights in host countries are defined as the legal, social, and humanitarian rights which intend to ensure the welfare and inalienable freedoms of individuals who have been forced to flee their home countries due to persecution, conflict, or violence.^{1,2} Recently, the global number of refugees has increased beyond 32.5 million.³ Despite the work completed by the United Nations (UN) and other agencies, countless breaches of refugees' rights in host countries continue to be reported. Even more of these breaches are left undeclared, particularly from southeastern European countries such as Greece and countries in the middle east, notably Türkiye and Lebanon.⁴ States that encourage or have breaches of refugee rights are often ignored and left unpunished by international bodies such as the UN due to the lack of initiative in safeguarding freedom. For example, research from 2016 shows that refugees in Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, Hungary and Bulgaria are often mistreated by law enforcement agencies at border crossings. However, this issue was left completely unaddressed until 2022, when Oxfam, an NGO, started aiding these people.⁵

The lack of refugee rights in host countries can be attributed to unclear definitions within UN documents, lenient international legal frameworks, targeted ethnic discrimination, sudden influxes of displaced peoples, lack of investigative initiatives, and deficient global responsibility.⁶ When the UN fails to correctly define terms used in its resolutions, countries are unable to correctly apply actionable items. Thus, clauses carrying the intention of outlining how to uphold refugee rights have often been overlooked.⁷ Additionally, lenient legal frameworks, ones that don't clearly state a country's duties and obligations pertaining to upholding refugee rights, tend to result in breaches of rights as countries can avoid the difficult steps of protecting asylum seekers.⁸ Furthermore, targeted ethnic discrimination in vulnerable communities often leads to sudden influxes of displaced peoples, which puts lots of stress on host countries. In this pressure, countries lose the time and resources to ensure no breaches in rights are made, and thus violations of refugees' freedoms are many times unnoticed.⁹ Moreover, the lack of international investigative initiatives affect the instances of breaches in rights going unnoticed. This, in turn, allows countries to continue their wrong-doings without being held accountable.¹⁰

¹ Helton, Arthur C, "What Is Refugee Protection?" International Journal of Refugee Law 2, no. Special_Issue, September 1, 1990. https://doi.org/10.1093/reflaw/2.special_issue.119.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Headquarters, 1951.

³ "UNHCR - Mid-Year Trends 2022," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/635a578f4/mid-year-trends-2022.htm>.

⁴ "News Comment: UNHCR warns of increasing violence and human rights violations at European borders." News release, February 21, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/news-comment-unhcr-warns-increasing-violence-and-human-rights-violations>.

⁵ "At Europe's borders, migrants and refugees are denied their basic human rights" Oxfam, May 25, 2022, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/europes-borders-migrants-and-refugees-are-denied-their-basic-human-rights>.

⁶ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Fact Sheet No. 20, Human Rights and Refugees. July 1993. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet20en.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

With a lack of global responsibility for upholding refugee rights, large organizations can differ from their duties and goals, leading to a loss in asylum seekers' freedoms.¹¹ When refugees are stripped of crucial rights, those in need may not receive the necessary aid to achieve a basic standard of living.¹² This is seen through all aspects of healthcare, education, and safety; however, it is predominantly seen within mental health. Refugees of all ages, especially children, suffer from extremely high rates of clinical Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) compared to others.¹³

Furthermore, this lack of protecting refugee rights contributes to the decline in global security and stability. In recent years, member states that have removed significant portions of asylum seekers' rights have proved open law to be crucial in conflict and extremism prevention, tackling shared challenges, and promoting peace.¹⁴ Europe, for example, has begun to close their doors to refugees after waves of anti-migrant movements, especially in the United Kingdom.¹⁵ The Nationality and Borders Act of 2022 and the Illegal Immigration Bill of 2023 were passed to deter refugees from claiming asylum in the country by relocating many people to their home countries if the UK deems it "safe," and giving fewer rights to those who stay in the United Kingdom.¹⁶ In 2022, refugees in the UK were told they had to wait ten years instead of five before getting proper documentation. Additionally, they were restricted from applying to bring their families to the country—a measure aimed to prevent refugees moving solely to bring their families to safety.¹⁷ However, this created danger and fear within communities and stripped refugees of their claimed rights, specifically their right to a nationality. With a loss in citizenship, they no longer held the ability to vote, access healthcare, and education.^{18, 19, 20} In countless cases, countries removing refugee rights started due to the absence of resources, services, and training to manage minority communities. In other scenarios, it can be attributed to the countries' unwillingness to ethically manage conflict on behalf of state representatives.²¹ Irrespective of the cause, refugee rights in host countries are an essential requirement and continue to be a vital topic.²²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ingrid Kvestad, "Potential Traumatic Events and Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress in Unaccompanied Refugee Minors—a Comparison with Youth in Foster Care." *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 32, no. 3, September 19, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-021-01876-6>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Melissa Pawson, "Hot and cold: Greece's treatment of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian refugees" *The New Humanitarian* Edition, August 16, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2022/08/16/Greece-refugees-Ukraine-asylum-system-application>.

¹⁵ Walsh, Peter William, and Madeleine Sumption, "UK policies to deter people from claiming asylum," *The Migration Observatory*, April 4, 2023. <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/uk-policies-to-deter-people-from-claiming-asylum/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Nationality and Borders Act 2022," Government of the United Kingdom, 2022. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/36/pdfs/ukpga_20220036_en.pdf.

¹⁹ "Nationality and Borders Bill: Deprivation of citizenship factsheet." GOV.UK, March 2, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationality-and-borders-bill-deprivation-of-citizenship-factsheet/nationality-and-borders-bill-deprivation-of-citizenship-factsheet>.

²⁰ "Nationality and Borders Act." *The Law Society*, June 27, 2023. <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/immigration/nationality-and-borders-act>.

²¹ "Burden of Hosting Refugees, Chronic UNHRC Budget Shortages Highlighted, as Third Committee Continues Discussion on Refugees," Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, November 13, 2002. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/burden-hosting-refugees-chronic-unhcr-budget-shortages-highlighted-third>.

²² "Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)," United Nations, 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>.

Timeline

1939–1945 — The Second World War causes a sharp influx of global refugees due to the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust. An estimated 65 million people are forced to flee their homes, causing the biggest refugee crisis ever experienced.^{23, 24} Many refugees lose their rights across international borders due to the lack of laws and guidelines to protect their freedoms.²⁵

December 14, 1950 — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is established to initiate and guide international efforts to protect and resettle refugees through humanitarian aid and trained personnel.²⁶

July 28, 1951 — The UN signs the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines the status of a refugee and establishes their rights and responsibilities.²⁷

September 10, 1969 — The Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) adopts the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, a convention that addresses refugees' challenges and protection needs.²⁸

April 1, 1980 — The United States initiates the Refugee Act, which states a structured system for relocating and accepting refugees, putting them on par with the UN refugee policy.²⁹

May 24, 2006 — Uganda installs a progressive Refugee Act into its legislation. This law recognized and granted over 140,000 refugees living within the country's borders the ability to work and live outside of camps.³⁰

2011 — Ongoing conflict in Syria leads to a massive displacement of people nationally and internationally, leading to a global refugee crisis. By the end of 2011, thousands were forced to flee their homes.

July 11, 2018 — The UN publishes the final draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. It aims to diminish the negative effects of illegal migration and increase international cooperation.³¹

December 17, 2018 — The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) affirms the Global Compact on Refugees, which increases awareness of responsibility from individual states and finds a sustainable solution to refugee crises by boosting international cooperation.³²

²³ "What Happened to People Displaced by the Second World War?" Imperial War Museum, 2023.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-happened-to-people-displaced-by-the-second-world-war>.

²⁴ "Refugee Timeline." United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2023. <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/our-history/history-office-and-library/featured-stories-from-the-uscis-history-office-and-library/refugee-timeline>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees," Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, 2013. <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/09/office-of-the-united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees>.

²⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Headquarters, 1951.

²⁸ The Organisation of African Unity. Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia: OAU Headquarters, 1969.

²⁹ "Refugee Act of 1980," National Archives Foundation, 2023. <https://www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/refugee-act-1980/>.

³⁰ "Uganda's progressive Refugee Act becomes operational," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees United Nations Refugee Agency, June 22, 2009. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news/ugandas-progressive-refugee-act-becomes-operational>.

³¹ "Global Compact For Safe, Orderly And Regular Migration," Global Compact for Migration, 2018. https://refugeemigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf.

³² "The Global Compact on Refugees," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/global-compact-refugees>.

April 29, 2019 — American President Trump orders new refugee regulation: to implement a fee for applications and insert work permit restraints, making it difficult for refugees to make a living within the United States.³³

March 1, 2020 — Germany places the Skilled Immigration Act into official law, which encourages and makes it easiest for workers with non-academic skills to find job positions in the country. The law promotes refugees' economic and financial integration and access to the German labour market.³⁴

April 28, 2022 — The UK signs the Nationality and Borders Bill into law in order to reform its refugee system. The bill makes it easier to expel refugees from the UK and to remove all the rights they hold.³⁵

March 7, 2023 — The Illegal Migrant Bill is passed in the UK, making it even more difficult for refugees to be safe within the country. It makes it easier for them to expel asylum seekers and gives them the ability to remove refugee rights if the refugees are thought to have come from “irregular” routes.³⁶

March 25, 2023 — The US and Canada sign an Additional Protocol to the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA). The past protocol states that people going into Canada from the US, and vice versa, along the land border are not eligible to make a refugee claim. The protocol now states that people may not claim refugee status if they cross internal waterways, such as rivers, canals, and backwaters, unless they fit tight exemptions.³⁷

Historical Analysis

Despite the introduction of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR) in 1954, internationally displaced persons have continued to be subjected to mistreatment, breeches to their rights, and lowered recognition, in a multitude of host countries.³⁸ Although this is largely a consequence of the state's internal laws, international rule plays an important role in mitigating the possibility of injustice towards refugees.³⁹ Examples of this can be found in Article 3 and Article 4 of the CRSR, which states each refugee should be treated favourably with the freedom of religious practices and without discrimination.⁴⁰ Despite these international agreements, countries such as Lebanon have been noted to ignore these rules.⁴¹

³³ Kanno-Youngs, Zolan, and Caitlin Dickerson. "Asylum Seekers Face New Restraints Under Latest Trump Orders." New York Times, April 29, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/29/us/politics/trump-asylum.html>.

³⁴ "Skilled Im-mi-gra-tion Act." Anerkennung in Deutschland, 2023, <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/pro/skilled-immigration-act.php#>.

³⁵ "Nationality and Borders Act." The Law Society, June 27, 2023. <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/immigration/nationality-and-borders-act>.

³⁶ Donald, Alice, and Joelle Grogan. "The Illegal Migration Bill." United Kingdom in a Changing Europe, April 25, 2023. <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/explainers/the-illegal-migration-bill/>.

³⁷ "Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement" Government of Canada, March 24, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/policies-operational-instructions-agreements/agreements/safe-third-country-agreement.html>.

³⁸ "Lebanon: Torture of Syrian Refugees Arbitrarily Detained on Counter-Terror Charges," Amnesty International, March 23, 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/03/lebanon-torture-of-syrian-refugees-arbitrarily-detained-on-counter-terror-charges/>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees>.

⁴¹ "Lebanon: Torture of Syrian Refugees Arbitrarily Detained on Counter-Terror Charges," Amnesty International, March 23, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/03/lebanon-torture-of-syrian-refugees-arbitrarily-detained-on-counter-terror-charges/>.

Jewish Refugee Crisis in World War II

With Nazi Germany's mass persecution of Jews under Hitler's regime, 1.2 million people were forced to seek refuge in several countries.⁴² In the years prior to the war, Hitler made countless anti-semitic policies to marginalize and eradicate their community, such as the installation of concentration camps. To avoid having to attend said camps, a large number of ethnic Jews, who were at risk of falling under the control of Nazi Germany, fled their countries. As a result, millions of people became refugees.⁴³ However, at this time, Western European and American governments disliked the significant influx of escaping refugees.⁴⁴ For example, the Cuban, United States, and Canadian governments all rejected the arrival of the MS St. Louis—a ship with 908 Jewish people fleeing the holocaust in 1939—as they were unable to accept and look after them.⁴⁵ Throughout the war, many Jewish and Polish refugees were turned back at western borders; the United States had acceptance rates as low as 22%.⁴⁶ After World War II, initiatives, such as the Truman Directive of 1945 which set unchangeable refugee quotas to allow asylum seekers into American borders, allowed for Jewish peoples to find refuge in safer countries.⁴⁷ Importantly, in 1950, the UNHCR was formed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to manage the consequences of the war.⁴⁸ In 1951, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted by the UNHCR to alleviate the issue of Jewish refugees. This convention clearly defines the term “refugee,” and explains that no internationally displaced persons can be sent home should they face threats of persecution or danger.⁴⁹ This organization is still running today, continuing to aid conflict zones and manage refugee influxes.

Rwandan Genocide in Tanzania

The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 was a conflict between two major ethnic groups within the country—the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority. Generally speaking, Tutsis were a nomadic population, whereas Hutus were a people of agriculture that formed large family groups.⁵⁰ With colonialism, the two groups were spread further apart, and with increasing deep-rooted ethnic tensions, the Hutu majority began slaughtering thousands in the Tutsi minority in 1994.⁵¹ In 100 days, an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and Hutu extremists were systematically killed as the Hutu-led government encouraged this genocide.^{52, 53} Furthermore, the situation was exacerbated by the delay and inaction of the international community.⁵⁴ During the genocide, 500,000 refugees fled to refugee camps

⁴² "Refugees." Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/refugees>.

⁴³ "The United States and The Refugee Crisis, 1938–41," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2023. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-refugee-crisis-1938-41>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "MS St. Louis." The Canadian Encyclopedia, June 23, 2023. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ms-st-louis>.

⁴⁶ "The Evian Conference." The Holocaust Explained, 2022. <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/life-in-nazi-occupied-europe/oppression/evian-conference/>.

⁴⁷ "New Directive on Immigrant Visas to the US" United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2023. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/timeline-event/holocaust/1942-1945/truman-directive-on-immigrant-visas>.

⁴⁸ "History of UNHCR." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/history-unhcr>.

⁴⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Headquarters, 1951.

⁵⁰ "The Heart of the Hutu-Tutsi Conflict" PBS NewsHour, October 8, 1999. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/africa-july-dec99-rwanda_10-08.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² History.com Editors. "Rwandan Genocide." History, May 19, 2023. <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/rwandan-genocide>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Frushone, Joel. "Repatriation of Rwandan refugees living in Tanzania." Relief Web, January 10, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-republic-tanzania/repatriation-rwandan-refugees-living-tanzania>.

in Tanzania. Nearly all refugees in Tanzania were forcibly returned home by governmental authorities in 1996 on the justification that they belonged and would live better in Rwanda rather than in refugee camps, where they could be subject to the control and intimidation of refugee leaders.⁵⁵ This put immense pressure on refugees and placed them into danger as not all were safe to return to Rwanda. When waves of refugees continued, Tanzania continued to give the same excuse in rejecting asylum seekers. To find long-term solutions for these Rwandan refugees, the UNHCR and the governments of Tanzania and Rwanda met in Geneva, Switzerland at the end of September 2002. The officials agreed that Rwanda's security had improved and that more refugees from the country needed to return. This led to mass initiatives to increase voluntary repatriation. However, the lack of financial and humanitarian resources to complete this task as well as a poorly planned timeline led to its inefficiency.⁵⁶ In 2002, it was estimated that 3,000 Rwandan refugees were repatriated, officially putting an end to the operation, according to the UN and Tanzania. Uncertainty continues to surround the exact number of Rwandan refugees that had left Tanzania.⁵⁷

Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand

From 1975 to 1995, Thailand served as a major transit and temporary home for Vietnamese refugees fleeing the Vietnam War.⁵⁸ After the fall of Saigon in 1975, there was a mass exodus that resulted in many refugees making dangerous journeys across the South China Sea in crowded boats. Thus, during this time, Thailand became a haven for these individuals who sought safety. Within the 20-year period, Thailand accepted 160,000 Vietnamese refugees.⁵⁹ Overwhelmed by the influx of refugees, Thailand set up camps along its borders to accommodate them.⁶⁰ These camps often had harsh conditions, including limited resources of food, water, medical supplies, and intense overcrowding.⁶¹ This made it difficult for people to survive. However, international organizations such as the UN provided aid and assistance to the Thai government. Various resettlement programs, such as the Orderly Departure Program (ODP), which allowed Vietnamese to resettle in other countries, were enacted in the 1970s and 1980s, enabling many Vietnamese refugees to find new homes in many western countries such as France and Canada.⁶² However, Thailand continues to hold concerns about the Vietnamese refugee population within its borders to this day.⁶³ This is largely due to the fact that Thailand has yet to sign the United Nations Covenant of the Treatment of Refugees, making diplomatic relations with other member states and international bodies a challenge.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Napaumporn, Bongkot. "Forgotten Stateless Vietnamese in Thailand." IMISCOE Research Series, 2023, 57-74. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25748-3_4.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Vietnam's boat people mark their anniversary with their return to refugee camps." RefWorld, September 4, 2015. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/561b978f12.html>.

⁶² Ibid;

"East Asian Refugee Admissions Program" United States Department of States, January 18, 2000. https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/prm/fs_000118_eap.html.

⁶³ Shawcross, William. "Thailand Still Wary of Accepting Swarms of Desperate Refugees." Washington Post, March 19, 1980. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/03/19/thailand-still-wary-of-accepting-swarms-of-desperate-refugees/>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Afghan Refugees in Host Countries

As a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent war from 1979 to 1989, a significant number of Afghan civilians sought refuge in neighbouring countries to escape the violence. During this time, Pakistan became the main recipient country with millions crossing into their border.^{65, 66} This migration was composed of two waves, the first of which was those fleeing from the Soviet Union in 1979. During the first wave, 6 million individuals were forced to migrate. The second wave occurred when those who supported the Soviet invasion fled the country. When the Soviets withdrew their military, 5 million people left Afghanistan.⁶⁷ To respond to this, Pakistan established refugee camps along their border, providing temporary shelter for those escaping violence.⁶⁸ However, overcrowded conditions and limited humanitarian and financial aid presented significant challenges. In Pakistan and other host countries, food, health, and sanitation became major concerns. International organizations, governments, and over 200 NGOs, such as the Salvation Army and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), mobilized to provide aid and assistance to the refugees, helping to alleviate their suffering to some extent.⁶⁹ However, in this case, the people in this country suffered traumatic events and insecurity, and were given no help to themselves and their families. As a result, the population experienced higher levels of ignorance, isolation, illness, violence, and social upheaval from the international community. Notably, they failed to give any support to those who were severely impacted mentally.⁷⁰ Overall, the UN, along with other organizations, may have needed to more closely monitor mental health and access to psychological support.⁷¹

The rights of refugees in host countries have continued to be an increasingly pressing issue as countries attempt to manage the influx of internationally displaced individuals seeking safety and security.⁷² Ultimately, countless breaches and upholdings of refugee rights have been observed throughout history and should be considered when finding new solutions to aid asylum seekers maintain their freedoms.

Past UN/International Involvement

Humanitarian Actions and Emergency Situations

During numerous refugee crises, the UN and NGOs have worked together to provide aid in emergency situations. In 2022, approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees received a combined USD 208.5 million in financial support from UNHCR, which helped asylum seekers meet basic living requirements and lessen detrimental coping methods like malnutrition and child labour. Additionally, 111,500 Syrian refugee families received housing assistance from the UN, and 4.2 million Syrians received primary health care through onsite

⁶⁵ Monette Zard, "September 11: Has Anything Changed?" Migration Policy Institute," June 13, 2022. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/september-11th-has-anything-changed>.

⁶⁶ Runion, Meredith L. The History of Afghanistan, 2nd Edition. Santa Barbara, California, United States: ABC-CLIO, 2017.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Helga Baitenmann, "NGOs and the Afghan War: The Politicisation of Humanitarian Aid," Third World Quarterly 12, no. 1 p.62-85, January 1990. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599008420215>.

⁷⁰ Bhutta, "Children of War: The Real Casualties of the Afghan Conflict," BMJ 324, no. 7333 p.349-352, February 9, 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.324.7333.349>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "News Comment: UNHCR warns of increasing violence and human rights violations at European borders," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency, February 21, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/news-comment-unhcr-warns-increasing-violence-and-human-rights-violations>.

housing and medical tents within communities.⁷³ Moreover, NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders have provided onsite medical assistance through tents to almost 10 million refugees across the world in 2020.⁷⁴ Furthermore, to support the Yemeni Refugee Crisis, the UNHCR aided families in meeting basic rights through offering onsite adequate shelter, necessary household items, and financial assistance by providing refugees with tents. The UN's cash assistance program has reached more than 1 million refugees every year.⁷⁵ Lastly, NGOs intervening in the South Sudanese Refugee Crisis such as the International Rescue Committee have assisted over 1 million refugees in the conflict. They have provided financial aid and assistance to help them survive, recover, and rebuild, meeting with the communities, understanding their specific needs, and providing aid in areas identified as requiring assistance.⁷⁶ These resources have allowed communities to grow stronger and settle into their new homes faster. Despite this, millions of people in emergency situations continue to face life-threatening conflict.⁷⁷ Overall, despite the life-changing aid that the UN and NGOs offer, many refugees are left with little to no resources to help them and their family in difficult times.

Refugee Conventions and Agreements

Although NGOs do not hold the power to create their own legislation, they help the UN create treaties and agreements to mitigate the harsh conditions refugees face in host countries.⁷⁸ In 1951, the UN adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees—a crucial international treaty defining the rights and legal obligations of states in relation to refugees.⁷⁹ In its 46 articles, this convention mainly sets criteria for refugee status, prohibits the forced return of refugees to dangerous situations (resettlement), and stipulates access to basic rights such as education, employment and social welfare.⁸⁰ In addition, the UNHCR adopted the 1957 Protocol to the 1951 convention in order to address the limitations of the original document.^{81, 82} It extended the protection by removing certain geographical and temporal restrictions. As well, the protocol clarified the procedure for “dispute between states party to the present protocol which relates to its interpretation or application.”⁸³ The purpose of the convention was to ensure that refugees who do not fall under the strict definition of the convention but who still face persecution from their origin countries receive international protection and assistance such as a fair trial system.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU), now known as the African Union Convention on Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, was

⁷³ "Syria situation." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/syria-situation>.

⁷⁴ "MSF Canada 2020 Annual Report." Doctors Without Borders, 2020.

<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/.pdf>.

⁷⁵ "Yemen Humanitarian Crisis." United States of America for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/yemen/>.

⁷⁶ "War and hunger in South Sudan." Rescue, 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/country/south-sudan>.

⁷⁷ "Middle East and North Africa," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa>.

⁷⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Headquarters, 1951.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. New York, United States of America: UN Headquarters, 1967.

⁸² "About UNHCR The 1951 Refugee Convention." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees The United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

established to address the unique refugee challenges faced by African countries.^{85, 86} It notes the prevalence of conflict, internal migration, and forced migration on the continent, and aims to provide a regional framework. Furthermore, it sets out principles for the protection and assistance of refugees in Africa.⁸⁷ For example, it includes specifics on burden and responsibility sharing between countries, such as welcoming NGOs, and using land for refugees, which is not included in past conventions.⁸⁸ In 1984, the UNHCR helped the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America adopt the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.⁸⁹ The agreement expands the definition of refugees beyond the criteria of the 1951 Convention to include those fleeing violence in general, foreign aggression, internal conflict and human rights violations.⁹⁰ As well, the UNHCR adopted the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018 as a framework for more fair and predictable responsibility distribution. The document acknowledges that international cooperation is necessary to find a lasting solution to the refugee crisis. This framework has four core objectives: “[to] ease the pressures on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.” As such, it aids both host countries and refugees. It offers a guide that ensures host communities receive the required resources to protect the wellbeing of refugees. This aids governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders.⁹¹

International Coordination

Currently, the UN partners with over 900 NGOs to increase coordination and cooperation in addressing refugee rights. Through joint initiatives, projects, and seminars, they share knowledge, resources and best practices to improve implementation in host countries.⁹² For example, the UN works closely with Action for the Needy in Ethiopia, which provides “critical humanitarian needs of refugees from neighbouring countries Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan and vulnerable host communities in the project locations.”⁹³ As well, SOCHUM has repeatedly been a space for discussion on international co-operation of management of refugees. For example in October of 2021, the committee discussed the “world’s 82 million people forcibly displaced, as [well as] issues of burden-sharing”.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ Organization of African Unity. *Governing The Specific Aspects Of Refugee Problems In Africa*. Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia: OAU Headquarters, 1969.

⁸⁶ Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America. *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*. Cartagena de Indias, Colombia: CIPRCA Headquarters, 1984.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "What is the Global Compact on Refugees?" Global Compact on Refugees, 2023. <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/about-digital-platform/global-compact-refugees>.

⁹² "Non-Governmental Organizations." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/our-partners/non-governmental-organizations>.

⁹³ "Home Page of Action for the Needy in Ethiopia Humanitarian Organization." Action for the Needy in Ethiopia Humanitarian Organization, 2023. <https://www.ane-ethiopia.org/>.

⁹⁴ "Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)." General Assembly of the United Nations, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/pr.shtml>.

Development of Programs

Educational programs for adolescent refugees in host countries have been jointly developed by the UN and NGOs.⁹⁵ These programs aim to provide quality education, including language classes, vocational training, and support for developing educational systems. For example, the Educate A Child program partners with the UN to offer quality primary education to more than 1.4 million refugee and internally displaced children around the globe by creating new classrooms, providing schools with materials, and training teachers.⁹⁶ Twenty percent of the people they serve are unaccompanied minors and adolescents, who are able to access help before entering another country's education program.⁹⁷ As well, the UN and NGOs work together to develop socio-economic empowerment programs to help refugees become self-sufficient.⁹⁸ For example, the International Office for Migration offered a programme for economic empowerment and resilience for refugees who lost their jobs as a result of the economic downturn brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹⁹ The organization provided 32 beneficiaries with the opportunity to find new jobs or to restart and improve the competitiveness and adaptability of their micro or home-based businesses through a mentor process. Through vocational training and funding for new and small companies, interventions seek to increase the targeted refugees' ability to generate income and their economic resilience to shocks and market disruptions in the future.¹⁰⁰ In all, the UN and NGOs have developed countless programs in order to further refugees' rights in different life aspects.

Current Situation

Unclear Interpretations within Legislation

Legal systems can differ in defining who qualifies as a refugee. Some adhere strictly to the interpretation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, while others may have broad or narrow definitions, creating contradictions in determining refugee status.¹⁰¹ For example, some find that the 1951 Convention is insufficient at protecting refugees because it can be looked upon as outdated; it doesn't allow much space for different types of refugees within its text.¹⁰² Furthermore, the convention is not adaptable enough to deal with the new gender-based persecution that forms the basis of many women's asylum requests.¹⁰³ Because the convention was originally written for refugees coming from World War II, it does not encompass the diversity of people seeking asylum

⁹⁵ "Four UNHCR education programs transforming the lives of young refugees." United States of America for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency, January 24, 2023. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/four-unhcr-education-programs-transforming-the-lives-of-young-refugees/>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Economic Empowerment And Resilience Programme For Refugees." International Organization for Migration United Nations Migration, 2023. <https://jordan.iom.int/stories/economic-empowerment-and-resilience-programme-refugees>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "The Refugees Convention: why not scrap it?" Chatham House, October 20, 2005, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/International%20Law/ilp201005.pdf>.

¹⁰² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Headquarters, 1951.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

today.¹⁰⁴ This is especially an issue at a time where 73% of female refugees reported an increase in domestic violence due to the recent global pandemic.¹⁰⁵

Lenient Legal Frameworks and Deficient Global Responsibility

United Nations legislation is often not clear enough; therefore, states are able to get away with not fully implementing rules. The lack of UN enforcement in policies to aid refugees has created countless problems for asylum seekers. The UN has repeatedly failed to enforce the necessity of family reunification. According to the UN Human Rights Council, 77 nations are known to detain children for immigration-related reasons, including over 300,000 adolescents.¹⁰⁶ However, these children are very rarely reunified with their family, and many never see their siblings or parents again. Even though states are required to abide by international rules and regulations, they are very rarely carried out.¹⁰⁷ In Canada, many families have been torn apart due to the inability to be reunited. This is typically because families have to go through intense checks such as excessive documentation, DNA tests, and more in order to prove that families are related, which many refugees cannot obtain or afford.¹⁰⁸ ¹⁰⁹ In reaction to the migration policy crisis of 2015–2016, many European nations have passed new rules and regulations that significantly increase the difficulty of family reunification for refugees, particularly those with subsidiary protection, which is a status that is ostensibly more temporary. Waiting periods of up to three years have been implemented by nations including Denmark, Austria, and Switzerland before such individuals are permitted to petition for family reunification. Families can be kept apart for many years by these waiting periods, especially because family reunification can only begin after asylum has been granted which is frequently drawn out.¹¹⁰ Moreover, if refugees are late on deadlines, many more requirements are added to the already long list, making the terms almost impossible to meet.¹¹¹ However, the release of countless reports and suggestions may aid Europe in opening their borders in coming years.¹¹² On the other hand, a lack of investigative mechanisms and lack of global responsibility pose significant challenges to the safety and well-being of refugees in host countries. Inadequate comprehensive investigations into human rights violations against refugees leads to a state of impunity, undermining accountability. As well, it destroys support and necessary power that host countries should hold. The 1951 Refugee Convention's preamble uses the word "burden" in regard to imposing "unduly heavy burdens" on particular host countries, which obliges the international community to take action. However, states are able to argue that the "burden" of hosting refugees makes it impossible to uphold the fundamental

¹⁰⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR Headquarters, 1951.

¹⁰⁵ "New Report Finds 73% of Refugee and Displaced Women Reported an Increase in Domestic Violence Due to COVID-19," Rescue, 2023. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/new-report-finds-73-refugee-and-displaced-women-reported-increase-domestic-violence>.

¹⁰⁶ "Experts: States must stop failing children and strengthen family reunification," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/03/experts-states-must-stop-failing-children-and-strengthen-family-reunification>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ "Accepted refugees: on hold and separated from their family." Canadian Council for Refugees, July 2022. https://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/report_accepted_refugees_2022.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ "DNA Tests: A barrier to speedy family reunification" Canadian Council for Refugees, October 2011. <https://ccrweb.ca/en/dna-tests>.

¹¹⁰ "Ending restrictions on family reunification: good for refugees, good for host societies." Council of Europe, October 26, 2017. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/ending-restrictions-on-family-reunification-good-for-refugees-good-for-host-societies>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² "Realising the right to family reunification of refugees in Europe." Council of Europe, February 7, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/prems-052917-gbr-1700-realising-refugees>.

principle of refugee protection because the 1951 Convention is not legally binding. Countries often use the excuse of refugees being "too great of a burden" in order to avoid responsibility, which leads to many refugees not obtaining the help they need, and places countless refugees in grave danger.^{113, 114} This lack of action has made it harder for states to take part in the refugee crisis correctly and accept asylum seekers that need help.

Rising Numbers of Refugees

The sharp influx of international displaced people within the past years has put strain on supplies and infrastructure, and has prevented the delivery of adequate assistance. According to UNHCR figures on forced displacement, the total number of refugees climbed to 35.3 million at the end of 2022, the greatest annual increase ever recorded.¹¹⁵ Moreover, 42% of these refugees are under the age of 18.¹¹⁶ This surge was primarily brought on by Ukrainian immigrants who were escaping the ongoing war in their nation.¹¹⁷ In addition, 76% of those who have been forcefully displaced are housed in low or middle-income nations, which strains the resources of host communities. This means that refugees' capacity to survive depends almost entirely on the aid that the government, local residents, and humanitarian organizations can provide.¹¹⁸ As a result, this has caused countries such as Lebanon to limit entry of asylum seekers fleeing conflict. Due to tough new visa requirements, many Syrians, when trying to cross the border, have been turned back by Lebanon, claiming that it is unable to accommodate any more refugees from the ongoing civil war. The new policy effectively closes one of the last remaining escape routes from a conflict that has displaced a third of Syria's pre-war population. It restricts Syrians to only getting visas for a significantly limited amount of time.¹¹⁹

Targeted Discrimination Against Minority Ethnic Groups

Discrimination can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including denial of opportunities, limited access to jobs, social discrimination, and even violence.¹²⁰ Such discrimination undermines social cohesion, perpetuates inequality, and poses serious challenges to the attainment of human rights and the progress of integrated nations. In Australia, for example, the following can be found:

¹¹³ Marnie Jane Thomson. "The Invisible Burdens of Burden-Sharing." *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 4, April 6, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2022.668321>.

¹¹⁴ Alexander T Aleinikoff. "State-Centered Refugee Law: From Resettlement to Containment." *Michigan Journal of International Law* 14, no. 1 p.120-140, Fall 1992, <https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1560&context=mjil>.

¹¹⁵ "Data And Statistics Global Trends." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency. <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

¹¹⁶ "Global Refugee Statistics." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency Canada, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.ca/in-canada/refugee-statistics/>.

¹¹⁷ "Data And Statistics Global Trends." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency. <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

¹¹⁸ "Forced Displacement." European Commission, 2022, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement_en.

¹¹⁹ Diaa Hadid, and Bassem Mroue. "Lebanon limits entry of Syrians fleeing civil war amid concern over rising numbers of refugees." *Canadian Press*, January 5, 2015, <https://discovery-ebSCO-com.bc.idm.oclc.org>.

¹²⁰ Anthony Burke. "Prisoners of Paradox: Thinking for the Refugee." *Social Alternatives* 21, no. 4 p. 21-27, Spring 2002, <https://discovery-ebSCO-com.bc.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink>.

*“National identity, survival and being in the country is based on exclusion, on repression, on a profound functional cruelty toward the lives of others. The refugee seems to be defined by homelessness, by falling between the cracks of nations, laws, and the decks of rickety boats.”*¹²¹

Furthermore, xenophobia—defined as prejudice or discrimination against immigrants—has been clearly observed in the United States, and has affected individuals’ ability to access employment, police help, and healthcare, meanwhile also experiencing several types of harassment.¹²² According to research from the University of Chicago, 22% of migrants worked in private residences, mostly employing women who were required to work 12-hour days without breaks or receiving overtime pay.¹²³ Moreover, 62% of refugees and immigrants have been stopped by the police without cause.¹²⁴ As well, a study in South Africa found that medical xenophobia was very prevalent in their populations.¹²⁵ It concluded that “migrants in South Africa are routinely denied the healthcare to which they are constitutionally entitled.”¹²⁶ This affects a refugee’s quality of life, and ability to live like others, and directly diminishes their life spans.¹²⁷ Overall, the discrimination that minority groups face affects their ability to have opportunity and their ability to live.

Case Study: The Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian Refugee Crisis commenced in March 2011 after a brutal government crackdown on crowds supporting teenagers who were detained over anti-government graffiti inside the southern city of Daraa.¹²⁸ Throughout Syria, the arrests triggered large-scale protests that the government security forces brutally put an end to. Thousands of Syrians were forced to evacuate their homes as the fighting swiftly grew worse, and the nation fell into a civil war before the end of the year.¹²⁹ The nation’s highways, bridges, educational institutions, hospitals, and residences all suffered severe damage as a result of the fighting.¹³⁰ Due to the massive destruction, people were and currently still unable to access crucial services.¹³¹ The country has endured severe unemployment and pervasive poverty due to the disruption of numerous enterprises and industries.¹³² A humanitarian crisis has resulted from the Syrian Refugee Crisis’ broad displacement with many people finding it difficult to get access to necessities.¹³³ Today, more than 5.7 million people have left Syria borders to avoid

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² United Way NCA. "Discrimination Against Immigrants In Society With Examples." United Way of the National Capital Area, October 24, 2022, <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/discrimination-against-immigrants/>.

¹²³ Josselyn Andrea, and Garcia Quijano. "Workplace Discrimination and Undocumented First-Generation Latinx Immigrants." The University of Chicago Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice, May 28, 2023. <https://crownschool.uchicago.edu/student-life/advocates-forum/workplace-discrimination-and-undocumented-first-generation-latinx>.

¹²⁴ Celinda Lake, Josh Ulibarri, Cornelia Treptow, Dom Bartkus, Angela Glover Blackwell, Milly Hawk Daniel, Nik Theodore, and Robby Habbans. "Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement." University of Illinois at Chicago, May 2013, <https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/pdf>.

¹²⁵ Jonathan Crush, Godfrey Tawodzera "No. 54: Medical Xenophobia: Zimbabwean Access to Health Services in South Africa" Southern African Migration Programme, 2011, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/>.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained" United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023 <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

conflict.¹³⁴ The UNHCR reports that refugees from the Syrian civil conflict have applied for asylum in more than 130 nations.¹³⁵ However, the majority of these refugees, approximately 5.48 million, have settled in the five countries nearing Syria: Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt.



Figure 1: Size of refugee camps in countries bordering Syria.

Out of the five biggest host countries, Türkiye hosts a total of 3.6 million Syrian refugees.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, an earthquake that happened in February 2023 negatively impacted both the Turkish and Syrian population.¹³⁷ Currently, families displaced by the conflict in northwest Syria are living in makeshift tents, weak shelters, and partially demolished structures. Moreover, the catastrophe occurred during a hard winter, making their daily lives even more miserable.¹³⁸ These struggles need to be fixed in order to help the Syrian refugees, and it is important to take action on these issues.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Increasing Awareness of Refugee Situations and Creating Grounds for Discussion

Increasing awareness of refugee situations is important in promoting and protecting refugee rights in host countries. By raising public awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by refugees, this solution can have a variety of positive or negative consequences. Increased awareness can facilitate the social integration of

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ "Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help" World Vision, 2023. <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

refugees by improving acceptance and understanding within host communities.¹³⁹ This can help combat discrimination, xenophobia and bigotry, and provide an inclusive environment for refugees to rebuild their lives.¹⁴⁰ Crucially, increasing awareness also includes providing journalists with tools to make their media more accepting of asylum seekers and diversity in general, such as providing training on how to address refugees.¹⁴¹ As well, increasing awareness can look like implementing discussions about refugees in schools. This solution can be implemented through funding awareness campaigns that can work on how to shift peoples views on refugees to be kinder, or initiatives the UN can take such as spreading World Refugee Day all around the globe. On the other hand, building a foundation for dialogue is an important solution when addressing the issue of refugee rights in host countries. By providing forums for open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, different perspectives are heard, resulting in better understanding, collaboration and effective planning. Discussions also provide participant insights into the challenges faced by refugees and the complexity of their rights in host countries.^{142, 143} Furthermore, this solution builds empathy, broadens horizons, and encourages wise decision-making, making it plausible to implement. As well, the dialogue provides opportunities for host countries, international organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders to work together to find mutually beneficial solutions. It encourages the sharing of experiences, best practices and resources, thus strengthening networks and support for refugees.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, dialogue participation can identify gaps and shortcomings in existing systems. This creates a constructive debate that can lead to the development and improvement of legal systems, ensuring better protection and rights for refugees. However, it can be difficult to achieve consensus among stakeholders due to factors for different priorities, interests and opinions.¹⁴⁵ Disagreement over issues such as load sharing, resource allocation, or integration processes can impede progress and delay effective solutions. Furthermore, discussion alone does not guarantee immediate action or implementation of policies.¹⁴⁶ This can be implemented by the committee by creating a new global assembly taking place every set amount of years or by creating a new forum. However, this can also look like focusing conversation in current assemblies towards refugees; for example, SOCHUM can mandate a specific time in its committee time to be spent on protecting the rights of asylum seekers. Overall, increasing awareness of refugee situations and creating global grounds for discussion can help asylum seekers integrate into their new homes without discrimination in both short and long terms and allow states to better manage refugee crises.

¹³⁹ "Promoting welcoming and inclusive societies." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/handbooks/ih/welcoming-inclusive-societies/promoting-welcoming-and-inclusive-societies>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ News-Global. "Raising Awareness on Migration-related Issues." International Organization for Migration United Nations Migration, June 22, 2006. <https://www.iom.int/news/raising-awareness-migration-related-issues>.

¹⁴² "United Nations High-Level Dialogue On International Migration And Development (Hld)." International Organization for Migration United Nations Migration, 2006. <https://www.iom.int/united-nations-high-level-dialogue-international-migration-and-development-hlds>.

¹⁴³ "Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)." United Nations, 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>.

¹⁴⁴ "Non-Governmental Organizations." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/our-partners/non-governmental-organizations>.

¹⁴⁵ "UN General Assembly Social, Humanitarian & Cultural 'Third' Committee." An Roinn Gnothai Eachtracha Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023. <https://www.dfa.ie/our-role-policies/international-priorities/human-rights/our-international-engagement/un-general-assembly-third-committee/>.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas A. Hemphill. "The United Nations Global Compact: The Business Implementation and Accountability Challenge." International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics 1, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijbge.2005.006714>.

Deploying Peacekeepers in Refugee Conflict Zones

Deploying peacekeepers in refugee conflict zones can be beneficial or detrimental to this crisis. Peacekeepers can provide a secure environment for refugees. They can ensure refugees' safety and basic rights, including physical security, access to food, water, and healthcare. As well, the presence of peacekeepers can act as a deterrent to human rights abuses, including violence, discrimination, and exploitation, thereby safeguarding the rights and dignity of refugees. This is due to peacekeepers having the right to enforce legislation with force.¹⁴⁷ Peacekeepers can also help create a conducive environment for humanitarian actors to deliver aid, medical assistance, and other essential services to refugees, improving their well-being and living conditions.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, by addressing the root causes of conflicts in refugee host countries, peacekeepers can contribute to long-term peacebuilding efforts, reducing the likelihood of further displacement and promoting stability.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, peacekeepers have been deployed in refugee camps, and continuing this process can potentially be extremely beneficial as it has been so far.¹⁵⁰ For example, approximately 150 peacekeepers from Rwanda are stationed in Bunj in a mission to aid the stability of refugee camps in the country.¹⁵¹ The peacekeepers operate a base that connects to four different camps, and have had a "confidence-boosting presence" for refugees thus far.¹⁵² Despite this, conflict zones are often characterized by complex political dynamics and conflicting interests among various parties involved. Negotiating agreements and obtaining consent from relevant actors to deploy peacekeepers can be a difficult and time-consuming process.¹⁵³ Additionally, peacekeeping has, in the past, been a failed solution to problems largely due to the fact that the wars were constantly changing but the legislation on the operation of peacekeepers did not.¹⁵⁴ This would require a structured plan from SOCHUM including numbers and expected scenarios. This can be implemented by proposing a motion for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to allocate for these peacekeepers. Additionally, a comprehensive plan must be made to raise the issue within the Security Council, specifying the areas that need peacekeepers and determining the necessary manpower. Funding for this solution would come from the UNSC. This would require a structured plan from SOCHUM including numbers and expected scenarios.

Increasing Legislation and Updating Definitions

By introducing new rules and amending existing ones, governments can clarify legal systems and provide better protections for refugee rights.¹⁵⁵ The benefits of enhanced legislation include providing clear guidelines for the treatment of refugees, ensuring that their rights are well-defined and protected.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, clear legislation can avoid the formation of loopholes for countries finding ways to ignore legislation. Definitions need to be updated as well in order to reflect changing realities and to ensure a broader understanding of who qualifies as a

¹⁴⁷ "Peacekeepers: What we do." United Nations Peacekeeping, 2023, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-we-do>.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ "Refugees." United Nations, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees>.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ "Confidence-boosting role played by UN peacekeepers in South Sudan refugee settlements" United Nations Peacekeeping, June 21, 2017. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/confidence-boosting-role-played-un-peacekeepers-south-sudan-refugee-settlements>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Dennis Jett. "Does peacekeeping have a future? Here's a discussion of the fundamental challenge it faces today." American Foreign Service Association, May 2019. <https://afsa.org/why-peacekeeping-fails>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ C. Harvey. "Time for Reform? Refugees, Asylum-seekers, and Protection under International Human Rights Law." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 34, December 19, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdu018>.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

refugee. Broadening definitions could help address emerging challenges related to climate change or gender harassment, and could offer protection to previously excluded individuals.¹⁵⁷ This could enforce inclusion and eliminate potential gaps in protection.¹⁵⁸ However, increased regulation alone may not be enough to address the complex roots and challenges of refugees. It must be supported by comprehensive planning, appropriate resources, and robust implementation methods to ensure meaningful and sustainable change. As SOCHUM cannot create legally binding documents and states may simply ignore them, it is difficult to balance a globally-acceptable legislation and one that is strict in its purpose.¹⁵⁹ This can be done by the committee including clauses in a resolution that carry proposed definition changes and explication for those. These new definitions must be thoroughly negotiated by the committee for states to support the resolution.

Bloc Positions

Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has a unique position on refugee rights in host countries. This is due to its significant history of both receiving large numbers of refugees and also causing a large number of asylum seekers.¹⁶⁰ The region has experienced many protracted and unstable political conflicts, resulting in the displacement of millions.^{161, 162} Countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Türkiye, and Egypt host large numbers of refugees, especially from neighbouring countries like Syria, Iraq and Yemen.¹⁶³ Despite the resource constraints of these host countries, great efforts have been made to provide basic services such as healthcare, education, and shelter.¹⁶⁴ For example, the countries would supply tents and small homes where refugees can reside.¹⁶⁵ However, the challenges of hosting such a large number of refugees have also revealed limitations in healthcare for asylum seekers. Outbreaks of countless viruses and overall lowered quality of health continues to affect refugees in the region.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, although many MENA countries have shown hospitality towards refugees, tensions in

¹⁵⁷ "The Refugees Convention: why not scrap it?" Chatham House, October 20, 2005. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/International.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ "How Decisions are Made at the UN." United Nations; Model United Nations, 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/how-decisions-are-made-un>.

¹⁶⁰ "Middle East and North Africa Executive Summary." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, November 22, 2022.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalappeal/middle-east-and-north-africa>;

"Middle East and North Africa Executive Summary." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, June 16, 2022. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalreport/middle-east-and-north-africa>.

¹⁶¹ Rustad Palik, and Methi Harpviken. "Conflict Trends in the Middle East, 1989-2019." Policy Comms, October 9, 2020, <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1992841/palik-rustad-harpviken-methi/2744606>.

¹⁶² "The Armed Conflict Survey 2022: Middle East and North Africa Regional Analysis." The International Institute for Strategic Studies, November 17, 2022. <https://www.iiss.org/en/online-analysis/online-analysis/2022/11/acs-2022-middle-east-and-north-africa/>.

¹⁶³ Amna Puri-Mirza. "Number of refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region as of mid-2022, by country of asylum." Statista, February 3, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201495/mena-refugees-number-by-country-of-origin/>.

¹⁶⁴ "Where We Work: Middle East and North Africa." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/where-we-work/middle-east-and-north-africa>.

¹⁶⁵ "Middle East and North Africa", United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa>.

¹⁶⁶ Alfredo Morabia, and Georges C. Benjamin. "The Refugee Crisis in the Middle East and Public Health." American Journal of Public Health 105, December 2015. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2015.302929>.

their socio-economic systems still exist and often create hardships in the host communities.¹⁶⁷ For example, Lebanon, although accepting Syrian refugees, has had backlash from their population due to the different social and economic norms between the communities. These challenges highlight the need to support MENA countries financially and to increase shared responsibility for refugee hospitality, requiring more international cooperation and assistance.^{168, 169} The MENA region has played an important role in the global discourse on refugee rights. As conflict and migration affect the region, the need for regional integration and the need to address the root causes of migration increases.¹⁷⁰ MENA countries have also increased burden-sharing and a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges faced by refugees and host communities.¹⁷¹ Overall, with the large influx of refugees swarming the MENA region, the area has no choice but to accept these people, despite some states disliking that ideal.

Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia

Eastern European and East Asian regions typically don't favour accepting waves of refugees. They exhibit a unique position on refugee rights in the host countries, shaped by regional dynamics, historical contexts, and geopolitical considerations. In Eastern Europe, many countries have adopted policies that remove or restrict refugee rights. Concerns about national security, cultural preservation, and economic pressure are often cited as reasons for these restrictions. Countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have implemented strict border policies, restrictive asylum policies, and expressed reservations about resettlement of refugees.¹⁷² Moreover, East Asian countries have also developed many refugee reception strategies. For example, Japan and South Korea have historically focused on strict immigration policies and restrictive resettlement programs.¹⁷³ These countries prioritize economic and national security concerns, often emphasizing the need to integrate and assimilate refugees into their culture.¹⁷⁴ China has a similar policy, its main focus has been on helping refugee populations along borders, such as those from North Korea during past wars, while keeping a close watch on refugees arriving outside its borders. The nation is faced with difficult political, demographic, religious, and economic issues that have kept it from ever considering letting migrants inside its borders.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁷ Jared Malsin. "Why Some Arab States Refuse to Accept Syrian Refugees." *Time Magazine*, September 8, 2015. <https://time.com/4025187/arab-states-syrian-refugees/>.

¹⁶⁸ "Middle East and North Africa Executive Summary." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, November 22, 2022. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalappeal/middle-east-and-north-africa>.

¹⁶⁹ "Middle East and North Africa Executive Summary." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, June 16, 2022. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalreport/middle-east-and-north-africa>.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Marina Ottaway. "Sharing the Burden in the Middle East." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 18, 2008. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2008/12/18/sharing-burden-in-middle-east-pub-22569>.

¹⁷² Wintour, Patrick, "EU takes action against eastern states for refusing to take refugees." *The Guardian*, June 13, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/13/eu-takes-action-against-eastern-states-for-refusing-to-take-refugee>.

¹⁷³ Katrin Park, "Japan, South Korea shut out refugees: Column," *USA Today*, September 14, 2015.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/09/10/japan-south-korea-shut-out-refugees-column/71644394/>.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Pan Liang, "Why China Isn't Hosting Syrian Refugees," *Forbes Policy Magazine*, February 26, 2016. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/26/china-host-syrian-islam-refugee-crisis-migrant/>.

Western Europe, South Asia, and South America

Countries in Western Europe, South Asia, and South America often promote the upholding of refugee rights and the addition of legislations for asylum seekers. States in Western Europe have adopted a legal framework to establish comprehensive and social welfare programs to protect the rights of refugees. Priority is given to adhering to international human rights standards, and refugees often receive strong assistance. This includes education, health and social integration programs. However, in recent years, political changes that have taken place in some countries have resulted in controversy over national identity and integration concerns.^{176, 177} In South Asia, due to geopolitical complexity in the region and significant refugee populations, host countries have different positions on refugee rights.¹⁷⁸ Countries like Pakistan and Iran have long histories of conflict, allowing them to be more sympathetic. These countries house a large number of Afghan refugees and implement liberal protection measures, ensuring that they are accepted.¹⁷⁹ While there are challenges including lack of resources and income inequality, countries like India and Bangladesh have faced concerns of security and integration with Rohingya refugees in the past.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, South American countries generally exhibit a positive attitude towards the rights of refugees in host countries.¹⁸¹ Countries such as Colombia, Brazil, and Ecuador have been particularly active in hosting refugees as they border conflicted countries.^{182, 183} Colombia experienced a large influx of Venezuelan immigrants and refugees over the past few years, implementing protection measures and providing vital services.¹⁸⁴ Brazil has also welcomed large numbers of Venezuelan refugees and established reception centers and support programs to aid their integration.¹⁸⁵ All regions have emphasized the importance of international burden sharing and cooperation. Western European states tend to advocate an equitable distribution of responsibilities across states and greater support from global actors.¹⁸⁶ South Asian countries emphasize the need for continued funding and capacity building to deal with large numbers of refugees.¹⁸⁷ Overall, countries in these regions tend to attempt at offering protection of rights and implementation of protocols for refugees within their borders.

¹⁷⁶ "Germany." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/donors/germany>.

¹⁷⁷ "France Welcomes Refugees From Ukraine, Facilitates Travel Rules for Them." Shengenvisa, March 3, 2022, <https://www.schengenvisa.info.com/news/france-welcomes-refugees-from-ukraine-facilitates-travel-rules-for-them/>.

¹⁷⁸ "UNHCR in Central Asia." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/en/unhcr-in-central-asia>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ O'Boyle, Brendan. "How Latin American Countries and Cities Have Welcomed Migrants." *Americas Quarterly*, April 20, 2020. <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/how-latin-american-countries-and-cities-have-welcomed-migrants/>.

¹⁸² "Venezuela Situation." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023,. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/venezuela-situation>.

¹⁸³ "UNHCR and IOM welcome Ecuador's move to regularize Venezuelan refugees and migrants," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, June 10, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/unhcr-and-iom-welcome-ecuadors-move-regularize-venezuelan-refugees-and-migrants>.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ "Solidarity in EU asylum policy." European Parliament, January 2023. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/pdf>.

¹⁸⁷ "HLS: Solidarity and Burden-Sharing, Background papers for the High Level Segment." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, September 2013. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/hls-solidarity-and-burden-sharing-background-papers-high-level-segment>.

Southern Africa

Countries in Southern Africa have a complex and varied stance regarding the rights of refugees in host countries. Conflict, political instability, and economic challenges in neighbouring countries have led to an influx of refugees into the region.¹⁸⁸ In the region, commitments to further education, health and employment opportunities have been expressed, making it easier for refugees to establish themselves in communities.¹⁸⁹ For example, Zambia has held a more inclusive approach, offering freedom of movement and work permits to refugees.¹⁹⁰ As another example, South Africa has had problems with its asylum management system being overburdened: a system designed for 50,000 applications a year experienced numbers as high as 62,000 in 2015.¹⁹¹ South Africa is currently working and taking action towards a safer future for refugees.¹⁹² These states are most likely to promote inclusive growth, creating jobs, and addressing socioeconomic disparities can also help improve the acceptance and inclusion of refugees.

North America

North American countries demonstrate a balance between national security, domestic priorities, and international obligations to refugee rights. Countries in this region have historically played important roles in providing refuge for those fleeing persecution and conflict.^{193, 194} Canada takes a transparent approach to refugees, generally encouraging a humanitarian approach.^{195, 196} It established a robust resettlement program and implemented inclusive policies that prioritized refugee safety: integration and family reunification. Canada is recognized for its commitment to the principles of refugee rights and its efforts to share the burden of hosting refugees around the world.¹⁹⁷ The United States, while historically a major refugee destination, has seen structural changes over time.¹⁹⁸ Changes in governments have led to differences in the way refugees are resettled in terms of numbers, and processes. For example, although the US has traditionally led in the admission of refugees, in recent years and with the change in governance, the country has seen policy changes resulting in decreased admission rates and stronger screening policies. State security concerns, border controls and public sentiment have affected perceptions of refugee rights and acceptance.¹⁹⁹ North America actively participates in

¹⁸⁸ "Southern Africa: Global Focus." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/southern-africa>.

¹⁸⁹ "Zambia." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/zambia>.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Sikanyiso Masuku. "How South Africa is denying refugees their rights: what needs to change." The Conversation, May 12, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/how-south-africa-is-denying-refugees-their-rights-what-needs-to-change-135692>.

¹⁹² "South Africa." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/south-africa>.

¹⁹³ "Refugee Admissions" United States Department of State, March 27, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/>.

¹⁹⁴ "Canada's Resettlement Programs" Government of Canada, 2017. <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/winter-meetings/2017-vienna/reports-20/3479-special-report-on-canada-s-resettlement-programs-eng/file>.

¹⁹⁵ Amelia Cheatham, and Diana Roy. "What Is Canada's Immigration Policy?" Council on Foreign Relations, March 7, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-canadas-immigration-policy>.

¹⁹⁶ "Refugees in Canada." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the United Nations Refugee Agency Canada, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.ca/in-canada/refugees-in-canada/>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Cohn, D'vera. "How U.S. immigration laws and rules have changed through history." Pew Research Center, September 30, 2015. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2015/09/30/how-u-s-immigration-laws-and-rules-have-changed-through-history/>.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

international forums and cooperates with local partners to jointly address refugee issues. The countries usually follow a similar decision path, which is usually very variable depending on which party is in power.

Discussion Questions

1. How can host countries ensure that the rights of refugees are protected while addressing the crisis on financial and medical resources and infrastructure? How can the international community help these nations and how can the education and healthcare of refugees in host countries be improved?
2. What measures can be taken to promote the social integration and integration of refugees into host communities?
3. What strategies can be used to raise public awareness and generate empathy and support for refugees in host communities? How can SOCHUM ensure that NGOs and civil society organizations play in supporting host countries and advocating for refugee rights?
4. How can the international community enhance burden sharing and shared responsibility to meet the pressures faced by host countries?
5. What legal frameworks and mechanisms can be used to address challenges associated with ambiguous definitions of refugee status and protection?
6. What strategies can be used to combat targeted discrimination and ensure the rights of ethnic minorities in the refugee population? How can investigative systems be strengthened to address human rights violations and refugee violations?
7. What steps can be taken to promote long-term solutions for refugees, such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement, or community integration?
8. How can the international community support host countries in their efforts to build their capacity to effectively address the refugee crisis?
9. How have host countries and international actors been able to cooperate to ensure that refugee rights are protected in emergency and prolonged refugee situations?

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Child Labour

Overview

Throughout history, child labour has affected countless young people. Child labour currently affects one in ten children over the age of five—equivalent to approximately 160 million youth in the world.²⁰⁰ Child labour is defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development,” which is “mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children.” Moreover, child labour “interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”²⁰¹ Despite the implementations that attempt to mitigate this practice, it continues to be a conflict, especially in the world’s poorest countries. In these areas of the world such as Eritrea, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 percent of children experience a form of child labour.^{202, 203} Additionally, all member states of the United Nations (UN) currently allow imports from brands such as Nestle, Hershey’s, and Kraft, companies which have been alleged to utilize child labour.²⁰⁴ Due to child labour’s economic contributions to the brands, no country in the United Nations has completely removed itself from this illicit practice.²⁰⁵ In addition, due to a lack of global initiative to protect children’s rights, states that promote or permit the use of child labour tend to continue their violations.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, conversations around child labour are often ignored by the media. Limited media has covered the hidden cost of beauty, the dangerous labour, and young lives lost in the make-up industry.²⁰⁷

Using youth in illegal work is usually due to several superimposed reasons. These include limited consensus about international legal frameworks and conventions to protect children, socioeconomic factors such as poverty, education, war and armed conflict, cultural beliefs and practices, and low advocacy for youth.²⁰⁸ Oftentimes, families are forced to send their children to labour due to severe poverty.²⁰⁹ For example, in 20th

²⁰⁰ Alicia Dubay, “Child Labour: Facts and How to Help,” ed. Melanie Ramos, World Vision, June 9, 2023.

<https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-protection/child-labour-facts-and-how-to-help>.

²⁰¹ “What Is Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁰² “Child Labour,” United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, June 2023. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/>.

²⁰³ Katie Hunt, “The 10 Worst Countries for Child Labor,” Cable News Network, October 15, 2023,.

<https://www.cnn.com/2013/10/15/world/child-labor-index-2014/index.html>.

²⁰⁴ Krishna Reddy, “Top 28 Companies That Use Child Labor Still,” Wisestep, 2023. <https://content.wisestep.com/companies-use-child-labor/>.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ “Hidden Cost of Beauty: The Risk of Child Labour in Canadian Cosmetics,” Worldvision, 2018.

<https://www.worldvision.ca/WorldVisionCanada/media/NCFS/Reports/risk-of-child-labour-in-canadian-cosmetics-mica-research-brief-2018.pdf>.

²⁰⁸ “Causes,” International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/child-labour/WCMS_248984/lang--en/index.htm.

Susan Raqib, “How Wars and Disasters Fuel Child Labor: Urgent Action Needed to Help Millions of Children Forced into Work Each Year,” Human Rights Watch, June 12, 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/12/how-wars-and-disasters-fuel-child-labor>.

“World Day against Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/campaignandadvocacy/wdacl/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁰⁹ “Why Does Child Labour Happen? Here Are Some of the Root Causes,” Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing Foundation. <https://www.eclt.org/en/news/child-labour-causes>.

century England, more than a quarter of low-income families suffered the disease and death of a child, putting their further financial support at risk.²¹⁰ Later, child labour declined as a result of improvements in the economy, education, and the establishment of labour laws.²¹¹ However, currently, another issue is that certain cultures do not value girls' education, forcing many into underage labour as domestic helpers. In specific regions in India, for example, if a child is not given a job, the family will not have enough money to make ends meet. Youth labour ratios are influenced by sociocultural factors like the caste system, prejudice, and cultural biases against girls.²¹² Youth forced into labour often experience diseases, illnesses, exploitation, trauma, and higher mortality rates.²¹³ Regardless of the reason, child labour is a crucial issue within SOCHUM and solving this conflict is a necessity for encouraging stable communities.

Timeline

1760–1840 — Industrial Revolution commences, triggering the rise of factories and the exploitation of child labour. Companies differed children from receiving an education by working long hours for little money in hazardous working circumstances.²¹⁴

June 22, 1802 — The United Kingdom passes the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, calling for the sufficient ventilation of cotton plants and mills and the completion of minimal cleanliness standards. Children in companies and factories are required to receive a basic education, go to church at least once a month, and to be provided with clothing. Furthermore, working days for children are limited to twelve hours, but oftentimes, this was not enforced, enabling the continuation of child labour in Britain.²¹⁵

August 28, 1833 — To improve the conditions for children in factories, the UK's government passes the Factory Act. It contains clauses stating that no child under the age of nine shall work, that employers will have an age licence for their youth workers, that children between the ages of 9 and 13 shall not work over nine hours per day, and that children shall be entitled to two hours of schooling per day. Notably, four factory inspectors are appointed to enforce the law.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ Walter I. Trattner, "Crusade for the Children : a History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America," *Quadrangle Books*, 1970, 111-35, University Of British Columbia Irving K. Barber Library.

Mary E. Miller, "Child Labor and Protecting Young Workers around the World: An Introduction to This Issue," *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* 16, no. 2 (April 2010): <https://doi.org/10.1179/oeh.2010.16.2.103>.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² "Bureau of International Labor Affairs: Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports," United States Department of Labor, 2021, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/india>.

A. Invernizzi and J. Williams, "The Human Rights of Children," *From Visions to Implementation*, o.s., 2013, 61-98, Ashgate Publishing.

²¹³ "Child Labour," United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, June 2023. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/>.

²¹⁴ "Child Labor during the Industrial Revolution," Museum of Tolerance, 2023. <https://www.museumoftolerance.com/assets/documents/children-who-labor-handout-2.pdf>.

²¹⁵ Joanna Innes, "Origins of the Factory Acts: The Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, 1802," *Law, Crime and English Society, 1660–1830*, October 17, 2002, 230 - 255, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511495885.012>.

²¹⁶ "1833 Factory Act: Did It Solve the Problems of Children in Factories?," The National Archives, 2023. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/1833-factory-act/>.

April 11, 1919 — The International Labor Organization (ILO) is established under the League of Nations to improve labour conditions, which addresses child labour. The international organization is in charge of creating, enforcing, and coordinating global labour standards with its 181 member states.²¹⁷

September 26, 1924 — The Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child is adopted by the League of Nations. It outlines that “the child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually; the child that is hungry must be fed; and the child that is sick must be nursed.”²¹⁸

June 28, 1930 — The ILO signs the Forced Labour Convention into its legislation. This convention works to “suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible periods” for all members of the ILO.²¹⁹

November 20, 1959 — The UN adopts the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, urging member states to protect children from economic exploitation. It states that young people have the right to express their thoughts on any topic that affects them.²²⁰

June 26, 1973 — The ILO adopts the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment Convention, a legally binding document, making the minimum age for work the following: 15 years old for normal work, 13 years old for light work, 18 years old for dangerous work, 16 years old for dangerous work in certain conditions, and 14 years old for justified countries in poverty.²²¹

November 20, 1989 — The UN adopts the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It outlines the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of all children worldwide, and shows how governments and adults must cooperate to guarantee that all children can exercise these rights.²²²

1992 — The ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is established with the objective of gradually eliminating child labour. This is planned to be accomplished by enhancing nations' ability to address the issue and encouraging a global movement.²²³

June 17, 1999 — The ILO adopts Convention No. 182—the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention—targeting the worst forms of child labor for immediate elimination.²²⁴ This includes clauses that target countless issues, including the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and forced or compulsory.²²⁵

June 26, 2019 — The ILO forms the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, a report focusing on a few areas of action. These include “increasing investment in people's capabilities, increasing investment in the

²¹⁷ International Labour Organization, 2023, <https://www.ilo.org>

²¹⁸ “Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child,” United Nations Documents, September 26, 1924. <http://www.un-documents.net/gdrc1924.htm>.

“Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959,” Humanium, 2023. <https://www.humanium.org/en/declaration-rights-child-2>.

²¹⁹ “C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29),” International Labour Organization, June 10, 1930. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/>.

²²⁰ “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: An Overview for Children and Teenagers,” Government of Canada, November 15, 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/national-child-day/united-nations-convention-rights-of-the-child.html>.

²²¹ “C138 Minimum Age Convention, 1973,” Humanium, 2023. <https://www.humanium.org/en/minimum-age-convention/>.

²²² “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,” United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/the-rrsa/introducing-the-crc/>.

²²³ “International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang-en/index.htm>.

²²⁴ “C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182),” International Labour Organization, 1999, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/>.

²²⁵ Ibid.

institutions of work, and increasing investment in decent and sustainable work.” The report includes 15 months of research, which show the true statistics and use of child labour within big corporations, and suggest ways to safely develop economies after the pandemic, such as focusing on skill-based learning and providing gender equality within workplaces.²²⁶

December 31, 2019 — In Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, cases of child pneumonia with an unclear aetiology are reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) China Country Office.²²⁷ Many children, within Wuhan, are being forced into exploitative and risky child labour because of the large economic impact of the pandemic. Many young people feel they have no alternative but to work in order to support their family.²²⁸ The pandemic also put a pause onto the amount of work being done to mitigate child labour.

2021 — Named the “International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour,” the UN General Assembly (UNGA) urges the its member states to eradicate child labour and implement laws from the ILO conventions. They also urge the ILO to follow the SDG target of halting all forms of child labour in 2030 by using the campaigns the ILO has formed. This year was mainly unsuccessful, as the world was recovering from COVID, and child labour continued.²²⁹

May 20, 2022 — The Durban Call to Action is adopted at the world’s 5th Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour held by the ILO. The document “emphasizes the need for urgent action to end child labour.”²³⁰ It is instrumental as a piece of advocacy for child rights after the pandemic, stating the importance of COVID-19 recovery while maintaining and promoting decent working conditions for children.²³¹

January 1, 2024 — In Canada, Bill S-211 starts being enforced. The piece of legislation enacts the *Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act* and amends the *Customs Tariff* (the Act). It aims to further awareness and advocacy for child labour within supply chains, and ensures transparency from businesses in order for civilians to be driven away from companies that utilize these practices.²³²

Historical Analysis

Although it was previously considered usual and was therefore not recorded, child labour has been around for centuries, pushing youth into dangerous and potentially life threatening situations.²³³ For many, this meant being forced into unstable physical and mental work, often leading to lowered quality of health, life, and sometimes

²²⁶ “Framework to Recover: the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019” Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2022. <https://labour.gov.tt/resources/articles/framework-to-recover-the-ilo-centenary-declaration-for-the-future-of-work/>.

²²⁷ “Coronavirus (COVID-19) SARS-CoV-2,” Infection Prevention and Control Canada, 2020. <https://ipac-canada.org/coronavirus-resources>.

²²⁸ “Covid-19 Pandemic Fueling Child Labor: Children in Ghana, Nepal, Uganda Describe Grueling Hours, Low Pay,” Human Rights Watch, May 26, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/26/covid-19-pandemic-fueling-child-labor>.

²²⁹ “2021 declared International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour” International Labour Organization, July 26, 2019. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_713925/lang--en/index.htm.

²³⁰ “Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour” Elimination of Child Labour, 2022.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/genericdocument/wcms_845907.pdf.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² “Forced Labour in Canadian Supply Chains” Government of Canada, 2023. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/frcd-lbr-cndn-sply-chns/index-en.aspx>.

²³³ “Child labour” United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour>.

death in tragic conditions.²³⁴ However, international law and improved societal standards have played a significant role in mitigating the practice of child labour.²³⁵ Overall, child labour laws have developed over time to aid in protecting youth in dangerous and illegal working conditions.

Prehistoric France

From 2100–3500 BCE, children in prehistoric France were given the task to soften animal hides and turn them into clothing, tent exteriors, or weapons.²³⁶ Although it might have not been physically draining, softening animal hides took skill.²³⁷ It is believed that children as young as four years of age were used to complete these types of tasks.²³⁸ Although it may not have been as dangerous as other jobs, children in this work died early due to a loss of teeth from biting down on hides, which led to an inability to eat food. When bone remains of these children were found, it was discovered that many teeth had been chipped away from using them to soften hides.²³⁹ Although the work was harmful for the child's body, these youth helped contribute to their prehistoric economy, and helped further the life of their tribe.²⁴⁰

Industrial Revolution in Britain

Great Britain was the first to industrialize in the 18th and 19th centuries.²⁴¹ In the rapidly changing time, Britain began to use child labour, especially youth coming from poor families, to keep up with its developing nation. Youth as young as ten were used in dangerous work to bring their families and economy money.²⁴² Many children were either domestic employees, apprentices, chimney sweeps, or helpers in the family company.²⁴³ Children who were being trained in a trade lived and worked alongside their "master" in a workshop that was either built into his house or attached to the back of his hut.²⁴⁴ Moreover, youth living in cities began to work in factories. The industrial system entertained rigid rules, severe penalties, unsafe working conditions, poor pay, and intense work schedules.²⁴⁵ In fact, according to several estimates, children were paid approximately 10-20% of what adults were paid for the same work.²⁴⁶ Due to the high tuition costs of education, parents simply found

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ashley Cowie, "New Discoveries Show Child Labor Is an Ancient Curse," *Ancient Origins*, September 21, 2018. <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/child-labor-0010731>.

²³⁷ Bridget Alex, "The Ancient Practice of Child Labor Is Coming to Light," *Discover*, May 22, 2022.

<https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/the-ancient-practice-of-child-labor-is-coming-to-light>.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ "Prehistoric Children as Young as Eight Worked as Brickmakers and Miners: Bones and Artefacts Suggest That Kids Laboured at Skilled Tasks Thousands of Years Ago," *Nature*, September 18, 2018, September 21, 2018. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-06747>.

²⁴⁰ "Archaeologists Look for Evidence of Past Child Labor Practices," *Archaeology*, September 19, 2018. <https://www.archaeology.org/news/6981-180919-child-labor-antiquity>.

²⁴¹ Emma Griffin, "Child Labour," *British Library*, May 15, 2014. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/child-labour>.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Carolyn Tuttle, "Child Labor during the British Industrial Revolution," ed. Robert Whaples, *EH.Net Encyclopedia*, August 14, 2001. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/child-labor-during-the-british-industrial-revolution/>.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Elias Beck, "Child Labor in the Industrial Revolution," *History Crunch*, October 5, 2016, December 30, 2021. https://www.historycrunch.com/child-labor-in-the-industrial-revolution.html#.

it more appealing to use their kids as a source of income while they garnered skills in the field.²⁴⁷ Overall, Britain took part in child labour during the industrial revolution and huge growth of the economy.

The United States in the 19th and 20th Centuries

In 19th and 20th century America, it was common for children, some as young as four, to work in factories, mines, farms, canneries, and tenement sweatshops.²⁴⁸ In fact, according to the 1900 US census, 1.75 million children, or 18.2 percent of those between the ages of ten and fifteen, were employed.²⁴⁹ However, the census failed to recognize those younger than ten were already working in mills, factories, or had street positions.²⁵⁰ Children of the era frequently worked in anthracite coal mines.²⁵¹ Eight and nine year old youth would lie about their age to find work, often working ten hours each day for only five to seven cents an hour.²⁵² The US tried to address this issue in creative ways. For example, the National Child Labour Committee (NCLC) hired photographers to capture images of child labourers and their jobs around the country.²⁵³ The images of child miners, mill workers, cotton pickers, cigar rollers, newsboys, pin boys, oyster shuckers, and factory employees gave the issue a "face," and reformers used them to create awareness and advance laws that would either protect young workers or forbid their employment.²⁵⁴ In fact, the Fair Labour Standards Act, supported by the NCLC, was passed by Congress in 1938 and forbade hiring anybody under the age of 16 in the US.²⁵⁵ These efforts mitigated child labour, but underage youth have still continued to work in unsafe capacities.²⁵⁶

Canadian Mining

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Canadian children were often employed as miners in dangerous conditions if they lied to be older than they were. With a rapidly growing economy, this seemed favourable to many young children as they were not only able to get out of school but also able to earn money for their families.²⁵⁷ However, child miners were paid significantly less than their adult counterparts. In 1880, Nova Scotian boys made an average of 65 cents per day working, compared to adult labourers, who earned 95 cents.²⁵⁸ Children experiencing

²⁴⁷ Mark Cartwright, "Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution," World History Encyclopedia, April 12, 2023.

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/2216/child-labour-in-the-british-industrial-revolution/>.

Jane Humphries, "Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution," *The Economic History Review* 66, no. 2 (2013). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42921562>.

²⁴⁸ "Child Labor 1900," Record of Rights. <http://recordsofrights.org/events/30/child-labor#>.

²⁴⁹ "Child Labor in the Early Twentieth Century," Encyclopedia, July 25, 2023.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/child-labor-early-twentieth-century>.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

Betsy Wood, "The End of Child Labor in Early 20th-Century America," Brewminate, September 3, 2020.

<https://brewminate.com/the-end-of-child-labor-in-early-20th-century-america/>.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ "In the Playtime of Others: Child Labor in the Early 20th Century," *Art to Zoo*, December 1966.

https://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/child_labor/ATZ_ChildLabor_December1988.pdf.

²⁵⁴ Alan Taylor, "Child Labor in America 100 Years Ago," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2015.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2015/07/child-labor-in-america-100-years-ago/397478/>.

²⁵⁵ J. Hansan, "Child Labor: The American Era of Child Labor," Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011.

<https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/child-welfarechild-labor/child-labor/>.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Robert McIntosh, "Canada's Boy Miners," *Canada's History*, May 9, 2017. <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/business-industry/canada-s-boy-miners>.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

these conditions were not uncommon. More than 1 million youth in Canada were employed as child labourers, the majority of which were in the mining industry.²⁵⁹ In response, provinces installed legislation to halt the practice of child labour. For example, the 1873 Mines Regulation Act was passed in Nova Scotia.²⁶⁰ The act was the first to govern mine safety in Canada and established regulations on the use of safety lighting, explosives, daily inspections of the machinery, and ventilation.²⁶¹ Additionally, it provided the provincial government's Inspector of Mines the power to levy penalties and enact custom regulations to address particular safety issues faced by certain mines.²⁶² Finally, it protected every child's right to education, and made it mandatory for boys aged 7–12 to go to school for eighty days a year. This number greatly increased as time continued.²⁶³

Past UN/International Involvement

The UN and other non-governmental organizations have made substantial efforts to reduce the conflicts that employed children face throughout history. Through stronger education programs, legally binding legislations, and definitions of specific terms, international organizations have been able to mitigate the number of youth labourers from around the world.²⁶⁴

ILO Conventions

The ILO has adopted two fundamental conventions that contain strategies to combat child labour. The first one is No.138, called the Minimum Age Convention, which was adopted in 1973. The second one of which is No. 182, about the Worst Forms of Child Labour, adopted in 1999.²⁶⁵ The Minimum Age Convention establishes that the youngest age for work is “15 years old for normal work, 13 years old for light work, 18 years old for dangerous work, 16 years old for dangerous work in certain conditions, and 14 years old for justified countries in poverty.”²⁶⁶ However, Convention No. 182 mainly targets slavery, indentured labor, and very harsh resources in child labour practice.²⁶⁷ Furthermore, both of these pieces of legislation, since they were enacted, have been followed by recommendations and amendments in later years. Recommendation No. 146, also adopted in 1873, encourages

²⁵⁹ "Child Labour in Mining and Global Supply Chains," International Labour Organization, May 2019. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms_720743.pdf. Jean Barman, "Child Labour," ed. Anne-marie Pedersen, Julia Skikavich, and Jessica Poulin, The Canadian Encyclopedia, September 11, 2011, August 23, 2022. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/child-labour>.

²⁶⁰ "Child Labour," Not Your Grandfather's Mining Industry. <https://notyourgrandfathersmining.ca/child-labour>.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ "Background" United Nations, 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-day-against-child-labour/background>.

²⁶⁵ "C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)," International Labour Organization, 1999. 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/>.

"C138 Minimum Age Convention, 1973," Humanium, 2023. <https://www.humanium.org/en/minimum-age-convention/>.

"C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)," International Labour Organization, June 10, 1930.

<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/>.

"Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child," United Nations Documents, September 26, 1924 <http://www.un-documents.net/gdrc1924.htm>.

"Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959," Humanium, 2023. <https://www.humanium.org/en/declaration-rights-child-2/>.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

priorities and urgencies, and explains the responsibility beared by each member of the ILO.²⁶⁸ Moreover, Recommendation No. 190, adopted in 1999 as well, includes clauses that target programs of action, specifics on hazardous work, and details on implementation.²⁶⁹ However, the most influential portions of these acts were the clauses targeting accessible education, social security systems and birth registries, and stressing the importance of mitigating the use of children in hazardous work. The aim of this was to ensure that the IMO was able to track children and able to verify that everyone was receiving an education, rather than being involved in child labour.²⁷⁰

UN Advocacy Campaigns

In past years, the UN has launched several advocacy campaigns to encourage diplomatic discussions and debate around the implications and dangers of child labour.²⁷¹ For example, the ILO started a World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to “highlight the plight of children engaged in child labour.”²⁷² This event brought important people to observe the issues faced by children in laborious conditions and helped bring their much needed attention.²⁷³ Moreover, the UN has created Alliance 8.7, a group that aims to spread awareness about child labour. Together, with over 375 partners so far, they work with other organizations to mitigate such issues.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, the ILO’s Supporting Children’s Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media Campaign (SCREAM) was created and aims to “promote awareness among young people about children’s rights, with a focus on child labour, so that they, in turn, can speak out and mobilise their communities to act.”²⁷⁵ The campaign educates the public on different issues faced by child workers including sicknesses and agriculture.²⁷⁶ Lastly, the ILO has also branched out to more creative awareness campaigns, such as the Music Against Child Labour Initiative. Overall, the ILO has been an exemplar in their role as the voice of the UN, having created campaigns to advocate for the ending of child labour.

International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

Founded in 1992, IPEC is a global program that aims to mitigate child labour.²⁷⁷ Its objective is to start and continue “the progressive elimination of child labour, which [is] to be achieved through strengthening the

²⁶⁸ “R146 - Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146),” International Labour Organization, 1973.

<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/>.

²⁶⁹ “R190 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190),” International Labour Organization, 1999. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/>.

²⁷⁰ “ILO Conventions on Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023.

<https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁷¹ “Campaign and Advocacy on Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/campaignandadvocacy/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁷² “World Day against Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/campaignandadvocacy/wdacl/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ “Ending Forced Labour, Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking and Child Labour,” Alliance 87, 2023.

<https://www.alliance87.org/>.

²⁷⁵ “SCREAM: Supporting Children’s Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media,” International Labour Organization, 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Campaignandadvocacy/Scream/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ “International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>.

capacity of countries to deal with the problem and promoting a worldwide movement to combat child labour.”²⁷⁸ The program has been installed and operates in 88 countries, having spent more than USD 61 million on technical cooperation projects in 2008 alone.²⁷⁹ It is both the largest operational program of the ILO and the largest program of its sort in the entire world. Over the years, IPEC's partners have grown in number and scope, and they now consist of employers' and workers' agencies, other international and governmental organizations, private companies, community-based organisations, NGOs, different forms of media, lawmakers, educational institutions, religious groups, and families.²⁸⁰ As well, IPEC has completed several achievements within its lifetime. For example, by 1998, 105 programs had been implemented all over the world by the program to prevent child labour, and remove youth from hazardous situations.²⁸¹ Overall, the IPEC has done incredible work to limit the child labour in the world.

Reporting Mechanisms

Throughout the UN's past, the organization has improved and furthered their strategies to report and flag areas of child labour. In addition to the International Labour Organization's Conventions, the UN has implemented the Report Form in 1999 as a way to “assist government officials, [communities, and United Nations workers] to include all the necessary information for a balanced and evaluation of the application of the Conventions at the national level.”²⁸² It includes questions such as minimum age for admission to work, how child labour is defined in states, and policy reforms to mitigate youth work.²⁸³ Furthermore, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has implemented several surveys, which include child labour reporting.²⁸⁴ For example, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), a questionnaire that has been in use since 1995, is used to find the currency of child labour across United Nation member states. The survey poses questions on youth aged 5 to 17 and incorporates questions on the type of work a young person does and the number of hours they are engaged in the illegal activity. Moreover, another example is the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), which is a series of surveys and web pages that “makes available a wealth of statistical tools, data, reports, like specific questionnaires for child labour surveys.”²⁸⁵ These surveys allowed the UN to highlight issues with child labour and serves as a “baseline understanding of the factors, causes and variables

²⁷⁸ "About the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)," International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/programme/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ "International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour," International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁸¹ "Initiative: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)," Sustainable Development United Nations, 1992. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/dsd/dsd_aofw_mg/mg_VIA/viaprofiles_ILO_IPEC.htm.

²⁸² "Practical Guide to Child Labour Reporting," International Labour Organization, February 6, 2006. https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_065173/lang--en/index.htm.

²⁸³ "Report Form: Effective Abolition of Child Labour," International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/genericdocument/wcms_100440.pdf.

²⁸⁴ "Child Labour," United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, June 2023. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/>.

"Increasing Wealth of Data to Monitor the Situation of Children and Women," The World Bank. <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/collections/MICS>.

"Division for the Advancement of Women: Violence against Women: A Statistical Overview, Challenges and Gaps in Data Collection and Methodology and Approaches for Overcoming Them," United Nations, April 14, 2005. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-stat-2005/docs/expert-papers/Unicef%20for%20Geneva.pdf>.

²⁸⁵ "Child Labour Statistics," International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/ChildlabourstatisticsSIMPOC/lang--en/index.htm>.

contributing towards the use of child labour in the industry.”²⁸⁶ As well, the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program has put out more than 400 surveys in over 90 countries, with the aim to “collect, analyze, and disseminate accurate and representative data on population, health, HIV, and nutrition.”²⁸⁷ This analysis collects approximations for youth labour involvement and attendance at school. The data is provided for each nation at the aggregate level and is broken down by age, sex, location, and household wealth.²⁸⁸

Current Situation

Over 100 million young people are still forced into hazardous labour despite previous efforts.²⁸⁹ The UN is responsible for providing resources to guarantee safety and security for individuals who are involved in child labour. The work done so far has taken countless effort and management to support communities and families.²⁹⁰ However, the UN has been criticized for failing to ensure its legislation is implemented.²⁹¹ Organizations have called it “slow, bureaucratic, and lacking teeth and the capacity to follow through on the ground.”²⁹² In a world where 79 million children are currently taking part in dangerous or life-threatening work, the UN needs to work quickly and efficiently. The former general secretary of UNI Global Union, the global trade union, has expressed that “there's an issue [with the ILO] in terms of application and a contradiction with certain governments voting for a convention in Geneva and then not putting that into practice back home.”²⁹³ In addition, child labour is presently affecting the number of youth in educative programs.²⁹⁴ Youth without education often lack the requirements to advance their careers, perpetuating the cycle of youth labour.²⁹⁵ War and armed conflict impacts childrens’ ability to attend school, and the low pay rates offered to these children make it impossible for them to leave their lives.²⁹⁶ According to current research, societal norms or culture play a significant role in the continuing of child labour.²⁹⁷ For example, a parent who admitted to involving her kid in cocoa cultivation emphasized the need of getting kids interested in labour in order to provide them a brighter future, stating “our culture teaches our children to believe that work socialization is meant to provide training which will ensure a better life in the future.”²⁹⁸ Overall, youth currently participate in dangerous child labour for a multitude of reasons.

²⁸⁶ “Baseline Surveys on Child Labour in Selected Areas in Thailand,” International Labour Organization, September 2013. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_222568.pdf.

²⁸⁷ “Child Labour Surveys,” International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/surveyLib/index.php/catalog/CLS/>.

²⁸⁸ Demographic and Health Surveys Program, <https://dhsprogram.com/>.

²⁸⁹ Friedrich Huebler, “Seminar on Child Labour, Education and Youth Employment,” *Child Labour and School Attendance: Evidence from MICS and DHS Surveys*, September 12, 2008, 1-5.

²⁹⁰ Alicia Dubay, “Child Labour: Facts and How to Help,” ed. Melanie Ramos, World Vision, June 9, 2023. <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-protection/child-labour-facts-and-how-to-help>.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Simon Bradley, “Has the Global Labour Organisation Advanced Workers’ Rights?,” Swiss Info, January 22, 2019. https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/business/decent-work_centenary--has-global-labour-organisation-advanced-workers--rights-/.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ “Barriers to the Right Education: VI Child Labour,” Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/education0905/8.htm>.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Jo Becker, “Children and Armed Conflict,” Human Rights Watch, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/children-and-armed-conflict>.

²⁹⁸ A. Fyfe, “Understanding Children’s Work: An Interagency Data and Research Cooperation Project,” *The World Bank Economic Review* 17, no. 2 (December 1, 2003): 311-314, <https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhg022>.

²⁹⁹ Obed Adonteng-kissi, “Child Labour versus Realising Children’s Right to Provision, Protection, and Participation in Ghana,” *Australian Social Work* 74, no. 4 (April 5, 2020).

Case Study: Myanmar

There are 1.1 million children in Myanmar from the ages of 5 and 17 who are improperly employed.²⁹⁹ The employment of children has sustained and continued due to several reasons, including domestic economic demand, poverty, Myanmar's poor educational system, and governmental regulations.³⁰⁰ After the military overthrew the government of Myanmar in 2021, the militia took a stance that increased and encouraged youth to be “porters, cleaners, cooks, and agricultural labourers in conflict areas,” or even as child soldiers.³⁰¹ This trend is largely the result of insufficiently severe consequences of children in the military, considering the gravity of the crime.³⁰² Moreover, there is not a minimum age of work across all sectors in Myanmar.³⁰³ For example, there is no minimum age to work in the agricultural sector, which occupies 60.5% of all youth employment in the country.³⁰⁴ The disadvantages that youth face in labour keeps them from education and prevents the skilled labour force from expanding.³⁰⁵ Despite this, the number of children employed in the workforce can be reduced by putting an emphasis on educating child labourers.³⁰⁶ Only children under the age of 10 are required to attend school under Myanmar legislation.³⁰⁷ As they are neither legally allowed to work nor are required to attend school, children between the ages of 10 and 13 are the ones who are most at risk from child labour.³⁰⁸ In addition, programs such as Myanmar Mobile Education Project (myME) and the ILO have also been working in the country to eradicate child labour.³⁰⁹ Both of the international conventions against child exploitation have now been ratified by Myanmar, and ILO field initiatives have decreased child work by 55% over three years in three pilot locations.³¹⁰ Despite this, in part due to the new government, child labour continues to be an issue face by Myanmar today.³¹¹

Case Study: India

Approximately 12.9 million Indian youth within the ages of 7 and 17 are working. Every day, millions of Indian children work in factories and quarries or sell goods on the streets. Many kids aged 12 to 17 work up to sixteen hours every day to support their families.³¹² The significant amount of youth forced labour in India is due to

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407x.2020.1742363>.

²⁹⁹ "Child Labour in Myanmar," International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/yanmar/areas/childlabour/lang--en/index.htm>.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ "Bureau of International Labor Affairs: Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports," United States Department of Labor, 2021. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor>.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Minh-Ha La, "10 Facts about Child Labour in Myanmar," The Borgen Project, February 9, 2020. <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-child-labor-in-myanmar/>.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Alyssa Augustus, "Child Labor in Myanmar," Ballard Brief, December 2022. <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/child-labor-in-myanmar#>.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Minh-Ha La, "10 Facts about Child Labour in Myanmar," The Borgen Project, February 9, 2020. <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-child-labor-in-myanmar/>.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ "Child Labour in Myanmar," International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/yanmar/areas/childlabour/lang--en/index.htm>.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ "ILO Myanmar Calls for More Action to End Child Labour," International Labour Organization, June 14, 2022. https://www.ilo.org/yanmar/press/WCMS_848338/lang--en/index.htm.

³¹² "Child Labour in India," SOS Children's Villages, June 25, 2018. <https://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/news/child-labour-in-india-588>.

poverty. Despite India's recent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), over a third of the country's population continues to live in poverty.³¹³ To end child work abuse in India, much more needs to be done politically.³¹⁴ For example, the laws prohibiting child employment must be strengthened and the main cause of child labour—extreme poverty—must also be addressed. Overall, India needs several reforms to end the high rates of child labour within their borders.

Case Study: Bangladesh

With extremely high poverty rates, the children of Bangladesh are often either employed in order to provide for their families, or involved in forced child labour. As of 2019, 20.5% of the total population of the nation was below the poverty level.³¹⁵ In addition, Bangladesh had one of the harshest school lockdowns during the pandemic.³¹⁶ The country's schools were closed for 18 months, and since then, 59% of children dropped out in order to provide money for their families.³¹⁷ As a result, over 3.45 million children are involved in the “worst forms of child labour,” such as forced work for brick manufacturing and the drying of fish.³¹⁸ Despite countless projects taken on by NGOs in Bangladesh, few organizations have been able to make an impact on the crisis. Both the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention and ILO Convention No. 138: Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment were ratified by the Bangladesh government in early 2022. Through labour inspections, the authorities also removed 5,088 vulnerable children from 23 districts.³¹⁹ However, many children continue to carry out hazardous work in the leather and clothing industries, known as the informal sector, which is where the majority of child labour in Bangladesh takes place and is exempt from the Bangladesh Labour Act. Additionally, when courts do impose penalties for breaking child labour laws, the fines are too small to serve as a deterrent to major and small companies. Penalties for breaking child labour laws can only be enforced following a long judicial process.³²⁰ Overall, Bangladesh has very lenient laws that are often overlooked, which tends to promote child labour.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ "Child Labour in India," International Labour Organization, 2023.

https://www.ilo.org/whhttps://www.ilo.org/dhaka/areasofwork/child-labour/lang--en/index.htmcm5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_557089.pdf.

³¹⁵ "Poverty Data: Bangladesh" Asian Development Bank, 2019. <https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/bangladesh/poverty>.

³¹⁶ Corinne Redfern and Ali Ahsan, "Tens of Thousands of Boys in Bangladesh Were Forced into Work during the Pandemic. Now School Is Resuming without Them," Time, April 26, 2022. <https://time.com/6170432/bangladesh-child-labor-pandemic/>.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ "Poverty Data: Bangladesh," Asian Development Bank, 2023. <https://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/poverty>.

Rumana Afroz Srabony and Ali Azman, "Poverty and Hunger - the Reality of Child Labour in Bangladesh in the Context of COVID-19," Child Hope. <https://www.childhope.org.uk/our-work/blog/poverty-and-hunger-the-reality-of-child-labour/>.

³¹⁹ Rabeya Akter Urmi, "Child labour, a fault-line in our socio-economic infrastructure," Daily Observer, January 15, 2023. <https://www.observerbd.com/news.php?id=402341#>.

³²⁰ "Bureau of International Labor Affairs: Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports," United States Department of Labor, 2021. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/bangladesh>.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Enforcing Legislation

Although regulation alone cannot end child employment, it is a necessary step. Unclear legal definitions regarding the minimum age children which can take part in risky work, poor definitions of dangerous activities, and laws prohibiting practices like forced and bonded labour or the sale and trafficking of children must be addressed to form the foundation of any constitutional program to eliminate child labour. It will also be important to make sure that these laws include sanctions against countries which continue to allow the exploitation of children in inhumane ways, while also providing victims with fair compensation and protection.³²¹ This legislation can potentially go through the International Labour Convention, a body under the ILO, to ensure a dedicated international unit looks over the implications of the conventions. Moreover, ILO protocol is also legally binding, which assures countries follow its demands.³²²

Strengthening Past Programs

Programs such as the IDEP, Alliance 8.7, and the Global March Against Child Labour provide awareness, funding, and support for children in dangerous and unwanted work.³²³ As well, they ensure that countries are actively discussing ways to eliminate child labour, and how they can implement solutions within their borders. For example, the Global March Against Child Labour “works to ensure that all children enjoy their rights, and that they are protected from being forced into labour, which hinders their development.”³²⁴ The network brings together participants and actors across the world to advocate for the rights of all children—specifically ones that tackled economic exploitation, and any type of indecent labour.³²⁵ However, this program could be strengthened to have a more direct impact on communities such as installing educational institutions or leading investigations more often.³²⁶

Furthering Education

As stated in international labour regulations on the Minimum Age for Admission to employment, education is the substitute for child labour. Laws requiring school attendance for children up to the age of 15 for specific and specialized jobs can significantly help work towards abolishing many of the more dangerous child labour cases.³²⁷

³²¹ "Extending and Improving Schooling for Children Is the Most Effective Way to Eliminate Child Labour," International Labour Organization, 2023. https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/child-labour/WCMS_249007/lang--en/index.htm.

"Bureau of International Labor Affairs: Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports," United States Department of Labor, 2021. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/india>.

³²² "Conventions and Recommendations," International Labour Organization, 2023. <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm>.

³²³ Ada Hasanagic, "10 Organizations Working to End Child Labor," Human Rights Careers. <https://www.humanrightscarers.com/issues/organizations-end-child-labor/>.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ "Child Labour Is Keeping Millions of Children out of School," International Partnerships European Commission, 2023. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/stories/child-labour-keeping-millions-children-out-school_en.

Bonded labour and numerous other ways of child exploitation can be prevented by regular school attendance in general. Beyond these immediate advantages, a high-quality education has numerous long-term advantages for both the child and society as a whole.³²⁸ It would eventually result in the total elimination of every form of youth employment as the educational system has often been the issue.^{329, 330} Children entering the workforce are likely influenced by a number of circumstances that include inadequate school facilities in many places, a lack of teachers, and low-quality education in many others.³³¹ To make schooling appealing and affordable for everyone, there must be a renewed dedication to free, obligatory education for all children. There must also be enormous investments in teacher training and education, and in many countries, an entire redesign of the curriculum may be necessary. Although this would be costly, the outcomes of the process could either redefine child labour practices, or fail as a whole.³³²

Bloc Positions

Countries Supporting Child Labour

With the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries experienced a significantly increased risk for both hazardous and non-hazardous labour, which led to a surge of over 9 million children in youth working.³³³ Often, these countries dismiss the harms of child labour because of the economic benefits of the practice. After the pandemic, many countries fell into this category. In fact, as of September 2022 United States reports that their list of “Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor comprises 159 goods from 78 countries and areas.”³³⁴ For example, there have been allegations that açai berry harvesting in Brazil involves employing minors as young as eight years old. In the State of Pará’s Abaetuba, a significant hub for the production of açai berries, there is substantial proof of child labour with kids assisting their family in the harvesting process from August to January. The harvest serves as the primary source of income for the majority of families in the area. Brazil views collecting açai berries as a particularly hazardous employment since it often necessitates workers to scale heights of as much as 20 metres without the proper safety gear, carry heavy knives with sharp blades in the back alongside their shorts, and work in hot environments with venomous insects as well as other hazardous organisms.³³⁵ As for another example, there have also been claims that forced labour is used to produce beans in Myanmar for children between the ages of 15 and 17. According to a report by an NGO, the military forces both adults and children to work year-round shifts, harvesting and planting beans at a military encampment. With this being enforced by armed authorities, children are prohibited from refusing to work, even if they are ill.³³⁶ Overall, these countries are often found to have high rates of poverty, low rates of education, and very dense populations, making it very difficult to discourage families from forcing their children to work. Although these

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ “Extending and Improving Schooling for Children Is the Most Effective Way to Eliminate Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, 2023. https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/child-labour/WCMS_249007/lang--en/index.htm.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ “Child labour rises to 160 million – first increase in two decades,” United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, June 9, 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-labour-rises-160-million-first-increase-two-decades>.

³³⁴ “List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor,” United States Department of Labor, September 28, 2022. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods-print>.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

can be very dangerous places, the necessity for money, lack of information, little advocacy, and cultural or social norms renders it difficult to change these countries' practices.

Countries Denying the Use of Child Labour

In addition to countries that openly support and disapprove of child labour, there are those that deny it is occurring within their borders. However, with minimal to no investigations into this, despite several unsupported reports stating there is the use of child labour, it seems these countries may be trying to hide the reality of the situation. Often, these situations have been worsened by COVID as poverty rates increased and education decreased. One of these countries is China. Sophie Richardson the Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch stated in a press release that "China claims that it is fighting child labour, and repeatedly cites its legal prohibition against the practice as proof, but the government actively violates its own prohibitions by running large programs through the school system that use child labour, lack sufficient health and safety guarantees, and exploit loopholes in domestic labour laws."³³⁷ Sophie's group proved their points with reports found in China's borders. The group listed a number of severe examples of exploitation, including one located in the Guangdong region in southern China where 100 kids were discovered working cardboard boxes and earning CNY 2.4 (USD 0.32) per hour.³³⁸ China has since been denying this statement and is left unpunished. Overall, the use of child labour extends beyond countries openly supporting it or condemning it; nations in this bloc have denied this existence of these issues.

Countries Working to End Child Labour

Several countries on the international stage are starting and continuing to make drastic efforts in order to end child labour. Most of these countries have the ideology that all children should have access to an education and a life without dangerous work in order to stay healthy with their own future. Within this bloc, however, countries are approaching the situation in different ways.³³⁹ For example, Nigeria is using an Action Pledge, made in 2021, to push its drive for change and guide their citizens to a more stable life. Their action plan to eradicate child labour involves, a nationwide survey, the creation of a Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS) in industry supply chains, and the development of a cash-transfer scheme for low-income families. Through this, social investment schemes will empower 600,000 rural and urban vulnerable households to stop the escalation of child labour in supply chains, such as those for granite mining, cultivating rice, artisanal gold mining, and cocoa farming.³⁴⁰ However, in the EU, the situation looks very different. The countries themselves are not at high risk for child labour, and therefore, they not only aim to continue to prevent the issue within the borders of Europe, but also seeks to aid other countries to lessen their prevalence of youth employment. To achieve this, the EU is now beginning to exam its supply chain due diligence rules such as child labour, environmental consequences, and human rights. This new piece of law would impact collaborations with producing nations that struggle with combatting child labour and lay forth measurable, time-bound, and

³³⁷ Reuters Staff, "China urged to end 'child labor' in schools," Reuters, December 2, 2007. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-idUSPEK37155620071203>.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ "Countries move to end child labour - but globally the picture is still bleak," TheirWorld, August 9, 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/countries-move-end-child-labour-globally-picture-still-bleak>.

³⁴⁰ "Ending Child Labour by 2025," European Union: External Action, May 14, 2021. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/ending-child-labour-2025_en.

enforceable roadmaps. Through a number of geographical and thematic programs, as well as through bilateral and regional cooperation, the EU's external assistance also helps to eliminate child labour. The union has reaffirmed their support of partner nations needing to "strengthen the capacities of partner countries in better designing and improving the regulatory and legislative framework and policy implementation, [better] access to quality and inclusive education by reaching out to marginalised children and those in vulnerable situations, and [supporting] local governments, public service providers, and other relevant stakeholders to take effective action to combat child labour."³⁴¹ Alongside the EU, Canada and other Western democracies are also striving to combat child labour. For example, in Canada, the 2023 Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act aims to ensure that companies verify that their products have not been made in sweatshops containing child labour.³⁴² While the countries in this bloc share the sentiment of working towards the end of child labour, there are many nuances between each approach and solution.

Discussion Questions

1. How should SOCHUM balance the urgent need to eliminate child labour with the difficult economic situations faced by developing countries? How would removing youth from the workforce affect economies? How can SOCHUM help support the shift to avoiding the use of child labour?
2. What measures can be taken to address the root causes of child labour, such as poverty and lack of education? If these root causes are fixed, how will that impact societies as a whole?
3. How can international legal frameworks, conventions, guidelines, and legislations be strengthened or re-written to aid in protecting children from labour, considering the limited consensus among most nations?
4. How can SOCHUM collaborate with governments and other international organizations and businesses to develop effective strategies for eradicating child labour? How would governments help to support their citizens through this shift and what impact does SOCHUM have on members of countries?
5. What approaches can be used to engage communities to change cultural beliefs and practices that encourage or support child labour?
6. What measures can be taken to encourage and enhance international cooperation in combating child labour? How can SOCHUM be a speaking-grounds for that cooperation?
7. How can governments effectively promote investment in industries that don't use child labour? How can the general public be more educated on the impact of youth labour?
8. What strategies can be developed by SOCHUM to improve data collection and reporting on youth forced and unforced labour, in order to ensure accurate assessment and monitoring? How will this benefit efforts to mitigate child work?

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Alicia Dubay, "Child labour: facts and how to help," World Vision, June 9, 2023. <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-protection/child-labour-facts-and-how-to-help>.

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