VMUN 2024

United Nations Children's Fund

BACKGROUND GUIDE

VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS
The Twenty-Third Annual Session | January 26–28, 2024

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Caleb Jang and it is my utmost honour and privilege to serve as your Director for the United Nations Children's Fund at this year's iteration of Vancouver Model United Nations. On behalf of your Chair, Airah Virani and Assistant Director, Albert Guo, we hope to create a fun, engaging and collaborative committee with all of you.

I am currently a Grade 12 student at Stratford Hall IB World School in my fifth year participating in Model United Nations. Ever since my first conference in 2019, my passion and appreciation for diplomacy, global affairs and comprehensive debates have continued to grow. These conferences have sparked friendships and created unforgettable memories within the MUN community that are priceless, and I hope you will experience the same.

This year, UNICEF will be discussing two intricate topics: *Malnutrition and Food Insecurity* and *Access to Education*. Both topics have unique challenges to each region that create discrepancies in quality of life to millions of children across the globe. Given the complex and global nature of these topics, I challenge you all to conduct research on your delegation's perspectives and possible solutions with a holistic approach prior to the conference to enable a successful, rich debate.

I wish you the best of luck in your preparations for this conference, and I look forward to meeting you all soon. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me at *unicef@vmun.com*.

Sincerely,

Caleb Jang
UNICEF 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 United Nations Children's Fund, 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 22, 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 *unicef@vmun.com*.

Malnutrition and Food Insecurity

Overview

In many parts of the world, malnutrition and food insecurity continue to be prevalent issues affecting millions of people. In particular, children and youth are impacted the most, leading to stunted growth and increased vulnerability to illnesses and starvation. Factors contributing to this crisis include war and conflict, economic conditions, government power, and climate change. Around the world, there is no single root cause of malnutrition and food insecurity; rather, a combination of factors makes addressing this crisis exceedingly challenging.

The World Health Organization defines malnutrition as the imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization.[1] Malnutrition stems from three root causes: poor accessibility to food and nutrients, a lack of clean water, and limited access to healthcare services.[2] The effects of these disparities have been widespread, with UNICEF estimating that roughly 45 million children under the age of five face severe malnutrition and are in dire need of medical attention.[3] On a broader scale, an estimated 838 million people experience food insecurity on a daily basis.[4] The effects of these crises range from decreasing a child's ability to grow and ability to attend school to longer-term consequences such as greater vulnerability to non-communicable diseases and poorer cognitive functioning. Moreover, these effects often further contribute to the poverty cycle experienced by these individuals. It should be noted that although the most severe malnutrition and food insecurity crises are isolated to the developing world, malnutrition is still prevalent even in wealthier nations, particularly in marginalized communities.

Timeline

December 1918 — During World War I, French and British forces establish naval blockades, preventing ships carrying food and weapons from reaching the axis powers. This causes widespread malnutrition and starvation in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey.[5]

October 1945 — The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) is established to "achieve food and security for all" and raise food and agriculture standards.[6]

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[1] WHO, "Malnutrition," World Health Organization, https://www.who.int/health-topics/malnutrition#tab=tab_1.

[2] Government of Canada, "Nutrition in Developing Countries," *Canada and the World*. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues/development-enjeux_developpement/global_health-sante_mondiale/nutrition.aspx?lang=eng.

[3] UNICEF - WHO - World Bank, "Child Malnutrition," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, May 2023. https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/.

[4] WFP, "A Global Food Crisis," *United Nations World Food Programme*. https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis.

[5] Bethany White, "Artistic Licence: How Hunger Was Used as a Deadly Weapon in WWI," *University of Oxford*, February 27, 2018. https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/arts-blog/artistic-licence-how-hunger-was-used-deadly-weapon.

[6] UNFAO, "Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations," *United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization*, 2016. https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/09/fao-food-and-agriculture-organization-of-the-united-nations/.

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1959 — During the "Great Leap Forward," extreme forced labour combined with poor government provisions causes over 30 million deaths. The repercussions of the Great Chinese Famine has lasting effects on education levels and cognitive functioning for individuals of that generation. In addition, it causes intergenerational health impacts as well.[7]

August 1964 — The UN Economic and Social Council signs the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, which promotes developments in food security and healthcare in developing nations. This campaign is one of the first to use education to address this crisis.[8]

November 1996 — The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action' is adopted by UNFAO. This plan aims to ensure food security across the world through sustainable development of agriculture and international partnerships.[9]

January 2012 — The Tuareg Rebellion against the Mali government, coupled with one of the worst droughts in the decade, instigates higher rates of violence and cripples the food supply in the Sahel Region, forcing millions of people to be food vulnerable.[10]

August 2015 — Warplanes led by a Saudi war coalition, with the support of U.S. military aircraft, hit Yemen's port of Hodeida, crippling Yemen's food and medical aid supply by rendering the port's infrastructure unusable. This exacerbates the already dire humanitarian crisis in the region.[11] As a result, food prices in Yemen have also skyrocketed, making it inaccessible for many Yemeni families and leaving them food insecure.[12]

September 2015 — At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, delegates from 193 member states agree upon the creation of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). The second of these SDG meetings formally highlights the dire urgency of the food insecurity issue and the critical need to set a target to eliminate hunger by 2030.[13]

October 2019 — UNICEF and UNFAO publish a joint report titled "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World." This report recognizes the significant improvements made in the reduction of the global undernourished rate from 13.2% to 8%. Simultaneously, however, the report raises the alarm about the poor safeguarding of food distribution networks, the lack of progress in improving birth weight, and the overreliance on global trade for food security.[14]

July 2022 — Russian forces bomb Ukraine's Odessa Port, compromising Ukraine's food supply and preventing exports to many vulnerable countries in the Middle East that relied on Ukraine's grain exports.[15]

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[7] Johannes Norling, "The Consequences of the 1959–1961 Chinese Famine for Educational Attainment," The B.E. *Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy*, February 1, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1515/bejeap-2019-0112.

[8] The Economic and Social Council, "World Campaign against Hunger, Disease and Ignorance," *United Nations Digital Library*, August 16, 1964. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/213992/files/E_RES_1039%28XXXVII%29-EN.pdf?ln=en.

[9] Jacques Diouf, "World Food Summit," *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, November 13, 1996. https://www.fao.org/3/w3548e/w3548e00.htm#adopt05.

[10] Clionadh Raleigh, "The Sahel Crisis since 2012," *African Affairs 120*, January 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa022.

[11] Mohammed Ghobari, "Saudi-led Warplanes Hit Yemeni Port, Aid Group Sounds Alarm," *Reuters*, August 18, 2015, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN0QN0HX20150819.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Yower Museveni, "Summit Charts New Era of Sustainable Development," *United Nations*, September 27, 2015. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/.

[14] UNICEF, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, October 2019. https://www.unicef.org/media/55921/file/SOFI-2019-full-report.pdf.

[15] Jeff Seldin, "Russia Bombs Odessa Port, Compromising Ukrainian Grain Deal," *VOA*, July 23, 2022. https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-hits-black-sea-port-hours-after-agreeing-not-to/6670829.html.

May 2023 — UNICEF, WHO, and the World Bank release 2023 Malnutrition Estimates. They warn that existing NGO projects demonstrate slower progress in reducing malnutrition and growth stunting and that significantly more needs to be done to address the issue.[16]

Historical Analysis

The malnutrition and food insecurity crisis has deep historical roots that continue to affect the status quo of malnutrition and food insecurity. In Africa, these issues grew following the colonization by European powers. Through colonialism, the basic, existing food security systems were disrupted due to the European's overexploitation of their crops and soil, resulting in overfarming.[17] The prioritization of economic development by colonists ignored the environmental and biophysical repercussions of the exploitation of land. This led to soil infertility and degradation of natural resources which is extremely present today.[18] Moreover, the conflict and violence instigated by colonists also shaped the current scene of food insecurity.[19] Colonizers often failed to establish stable governments following their departure. Consequently, power vacuums were often created as they left, often spurring conflict and political instability and thereby impacting food security.[20]

Although colonization played a significant role in exacerbating this crisis, many other factors have also contributed to the alarming rates of child malnutrition and poor food security globally. The staggering growth in the global population has created an immense growth in the demand for food as well. In the past 50 years, the global population has nearly doubled.[21] In Africa and Southeast Asia, the population grew at an even higher rate, nearly tripling in the same time period.[22] This staggering population growth in emerging economies has not been matched by a similar growth in food output. The imbalance of supply and demand for food, particularly in developing countries, has resulted in widespread food shortages. The unfettered, significant mismatch between the size of the population and availability of resources has been a challenging problem yet to be resolved, particularly in developing countries.[23]

Moreover, conflict and war have also been significant factors contributing to malnutrition and food insecurity. For example, in World War I, the widespread violence and subsequent restrictions on the flow of goods spurred famines across Europe, causing an estimated 14 million deaths.[24] To this day, violence continues to play a critical role in perpetuating food insecurity. For instance, the Arab Spring, a series of pro-democracy movements in the

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[16] "UNICEF-WHO-World Bank: Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (JME) -2023," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, May 31, 2023. https://data.unicef.org/resources/unicef-who-world-bank-joint-child-malnutrition-estimates-2023-edition-interactive-dashboard-2/.

[17] Vibeke, Bjornlund, Bjornlund, Henning, and André Van rooyen. "Why Food Insecurity Persists in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Existing Evidence." *Food Security 14*, February 3, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-022-01256-1.

[18] Sjored Rijpma, "Malnutrition in the History of Tropical Africa," *Civilisations*, April 1, 1996. https://doi.org/10.4000/civilisations.1565.

[19] William B. Morgan, "Agricultural Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa: Development Constraints and Policy Problems," *The Geographical Journal 160*, March 1994. https://doi.org/10.2307/3060142.

[20] Simon Chesterman, "Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance," *United Nations University Press*, 2005. https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:2454/pdf928081107X.pdf.

[21] "Current World Population," *WorldOMeter*. https://www.worldometers.info/.

[22] Ibid.

[23] UNDESA, "UN/DESA Policy Brief #102: Population, Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Development," *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, April 20, 2021. https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-102-population-food-security-nutrition-and-sustainable-development/.

[24] Imperial War Museums, "Rationing and Food Shortages during the First World War," *Imperial War Museums*. https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/rationing-and-food-shortages-during-the-first-world-war.

Middle East and North Africa, was detrimental to food security when the governments used excessive violence.[25] The growing foreign influence across the Middle East and North Africa and the civil threats rising from it prompted the deadliness of the government retaliation.[26] Rising food prices, unstable economic conditions, and the destruction of food supply routes in these Arab states have contributed significantly to the current malnutrition crisis.[27] Efforts to bolster food production in these affected countries were implemented, but remained largely unsuccessful.

In Syria, the expansion of its agriculture industry through flood irrigation was entirely sourced through groundwater which eventually dried up, preventing further use.[28] Such countries have been in dire need of humanitarian aid to treat malnourished children, but efforts have been primarily suppressed due to the conflict preventing the incoming aid. Conflict zones affecting food security are not unique to only the Arab world. The escalation in conflict within the Sahel region in Sub-Saharan Africa has drawn concern from international agencies since 2012. Recently, seized land in Mali has prevented crop production and caused nearly 2.6 million people to be internally displaced and risk starvation.[29] Overall, the historical causes and impacts of malnutrition and food insecurity, including war and population growth, are still felt in the status quo.

Past UN/International Involvement

Red Cross

The Red Cross, a non-governmental organization (NGO), has been pivotal in addressing the humanitarian needs of food insecure countries around the world. Their presence in conflict zones such as Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan has been critical in providing food and water to alleviate the humanitarian crisis which governmental organizations have not been able to address. For children living in crisis-affected regions, the Red Cross has been essential in providing support, specifically nutritional assistance. In contrast to other established governmental organizations, the Red Cross is one of the few organizations authorized to transport and administer medical aid and humanitarian support due to its NGO status. For example, the Venezuelan Red Cross was able to provide medical aid, food and clean water, and establish makeshift shelters for those in need in that country. This was in stark contrast to UN bodies and foreign aid that were denied access into Venezuela due to ideological tensions between the Western nations and Venezuela.[30] The Red Cross has also supported numerous projects outside of Venezuela, such as their provisions of food and clean water in refugee camps camps following the Myanmar Genocide.[31] This impact has been particularly important for children because of their vulnerability

[25] "What Is the Arab Spring, and How Did It Start?" *Al Jazeera*, December 17, 2020.
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/17/what-is-the-arab-spring-and-how-did-it-start.
[26] Kali Robinson, "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 3, 2020. https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings.
[27] Travis J Lybbert, "Lessons from the Arab Spring: Food Security and Stability in the Middle East and North Africa," *UC Davis Archives*, June 6, 2013.
https://arefiles.ucdavis.edu/uploads/pub/2022/02/09/2013_lybbert_and_morgan_lessons_from_arab_spring.pdf.
[28] Eckart Woertz, "Agriculture and Development in the Wake of the Arab Spring," *Revue Internationale De Politique De Développement*, February 1, 2017. https://doi.org/10.4000/poldev.2274.
[29] Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger)," *Globalr2p*, May 31, 2023.https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/mali/.
[30] Anatoly Kurmanaev, "Red Cross Granted Access to Deliver Aid in Venezuela," *The New York Times*, March 29, 2019.
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/29/world/americas/red-cross-venezuela-aid.html.
[31] Canadian Red Cross, "Myanmar Refugee Crisis," *The International Red Cross*.

during times of conflict and dire nutritional needs. However, because the Red Cross is reliant on donations, their reach and effectiveness of support is often deemed "not enough" to address the food insecurity crisis across the world.[32] Additionally, the International Red Cross holds a neutral stance, not taking a political side in conflict zones, which can tend to limit their ability to support vulnerable communities in conflict zones. In many international conflicts, the International Red Cross neutrality clause has often hindered their ability to administer humanitarian aid, including their provision of food and medications.[33] In Afghanistan, for example, the Red Cross' neutrality prevented the organization from cooperating with the Taliban government. The organization lost protection and access guarantees from the Taliban government which significantly impeded their ability to deliver vital humanitarian aid including food and medications to children in need. In the weeks following this, 14 aid workers were killed and the Red Cross was forced to scale back operations.[34] At times, the Red Cross' neutrality stance has jeopardized their ability to provide aid to children in conflict zones that are experiencing the highest rates of malnutrition and food insecurity.[35]

UNICEF Emergency Response Teams

The UNICEF Emergency Response Team is a coalition of both international and locally recruited staff that respond to the crises that can sometimes deal with food security throughout the world.[36] Through community-based involvement, UNICEF provides long-term assistance directly to children and their families before, during, and after emergencies. "As part of its mission, UNICEF responds to global humanitarian crises that include natural disasters, human-caused crises, health-related emergencies and pandemics, and the negative effects of climate change"[37] One of the reasons why the UNICEF Emergency Response Team has been so effective is their recruitment of staff originating from their emergency region.[38] Emergency Response Team's often employ members that are familiar with the language, culture and geography of each of the regions they work in.[39] With existing knowledge of the language and geography, these teams are able to provide effective humanitarian aid and prepare response teams enroute with detailed information. This allows the response team to have a strong background within each crisis they support while still maintaining their international governmental relations. Their impact in each of the crisis zones has been focused on children. For example, to address malnutrition and improve access to food, the UNICEF emergency response team has provided ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) to children, of which UNICEF provides roughly 80% of the world's supply.[40] These nutrient-rich foods

https://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/current-emergency-responses/past-emergency-responses/myanmar-refugee-crisis.

[32] IFRC, "Crisis Fatigue Not an Option as Global Hunger Crisis Deepens, the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Warns," *International Committee of the Red Cross*, September 13, 2022.
https://www.ifrc.org/press-release/crisis-fatigue-not-option-global-hunger-crisis-deepens-international-red-cross-red.

[33] Anna Teehan, "Red Cross Basics: The Principle of Neutrality," *Canadian Red Cross*, February 16, 2017.
https://www.redcross.ca/blog/2017/2/.

[34] Charlotte Greenfield, "Red Cross Set to End Funding at 25 Hospitals in Afghanistan," *Reuters*, August 17, 2023.
https://www.voanews.com/a/red-cross-set-to-end-funding-at-25-hospitals-in-afghanistan-/7229812.html.

[35] Ibid.

[36] UNICEF Emergency Response Team, "Working in Humanitarian Emergencies," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*. https://www.unicef.org/careers/working-humanitarian-emergencies.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Sabrina Sidhu, "Over 625,000 Children at Risk as Cyclone Biparjoy Makes Landfall," *UNICEF*, June 15, 2023.
https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/over-625000-children-risk-cyclone-biparjoy-makes-landfall.

[40] The Globe and Mail, "Every Minute, One Child in the World's Worst-affected Countries Become Severely Malnourished," *The Globe and Mail*, October 13, 2022. https://motherchildnutrition.org/malnutrition-management/info/rutf-plumpy-nut.html.

allow children to be able to recover from acute malnutrition and maintain consistent growth throughout childhood.[41]

The UNICEF Emergency Response Team also does fieldwork by monitoring the situations during and after crises to ensure any resurgence of malnutrition or impacts on the food distribution networks are addressed.[42] However, in its own evaluation, UNICEF outlined that "regional capacities [were] largely geared to advocacy and technical support [....], limiting experience in large-scale emergency response, with existing country programmes."[43] While advocacy is important, many argue that it would be better to allocate resources on actively addressing these crises.[44]

R4 Rural Resilience Initiative

The R4 Rural Resilience Initiative is a risk reduction plan that ensures regions impacted by severe weather events have the adequate resources to rebuild farms and to continue supplying food in a timely manner.[45] Since its inception in 2011, the program has been implemented in 15 different countries and has reached over 400,000 people.[46] This project promoted improvements in agricultural practices and reduced the liabilities when expanding agricultural capacities by providing insurance for new projects in developing countries.[47] A highlight of this project was the creation of micro-insurance projects, which integrated climate risk management into agricultural practices.[48] For example, the R4 project supported small cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire by insuring their farms from the risk of damages associated with climate change and climate shocks.[49] Because of this initiative's insurance programs, farms in developing countries have been able to expand their farming practices. This has helped mitigate the impact of climate-related risks and contributed to increased agricultural productivity, improved food security, and the resilience of farming communities in developing countries.[50] However, unlike other programs, this program fails to provide substantial investments into retooling and expanding farming practices that would, in theory, increase supply of food locally.[51] Additionally, these programs do not focus on malnutrition in children who are the most susceptible to health implications due to food insecurity.[52]

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[41] "UNICEF's Work to Prevent and Treat Child Malnutrition," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*. https://www.unicef.ca/en/what-we-do/our-work-globally/malnutrition.
[42] Ibid.
[43] UNICEF Executive Team, "Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to Support the Influx of Refugees from Ukraine," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, March 2023. https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/28211/file/Report.pdf.
[44] Ibid.
[45] EU Knowledge for Policy, "2023- R4 Rural Resilience Initiative Factsheet," *European Union Commission*, February 17, 2023. https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/2023-r4-rural-resilience-initiative-factsheet_en.
[46] WFP, "The R4 Rural Resilience Initiative," *World Food Programme*. https://innovation.wfp.org/project/r4-rural-resilience-initiative.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Climate Initiatives Platform, "R4 Rural Resilience Initiative Overview," *Copenhagen Climate Centre*. https://climateinitiativesplatform.org/index.php/R4_Rural_Resilience_Initiative.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Hannah Siedek, "Development Solutions: Opportunity for the Vulnerable," *European Investment Bank*, October 26, 2020. https://www.eib.org/en/essays/african-farmers-microfinance.
[52] Ibid.

School Meals Coalition

With 82 participating countries, the School Meals Coalition is a global initiative that aims to provide children with stronger food security.[53] This non-profit organization supports governments and provides resources to improve, restore or establish school meal programmes.[54] This is done by increasing the participating school's meal plan's budget to make meals more affordable, healthier, and nutritious.[55] By providing meals at schools across the world, the School Meals Coalition helped incentivize the attendance of students at these schools while ensuring that all children have a continual safe supply of food.[56] In a school in Rwanda, the School Meals Coalition has been successful by creating a school meal program that increased attendance by 18% in the span of 4 months.[57] Especially following the closure of schools during the pandemic, these initiatives work to repair the damage and expand the opportunities for children to succeed.[58]

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals were created at the 2015 United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development in New York.[59] Within this agenda, all member states of the United Nations agreed upon 17 goals that ranged from eliminating hunger and promoting gender equality, to providing clean water and sanitation. These goals aimed towards eliminating malnutrition by setting guidelines and listing actions that involved engaging local communities and organizations to work with governments.[60] Moreover, the Sustainable Development Goals helped place an emphasis to change governmental agendas, with many countries prioritizing malnutrition as a significant problem after the SDGs were created.[61] These goals also led to stronger monitoring of child malnutrition rates globally to provide clarity on areas that needed aid.[62] The SDGs also allocated more funding to reach zero hunger to developing countries to reach this goal. However, analysts have doubted the viability of reaching these global goals in such a short time period.[63] For example, although malnutrition and

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[53] Secretariat of School Meals Coalition, "Declaration of Commitment," *School Meals Coalition*, May 2023. https://schoolmealscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SMC-National-Commitments_May-2023.pdf.
[54] The School Meals Coalition, "A Healthy Meal Everyday for Every Child," *The School Meals Coalition*. https://schoolmealscoalition.org/.
[55] Lesley Drake, "Improving Africa's School Feeding Programs: Analysis Sheds Light on Strengths, Challenges," *World Bank*, June 9, 2016. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/06/09/improving-africas-school-feeding-programs-analysis-sheds-light-on-strengths-challenges.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Twagirayezu Gaspard, "Rwanda Champions Regional Scaling up of School Meals," *School Meals Coalition*, September 12, 2023. https://schoolmealscoalition.org/rwanda-regional-school-meals/.
[58] Bill Wegener, "School Meals Coalition Hopes to Provide a Meal to Every Child," *Relief Web*, November 21, 2021. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/school-meals-coalition-hopes-provide-meal-every-child.
[59] Yoweri Museveni, "Summit Charts New Era of Sustainable Development," *United Nations*, September 27, 2015. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/summit-charts-new-era-of-sustainable-development-world-leaders-to-gavel-universal-agenda-to-transform-our-world-for-people-and-planet/.
[60] Sisay Beyene, "The Impact of Food Insecurity on Health Outcomes: Empirical Evidence from Sub-Saharan African Countries," *BMC Public Health*, February 15, 2023. https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-15244-3.
[61] Niloufar Fallah Shayan, "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility," *Sustainability 14*, 2022. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031222.
[62] Micha Renata, "Global Nutrition Report," *World Business Council for Sustainable Development*, 2023. https://globalnutritionreport.org/documents/922/2022_Global_Nutrition_Report.pdf.
[63] Leena Srivastava, "World Not on Track to Achieve Most SDGs by 2030," *The Hindu*, October 14, 2023. https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/article67416962.ece.

food insecurity rates have fallen globally, it is still far from the targeted rate of zero.[64] For children under five, malnutrition rates globally are still alarmingly high at 20%.[65] In recent years, undernutrition rates have increased, an alarming reversal to the general downward trend that began in the late 1990s.[66] Achieving some of the actions, targets, and guidelines set by the SDG scan be a starting point to address the malnutrition and food insecurity crisis, but significantly more has to be done to actually reach the goal of zero hunger.[67]

Current Situation

Attacks on Critical Infrastructure

In much of the developing world, conflict and war have been the primary driving factors in creating food insecurity. Violence targeting critical infrastructure, such as airports, seaports, roads, and bridges has severely disrupted the access of food, particularly in regions reliant on imported food.[68, 69] This disruption of the flow of goods often causes the prices of food and water to soar due to severely decreased supply and subsequent increased demand. As a result, food essentially becomes unaffordable for the vast majority of people.[70] Violence surrounding ports and critical infrastructure by both militia groups and government forces have become a deadly weapon in wars including the Yemeni civil war and Oromo conflict in Ethiopia.[71] In the past, militias and governments have strategically attacked food infrastructure to spark food shortages and instigate famines as a means of putting pressure on opposition forces. This practice has been particularly evident in the Russia-Ukraine War, in which Russian forces took control of and closed the Ukrainian port of Odessa.[72] This strategy hindered the port's ability to export food and risked food shortages to neighbouring trade partners. Thus, those countries would likely see an eventual increase in food prices due to food scarcity followed by widespread famine.[73]

The impacts of war also extend to medical treatment centres. No-strike lists are typically objects, places, or entities that are agreed to be protected from military attack under international law. However, despite no-strike-lists being in places such as Afghanistan and Syria, countries have disregarded them by conducting drone and military strikes near or at hospitals and medical centres.[74] Assaults on medical treatment centers have given rise to numerous challenges for children facing malnutrition and food insecurity. Such attacks have prevented access

[64] Prudence Atukunda, "Unlocking the Potential for Achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2," *Food & Nutrition Research 65*, May 26, 2021. https://doi.org/10.29219/fnr.v65.7686.

[65] Ni Jin, "UN Report: Global Hunger Numbers Rose to as Many as 828 Million in 2021," *World Health Organization*, July 6, 2022. https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2022-un-report--global-hunger-numbers- rose-to-as-many-as-828-million-in-2021.

[66] Max Rosser, "Almost One-in-ten People in the World Do Not Get Enough to Eat," *Our World in Data*. https://ourworldindata.org/hunger-and-undernourishment.

[67] Simon Jessop, "Cost to Hit U.N. Sustainability Goals Rises to $176 Trillion Report," *Reuters*, September 8, 2022. https://www.reuters.com/business/sustainable-business/cost-hit-un-sustainability-goals-rises-176-trillion-report-2022-09-08/.

[68] Tyson Brown, "Hunger and War," *National Geographic*, May 20, 2022. https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/hunger-and-war/.

[69] Tarek Ben Hansen, "Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine War on Global Food Security: Towards More Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems?" *Foods 2022 11*, August 2, 2022. https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11152301.

[70] Mohammed Awadh, "Yemen Crisis: 85,000 Children 'Dead from Malnutrition,'" *British Broadcasting Corporation*, November 21, 2018. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-46261983.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Astrid Prange, "Fact Check: Are Food Supplies Being Weaponized?" *Deutsche Welle*, May 28, 2022. https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-is-hunger-being-used-as-a-weapon-in-the-ukraine-war/a-61955916.

[73] Ibid.

[74] MSF - Doctors Without Borders. "In Focus: Kunduz Hospital Attack." *Médecins Sans Frontières*. https://www.msf.org/kunduz-hospital-attack.

to medications and essential nutrition for these children, thereby exacerbating the already dire humanitarian crisis. These attacks violate international humanitarian law and guidelines set by the International Criminal Court which serve as a baseline for upholding basic human rights.[75] Despite investigations and charges being placed on aggressors, however, the process in holding such parties accountable has been flawed. In June 2018, in Yemen, airstrikes against a Doctors Without Borders Facility by Saudi and UAE forces broke international humanitarian law and were considered war crimes by the International Criminal Court.[76] However, sanctions against these countries were insignificant, with few other consequences being put in place against these countries.[77, 78] Following the ends of conflicts, cooperation between countries is essential for a peaceful, lasting resolution. The first priority must be to restore the damaged infrastructure and ensure that those seeking medical aid, clean water and food, particularly for children, have access to these basic needs.

Impact of Climate Change

Climate change has exacerbated the food insecurity crisis worldwide. The prevalence of severe weather events, such as prolonged droughts, more frequent storms, and flooding, have decreased agricultural production and food security in many regions.[79] These severe weather events have disrupted conventional farming industries by destroying farmland and reducing crop yield.[80]

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the annual rainfall in the southern part of the country has declined by roughly 20% in the last 10 years.[81] At the same time, rising temperatures, in general, have made it increasingly difficult for farmers to grow crops and meet the demand of the growing population. Some crops are not as resilient to rising temperatures as they become vulnerable to heat stress and less moisture, causing the plants to die.[82] These challenges have caused famines in the southern parts of the DRC.[83]

Climate change has also increased the frequency and severity of certain crop diseases, including potato blight, stripe rust and other fungal infections.[84] In 2023, a microbiology study concluded global warming has increased the probability of further outbreak risks, manipulating viral evolution and heightening dissemination of plant

[75] Lara Hakki, "Breaking the Silence: Advocacy and Accountability for Attacks on Hospitals in Armed Conflict," *International Review of the Red Cross*, January 2022. https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/breaking-the-silence-advocacy-and-accountability-for-attacks-on-hospitals-in-armed-conflict-915.

[76] Daniella Cheslow, "Airstrike Reportedly Hits Doctors without Borders Facility in Yemen," *National Public Radio*, June 12, 2018. https://www.npr.org/2018/06/12/619085964/airstrike-reportedly-hits-doctors-without-borders-facility-in-yemen.

[77] Lewis Sanders, "Syria's Hospitals Face Systematic Attacks: Report," *Deutsche Welle*, March 9, 2021. https://www.dw.com/en/syrias-hospitals-face-systematic-attacks-report/a-56811097.

[78] Brianne McGonigle Leyh, "Access to Medicines in Times of Conflict," *National Library of Medicine*, June 20, 2018. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6039728/.

[79] Cheikhm Mbow, "Special Report on Climate Change and Land: Food Security," *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2019. https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/.

[80] USDA, "Climate Change, Global Food Security, and the U.S. Food System," *United States Department of Agriculture*, 2015. https://www.usda.gov/oce/energy-and-environment/food-security.

[81] US Agency for International Development, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Climate Risks to Resilience and Food Security in Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Geographies," *Relief Web*, February 23, 2023. https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-climate-risks-resilience-food-security-bureau-humanitarian-assistance-geographies.

[82] NASA, "Global Climate Change Impact on Crops Expected within 10 Years, NASA Study Finds," *National Aeronautics and Space Administration*, November 2, 2021. https://climate.nasa.gov/news/3124/global-climate-change-impact-on-crops-expected-within-10-years-nasa-study-finds/.

[83] Integrated Food Security phase Classification, "Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Acute Malnutrition Situation," *IPC*, September 30, 2022. https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155153/.

[84] Singh Brajesh K, "Climate Change Impacts on Plant Pathogens, Food Security and Paths Forward," *Nature Reviews Microbiology*, May 2, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41579-023-00900-7.

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diseases.[85] This alarming pattern caused by climate change further risks reducing food security as overall crop yield significantly decreases. And with the reduction in crop output, food prices increase, therefore limiting access for low-income families. Thus, the inevitability of increasing severity and effects of climate change points to a worsening crisis of perpetuating malnutrition and food insecurity.

Accessibility of Healthcare

The accessibility of healthcare plays a pivotal role in maintaining proper, consistent and reliable nutrition for children.[86] Inadequate nutrition, such as malnutrition or nutrient deficiencies, can weaken the immune system and make individuals more susceptible to diseases. Malnourished individuals are often at a higher risk of infections and may experience delayed recovery from illnesses. This demonstrates the importance of nutrition as a foundational element in maintaining good health. Furthermore, healthcare access is crucial for addressing and managing nutrition-related conditions.[87] Healthcare professionals can provide guidance on proper nutrition, recommend dietary adjustments, and prescribe supplements when necessary.

Regions with inadequate access to proper medical services can hinder children's access to essential medication and nutrients, which can contribute to increased frequency of malnutrition.[88] Considering the widespread healthcare needs of young children and their heightened susceptibility to illness, having proper healthcare services is essential to ensure these children have the ability to access their daily nutritional needs. These healthcare facilities are also where most ready-to-use therapeutic food, one of the most effective treatment solutions for malnutrition, is supplied.[89] Many factors, however, can prevent access to this basic and essential need. Where conflict is prevalent, many healthcare centres are forced to shut down, and therefore, are unable to provide care to children in need.[90] The accessibility of healthcare to those living in rural regions has also become concerning: children in these communities are often underserved by even some developed healthcare systems. For example, in the Philippines, inadequate infrastructure connecting remote communities, such as roads, bridges, and ferry systems, has reduced the availability of healthcare to residents of these regions.[91] As a result, nearly half of the population does not have access to healthcare facilities within 30 minutes of their home.[92]

[85] UNICEF, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, October 2019. https://www.unicef.org/media/55921/file/SOFI-2019-full-report.pdf.

[86] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, "Food Accessibility, Insecurity and Health Outcomes," *National Institute of Health*, April 26, 2023. https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html.

[87] Ibid.

[88] António Melo, "Is Food Insecurity Related to Health-care Use, Access and Absenteeism?" *Public Health Nutrition 22*, August 6, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1368980019001885.

[89] Cécile Cazes, "Optimising the Dosage of Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food in Children with Uncomplicated Severe Acute Malnutrition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Non-inferiority, Randomised Controlled Trial," *EClinicalMedicine*, April 2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2023.101878.

[90] Ibid.

[91] "The Rural Healthcare Situation in the Philippines," *MedHyve*, August 22, 2012. https://news.medhyve.com/2021/08/22/the-rural-healthcare-situation-in-the-philippines/.

[92] Lorenzo Jaime yu Flores, "Optimizing Health Facility Location for Universal Health Care: A Case Study from the Philippines," *Plos One 16*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256821.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Establishing No-Strike Zones

Food distribution networks such as airports, seaports, railroads, distribution centres, and food markets are essential in maintaining consistent food supply. Armed conflict can potentially cause significant disruption to critical infrastructure crucial for food distribution. However, the establishment of peaceful, neutralized zones can safeguard the critical food distribution networks and ensure the stable access to food, particularly in the conflict zones. The designation of food distribution infrastructure under no-strike lists—specific sites that, under international law, cannot be attacked through airstrikes or ground conflict—would ensure the continuous flow of food across borders. Despite the disruptions associated with war, no-strike zones would be able to provide a steady food supply to vulnerable communities.[93] Moreover, no-strike lists would create safe passages for humanitarian organizations and NGOs to provide critical support to malnourished children.[94] These no-strike lists effectively enforce the fundamental laws of armed conflict, aiming to ensure no civilians suffer as a result of the war. Such lists would enable children, the most vulnerable in the population, access to nutrition.

There are, however, some controversies regarding the implementation and effectiveness of no-strike lists. Their implementation is often considered an infringement on national sovereignty due to the restrictions associated with such zones. Countries opposing foreign intervention may be hesitant to such solutions as it reduces the control over their territory.[95] In addition, no-strike lists may encourage militia groups and terrorist organizations to establish bases in these areas because of the added protection.[96] Lastly, violence in these designated zones have continued despite these lists being in place, demonstrating the drawbacks of this solution to provide protection to essential services.[97] Even as attacks on no-strike zones have been reported, the prosecution of crimes by the international courts of law has been inefficient; enforcing punishments that deter future attacks has been virtually non-existent. One such example was the U.S. attack in 2015 on the MSF hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, killing 42 people.[98] Although the intended target was Taliban militants, the attack struck a nearby hospital. The consequences for these actions were not enforced despite the hospital being under a no-strike list because the U.S. abstained from Protocol II, a ratification to the Geneva Conventions to protect victims of non-international armed conflict.

Expanding Domestic Food and Agriculture Industries

Although providing protection to key infrastructure is important, protection alone will not address the widespread food shortages across the developing world. Establishing and improving domestic food and

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[93] Hanek-Jan Brinkman, "Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict: Causes, Consequences, and Addressing the Challenges," *World Food Programme*, July 2011. https://ucanr.edu/blogs/food2025/blogfiles/14415.pdf.

[94] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "No Strike List Guidelines," *ReliefWeb*, February 4, 2018. https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/no-strike-list-guidelines.

[95] Curtis M Scaparrotti, "No Strike Lists and the Collateral Damage," *Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction*, October 12, 2012. https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/no-strike-collateral-damage-estimation/6632f2785aff5bba/full.pdf.

[96] Emma Cunliffe, "No Strike Lists - from Use to Abuse?" *Heritage in War*. https://www.heritageinwar.com/single-post/2020/01/24/trump-and-iranian-cultural-property-heritage-destruction-war-crimes-and-the-implications.

[97] António Guterres, "International Laws Protecting Civilians in Armed Conflict Not Being Upheld, Secretary-General Warns Security Council, Urging Deadly Cycle Be Broken," *United Nations*, May 23, 2023. https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15292.doc.htm.

[98] Ibid.

agricultural industries would increase crop output and help decrease the price, improving accessibility of food.[99] By establishing stronger food supplies through higher crop output, the supply will be able to fuel the increasing food demand from the population. Prices will become stable, and food will become affordable for the typical family. This will effectively reduce malnutrition as more families can afford to feed their children. This solution could also empower local communities by creating more job opportunities for establishing and maintaining operations in these newly expanded farms and food production centres.[100]

Expanding the domestic food and agriculture industries can take form in numerous ways. For instance, government loans and investments could fund improvements in agricultural practices by allowing farmers to purchase more efficient farm equipment, establish farmlands, and implement irrigation systems.[101] On a smaller scale, offering microloans to individuals would open funding opportunities.[102] The difference is that microloans work on a bottom-up approach, addressing malnutrition in children by providing funding to individuals to expand food production.[103] Governmental loans, on the other hand, operate on a top-down approach, allowing for larger-scale investments in agricultural infrastructure, research, and development. Nevertheless, the impact of both avenues is profound, allowing countries to expand their food production and make food more accessible and cheaper for all families.[104] That being said, these initiatives require significant investment. Additionally, provisions to ensure that this funding is going to the intended beneficiaries is essential for ensuring the effectiveness of this solution.[105] Countries implementing such funding should consider incorporating oversight bodies or outlining stipulations for funding to ensure proceeds go to expanding production and improving accessibility of food to children.[106] Countries also have to recognize the geographical barriers such as soil fertility, sunlight, and water supply that may limit agricultural practices no matter how much funding is invested.

Promoting International Trade

The agricultural challenges of some countries may encourage them to import food to bolster food security.[107] The promotion of international trade as a means of strengthening food security is a possible solution that would allow children to have access to a secure source of food.[108] With a new supply of food becoming more readily available in food-insecure regions, the prices of foods will likely decrease, thereby improving accessibility of food for families and their children.[109] Major agricultural exporting countries, such as the United States, India, or

[99] Uma Lele, "Why We Need Increased Investment in Food and Agriculture in Developing Countries and International Organizations That Support Them," *Brookings Institute*, October 26, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-we-need-increased-investment-in-food-and-agriculture-in-developing-counries-and-international-organizations-that-support-them/.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Vitor Gaspar, "Poor and Vulnerable Countries Need Support to Adapt to Climate Change," *International Monetary Fund*, March 23, 2022. https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/03/23/blog032322-poor-and-vulnerable-countris-need-support-to-adapt-to-climate-change.
[102] Ichaou Mounirou, "Can Micro-Credit Improve Food Security? Evidence from Benin-West Africa," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Spring 2022. https://doi.org/10.1353/jda.2022.0021.
[103] Adam Haynes, "Microlending: Definition, How It Works, Risks and Rewards," *Investopedia*, June 6, 2022. https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/040715/what-microlending-and-how-does-it-work.asp.
[104] Leanna Parekh,"The Basics of Food Security (and How It's Tied to Everything),"*World Vision*, October 18, 2023. https://www.worldvision.ca/ stories/food/the-basics-of-food-security.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Trade - a Key Ingredient to Food Security," *SDG Pulse*, 2023. https://sdgpulse.unctad.org/trade-agriculture-biotrade/#Ref_VCAHNVZB.
[109] Ibid.

China, with strong food industries have the capability to meet the growing demand of countries experiencing food insecurity. Moreover, importing food has a significantly lower upfront cost in comparison to establishing new food and agricultural industries in developing countries, making it a very plausible solution.[110] Scaling up food production to export to countries in need is also a relatively more timely solution and can more quickly ameliorate the widespread food insecurity in developing countries.[111]

This solution, however, is reliant on international trade. In particular, investments in trade infrastructure and reducing the time it takes to transport food directly to families are necessary for the success of increasing imports of food.[112] Reducing trade tariffs and implementing subsidies funded by more wealthy countries could provide benefits to both exporting and importing countries alike. For exporting countries, it can promote economic growth by exporting more food and agriculture products while importing countries can maintain a reliable supply of low cost food that would ensure accessibility of food for families.[113] However, this solution can severely compromise the national security and sovereignty of importing nations.[114] With their food supply being reliant on imports, they may face vulnerabilities to potential geopolitical challenges from export countries that reduce their independence. To mitigate this, countries may opt to diversify its import partners, but there is still an inherent risk associated with importing foods.

Establishing Stronger Healthcare Systems

Children suffering from malnutrition not only face possible starvation but are also more susceptible to diseases due to their weakened immune systems.[115] Establishing stronger healthcare systems to address the complex healthcare requirements of children can be an effective short-term solution that specifically targets malnutrition in children.[116] Creating emergency relief centres to alleviate the burden placed on developing countries is the first step to address this crisis. These emergency clinics can provide ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) to support starving children and administer medical aid to children unable to fight diseases and sickness.[117] Additionally, they also can provide affordable medication and help vulnerable children fight illnesses caused by poor sanitation and contaminated water.[118] Some initiatives, including development of temporary healthcare centres, establishing doctors in refugee camps, and travelling clinics, can be effective at treating malnutrition for

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[110] Ibid.

[111] Siemen Van Berkum, "How Trade Can Drive Inclusive and Sustainable Food System Outcomes in Food Deficit Low-income Countries," *Food Security 13*, October 13, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-021-01218-z.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Albert Jan Hummel,. "Food Subsidies in General Equilibrium," *Journal of Public Economics*, June 2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2023.104882.

[114] David Bicchett, "Trade and Food Security: When an Agreement Delayed Becomes a Human Right Denied," *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*, June 7, 2021. https://unctad.org/news/trade-and-food-security-when-agreement-delayed-becomes-human-right-denied.

[115] Judd L Walson, "The Impact of Malnutrition on Childhood Infections," *Current Opinion in Infectious Diseases 31*, June 2018. https://doi.org/10.1097/qco.0000000000000448.

[116] "Building a Better Path: Strengthening Health Systems to Reduce Child Malnutrition," *Devex*, May 7, 2021. https://www.devex.com/news/building-a-better-path-strengthening-health-systems-to-reduce-child-malnutrition-99813.

[117] Alison Fleet, "Application for Inclusion of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines and Model List of Essential Medicines for Children," *World Health Organization*, December 2022. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/essential-medicines/2023-eml-expert-committee/applications-for-addition-of-new-medicines/a37_rutf.pdf?sfvrsn=6b4e6dcf_2.

[118] J. Ovretveit, "Improving the Quality of Health Services in Developing Countries: Lessons for the West," *Quality and Safety in Health Care 11*, December 1, 2002. https://doi.org/10.1136/qhc.11.4.301.

children in under-served areas. However, establishing these healthcare systems may be difficult both in regards to the costs and finding properly trained doctors in these regions.

Bloc Positions

Countries Experiencing Conflict

Countries actively experiencing conflict, such as Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and Ukraine, have seen their food supply severely compromised due to war. Most countries in this bloc are advocates of having a peaceful end to the violence they currently experience in order to restore reliable food supply.[119] Ending their conflicts could establish a stronger supply of food and improve the affordability of food to families and their children. However, in the midst of their conflict, countries in this bloc would support expanding neutralized zone designations to seaports and food distribution centres. This could provide relief and increase food security because it would ensure that a safe passage of food and medical supplies is available for children and families in need.[120] These countries are also in dire need of medical aid to treat children experiencing acute malnutrition.[121] Ensuring that medical treatment centres are protected from the effects of conflict would allow them to administer treatments for malnutrition and other diseases. Protecting these medical treatment centres is essential as they are able to provide medication and treatments such as IVs and nutrient-rich ready-to-use therapeutic food. In the long term, re-establishing stronger food security systems in these conflict-torn regions is crucial to ensure successful rebuilding efforts.[122] As such. countries in this bloc could consider requesting loans and funding to establish domestic food production to enable these countries to independently increase food supplies. For example, prior to the conflict, Ukraine was a key supplier of global wheat and grain supply. Loans to re-establish this industry, while designating these farms under neutralized zones, could help bolster the food security in the region.

Developed and Food-Secure Countries

Members of this bloc, such as Japan, the United States, and countries in the European Union, generally have a strong food security network. Whether it be from strong domestic production or consistent international trade, these countries have been successful in creating supply chains that consistently provide citizens with food on a daily basis. Historically, these countries have aided developing countries through funding humanitarian aid projects and supporting NGOs. In 2021 alone, 73%, or USD 6.2 billion, of the funding for UNICEF's strategic plan and emergency response program was provided by these nations.[123] Further, support from these governments totaled to 82% of the International Red Cross' humanitarian aid budget.[124] Given the immense

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[119] "The Middle East's Cold War, Explained." *Fox News Youtube*, July 17, 2017.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veMFCFyOwFI.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Save the Children, "Looking beyond Food: Child Survival in the Hunger Crisis," *Children's Rights Resource Centre*, 2023.
https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/looking-beyond-food-child-survival-in-the-hunger-crisis/.
[122] Emad Alhaj, "Stuck in Limbo: Frustration, Despair at Sudan-Egypt Border," *Aljazeera News*, June 27, 2023.
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/6/27/stuck-in-limbo-frustration-and-despair-on-the-sudan-egypt-border.
[123] UNICEF Public Partnerships, "UNICEF Funding Compendium 2021," *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, 2021.https://www.unicef.org/media/124541/file/Funding%20compendium%202021.pdf.
[124] "The ICRC's Funding and Spending," *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 2022. https://www.icrc.org/en/faq/icrcs-funding-and-spending.

resources these countries possess, they are likely to continue to support the development of food insecure nations directly through loans, or indirectly through the support of NGOs.

Loans following the guidelines of the IMF have been proven mutually beneficial to both lenders and recipients for many reasons. Lender countries benefit from interest payments and can dictate terms based on conditions set by the IMF. Specifically, they can advocate for the promotion of democratic values, introduce measures to fight corruption, and remove trade barriers that would align country values more similar to their own. For recipient countries, this access to funding from developed countries allows them to construct food infrastructure such as farms, ports and roads that would help restore a stable supply of food.[125] That being said, these loans also carry risks for both lender and recipient countries. Given the rise in global interest rates, the interest rates to attract funding from lender countries will be high.[126] As a result, the likelihood that countries are unable to finance these loans will increase. This debt can pose risks to a country's national sovereignty as defaulting on this debt may result in foreign ownership of development projects or political influence. Issuing loans may also be an issue for lender countries too. These food insecure countries are often developing countries without stable governments; therefore, the success and sustainability of development projects hinge on the recipient nations' ability to manage the loans responsibly and implement effective governance structures.[127]

Moreover, countries in this bloc can also provide indirect aid through supporting NGOs and UN organizations. These avenues have more oversight and control over developmental projects while still being beneficial to recipient countries; they can still establish food production industries and improve import capabilities.[128] However, the development of projects including food, agriculture and import projects is more restrictive due to the oversight of NGOs and UN organizations. As a result, the size, and impact of these development projects to improve food security may be hindered.

Major Agricultural Producers

Countries in this bloc, including Brazil, China, India, Argentina, Philippines, Indonesia, are some of the largest food producers in the world and play a key role in addressing the food insecurity and malnutrition crisis. In 2020, these countries made up five of the top nine largest agricultural exporting countries in the world.[129] Countries within this bloc may be in favour of expanding their exports of food to alleviate the existing food challenges. Partnering with countries facing food insecurity creates a mutually beneficial partnership where agricultural exporters can export more goods, while countries experiencing severe food insecurity can have a reliable backing for their food supply.[130] That being said, countries on both the exporting and importing end should be wary of creating an overreliance. For importing countries, relying on these agricultural producers for food supply makes these countries susceptible to political influence. Additionally, price fluctuations with supply chain disruptions will be more pronounced in importing countries due to an overreliance on a limited number

[125] Ronojoy Mazumdar, "Sri Lanka, Bangladesh Clinch Final Approval for IMF Loan Payouts," *Bloomberg*, December 12, 2023. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-12-13/sri-lanka-bangladesh-clinch-final-approval-for-imf-loan-payouts-lq3e7vuc.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] "Agricultural Exports by Country 2023," *World Population Review*, 2023. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/agricultural-exports-by-country.

[130] Kristalina Georgieva, "Global Food Crisis Demands Support for People, Open Trade, Bigger Local Harvests," *International Monetary Fund*, September 30, 2022. https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/09/30/global-food-crisis-demands-support-for-people-open-trade-bigger-local-harvests.

of agricultural exporters. At the same time, exporting countries may be discouraged from exporting food due to their own domestic food and agriculture needs. Because of the variance in the size of each country's agricultural industries, investing into retooling to improve supply and production may also be a viable option.

Countries Experiencing Food Insecurity

For many food insecure nations, the primary drivers of child malnutrition is the lack of clean water and the unstable food supply. The role of climate change in destroying existing food supply has also been detrimental to food security. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, climate change has made rainfall patterns and extreme weather events unpredictable, thereby compromising its harvest and food.[131] Events like these have limited countries' abilities to produce food while also drastically lowering crop yield, eventually leading to food shortages.

To improve access to food for children and their families, these countries can consider either developing food and agriculture industries within their own countries or importing more food from foreign countries. Countries within this bloc can develop and expand food and agriculture industries to increase the supply of food with the help of loans and funding from foreign countries. They can also use this funding to address the need for improvements in healthcare, sanitation systems, and access to clean water—all of which contribute to poor nutrition for many children living in countries in this bloc. These loans can provide lender countries with interest and allow recipient countries to use the funding to improve their farming industries to be more efficient to meet the food demands of their country. When developing these food projects, however, these countries must acknowledge the risks of being indebted to select countries because failure to pay off these loans may result in losses in political independence and control over these projects. These countries can also consider funding from NGOs and UN bodies to reduce the risks associated with loans. However, the access to funding may be further restricted due to more oversight and restrictions. Countries within this bloc may also consider importing foods as a faster, more reliable source for food supply. By developing trade infrastructure such as ports and roads and creating trade partnerships by reducing tariffs on food and agricultural products, these countries can make food more accessible to children in need.

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[131] Ed Hawkins, "What You Need to Know about Food Security and Climate Change," The World Bank, October 17, 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/10/17/what-you-need-to-know-about-food-security-and-climate-change.

Discussion Questions

1. How can countries adapt their food supply to become resilient against climate change?

2. To what extent should domestic food production be prioritized over building international trade relationships?

3. How can countries balance short-term and long-term solutions to address and prevent malnutrition in children?

4. To what extent have previous initiatives to address malnutrition and improve food security been effective? What factors contributed to their success or failure?

5. Are NGOs and humanitarian aid groups effective at addressing this crisis? If so, how can they be provided adequate resources and protection to ensure aid is administered?

6. How can aid be targeted to provide food to children experiencing acute malnutrition?

7. If developmental loans are issued, what conditions and protectionary measures should be implemented to ensure the loans are effective at developing food production?

Additional Resources

Yemen's Civil War: Children on the Brink of Starvation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfCCNREjzGY

How Climate Change Shapes Food Insecurity Across the World:
https://www.carbonbrief.org/interactive-how-climate-change-shapes-food-insecurity-across-the-world/

Malnutrition: Causes and Consequences:
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Access to Education

Overview

Education continues to be an integral aspect of human development, providing children with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to succeed and contribute to societal progress.[132] However, not everyone is fortunate enough to have readily available access to education around the world. UNICEF estimates that over 600 million children worldwide are "unable to attain minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics."[133] These disparities exist due to the systematic discrimination of factors such as gender, race, social class and religion which act as barriers to education.[134] One of the key factors in this issue is the lack of gender equality in education. Traditional gender roles combined with a general prejudice against girls pushes many of them to undertake household responsibilities and enter into early marriages instead of receiving an education.[135] Likewise, factors associated with socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, child labour, and linguistic differences also act as barriers to education. Moreover, war and conflict have continued to force alarming numbers of children to be displaced, uprooting their lives and disrupting their access to education. Although the factors inhibiting access to education may vary globally, the effects of such challenges are similar. This lack of access to education deprives children of their basic human rights and freedoms while inhibiting their future growth. The lack of access to education deepens socioeconomic inequalities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and preventing children and their communities from capitalizing on opportunities to achieve social mobility.[136] Only by addressing and reducing these educational disparities can the world finally give all children of all backgrounds access to the same opportunities.

Timeline

December 14, 1960 — The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization launches the "Education for All" (EFA) initiative during the Convention Against Discrimination in Education.[137] The initiative provides funding to "make primary education free and compulsory" for children around the world.[138] In the 15 years following this policy's enactment, primary school enrollment globally accelerated by 10 percent.[139]

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[137] UNESCO, "Convention against Discrimination in Education," *Human Rights Commitment*s, December 1960. https://humanrightscommitments.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UNESCO-Convention-against-Discrimination-in-Education.pdf

[138] Ibid.

[139] Hannah Ritchie, "Share of Children in Primary School Age Who Are in School,"*Our World in Data*, July 17, 2023. https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/primary-enrollment-selected-countries.

November 20, 1989 — The Convention on the Rights of the Child is adopted by 196 United Nations member states.[140] Article 28 "recognizes the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity."[141] Under the establishment of the Rights of the Child, countries had to recognize and enforce equal educational opportunities for all children.[142]

March 1990 — The World Conference on Education for All, hosted in Jomtien, Thailand, establishes the Declaration on Education for All.[143] The declaration is a call to action that placed an emphasis on not only access, but also the quality of education.[144]

September 1, 2000 — The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are established with Goal 2 specifically targeting education.[145] The MDGs outlines initiatives to work towards achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality in education by 2015.[146]

February 10, 2002 — The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is established as a global fund to support education development in developing countries.[147] To this date, it is the largest global fund dedicated to improving quality and access to education in low-income countries.[148]

January 1, 2005 — The years after 2005 are named the Decade for Sustainable Educational Development.[149] It directs the United Nations in focusing on promoting cultural and gender diversity in education systems.[150] This initiative cooperated with the private sector to support awareness campaigns and research studies on developing education systems.[151]

December 2010 — The Arab Spring across North Africa and the Middle East advocates for political and social change against oppressive regimes.[152] In some countries, the push towards democracy involved the easing of regulations to reach gender parity in education, leading to improved access to education for many girls.[153] On the other hand, more oppressive governments including Syria and Afghanistan upheld against the Arab Spring revolution, and worsened equal access in their respective education systems.[154]

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[140] United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," *United Nations*, November 20, 1989. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instrumentsconvention-rights-child.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Dakar Retrospective. "The Jomtien Conference in 1990 Was a Game Changer for Education," *UNESCO*, August 22, 2014. https://world-education-blog.org/2014/08/22/the-jomtien-conference-in-1990-was-a-game-changer-for-education/.
[144] Ibid.
[145] MDG Advocacy Group, "Millennium Development Goals and beyond," *MDG Advocacy Group,* September 2000. https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml.
[146] Ibid.
[147] The World Bank, "The Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank Group: The Facts," *World Bank*, September 22, 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/the-global-partnership-for-education-and-the-world-bank-group-the-facts.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Anne Liimatainen, "United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development," *Springerlink*. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_13.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Akito Arima, "UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014," *UNESDOC*, January 2005. https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd/un-decade-of-esd.
[152] Erin Blakemore, "What Was the Arab Spring and How Did It Spread?" *National Geographic*, March 29, 2018. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/arab-spring-cause.
[153] Muhammad Faour, "Will the Arab Spring Lead to a Revolution in Education?" *Foreign Policy News*, November 1, 2011. https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/11/01/will-the-arab-spring-lead-to-a-revolution-in-education/.
[154] Ibid.

September 23, 2012 — The Global Education First Initiative is launched as a five year program to "foster global citizenship and improve quality of education globally." In cooperation with UNICEF, the program trains teachers in developing countries and provides educational resources to schools in hopes of bolstering the quality of education for all.[155]

October 9, 2012 — Malala Yousafzai is shot by a Taliban gunman as she enters a school bus on her way to school after speaking out publicly supporting a girl's right to education.[156] Malala's story spread across the world and sheds light on the issue of girls' education. Malala day was established on July 12th, 2013 to promote access to education for girls.[157]

April 14, 2014 — 276 girls from a school in Chibok, Nigeria are kidnapped by the terrorist group Boko Haram.[158] The group opposed girls' education because they believed that women should be at home looking after their husbands and children and not at school learning to read and write.[159] This kidnapping draws global condemnation and highlights the violence and risks still prevalent for girls' access to education.[160]

March 2020 — Following the COVID-19 pandemic, schools around the world close due to governmental safety measures, particularly impacting countries that are unable to switch to e-learning.[161] An estimated 168 million children lacked access to education for more than a year during the height of the pandemic.[162]

Historical Analysis

Since the construction of the first education systems, discrepancies in access to education have existed globally. In ancient civilizations such as the Xia Dynasty, Late Mesopotamia, and Ancient Egypt, education was reserved for the privileged elite such as the aristocrats, priests, and scribes.[163] Around 2000 BCE, education was focused on teaching basic skills and studying literature.[164] Notably, the Mesopotamian education systems put a focus on literacy of scribes and basic geography.[165] In these ancient societies, there was little emphasis placed on making

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[155] GCEDC Learning House, "Global Education First Initiative," *Global Education First Initiative*, September 2012. https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/pdf.

[156] Naomi Blumberg, "Malala Yousafzai," *Britannica*, December 6, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Malala-Yousafzai.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Vladimir Duthiers, "Boko Haram: Why Terror Group Kidnaps Schoolgirls, and What Happens Next," *CNN*, May 2, 2014. https://www.cnn.com/2014/04/24/world/africa/nigeria-kidnapping-answers/index.html.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Chika Oduah, "Chibok: The Village That Lost Its Daughters to Boko Haram," *The Guardian*, May 15, 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/15/chibok-nigeria-200-kidnapped-schoolgirls-boko-haram.

[161] Sara Alhattab, "Covid-19: Schools for More than 168 Million Children Globally Have Been Completely Closed for Almost a Full Year," *UNICEF*, March 3, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/schools-more-168-million-children-globally-have-been-completely-closed.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Joseph Lauwerys, "Education in the earliest civilizations," *Britannica*, August 25, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/education-in-the-earliest-civilizations.

[164] Candice Song, "China Ancient Education," *China Highlights*, August 1, 2023. https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/ancient-education.htm.

[165] Salem Media, "Mesopotamian Education and Schools," *History of the Net*, September 6, 2022. https://www.historyonthenet.com/mesopotamian-education-and-schools.

this education accessible, leading to women and people from lower social classes to remain uneducated and unable to improve their social standing.[166]

During the medieval period, education was predominantly controlled by the Church, providing limited opportunities for the common population, especially women with the belief they were intellectually inferior.[167] [168] On the other hand, around the same time in India, Muslim education systems established more structured education curricula, comprising both elementary schools and higher education.[169] These curricula ranged from logic and religion in elementary schools to philosophy, mathematics and medicine in higher education.[170] [171] In China, during the Tang Dynasty, the government strengthened and focused on education, particularly in the arts.[172] Confucianism became the dominant philosophical and ethical system during the Tang Dynasty. As a result, the government believed they needed to integrate Confucianism beliefs of character morality and social harmony into education to result in a good administrative system and better society.[173] Moreover, although women and girls were still relegated to household tasks, access to basic rudimentary education opened up to middle and selected lower class men due to the growing global realization of the benefits of education.[174]

The Renaissance and Enlightenment periods brought a shift in educational philosophy; humanist scholars advocated for education for all as it would contribute to personal development. They were successful with their missions and thus, led the expansion of educational systems.[175] The establishment of universities paved the way for higher education and attracted a broader segment of society. Access to higher education, however, remained largely limited to families with significant wealth and only to males.[176] Moreover, European expeditions also brought their educational practices globally. Although small at first, many European explorers in Africa established schools that served as Africa's first formal education system.[177] Following in the footsteps of existing European schools under the Church, African schools began with the focus on religion, but also taught literacy, philosophy, and the humanities.[178] During the Industrial Revolution, the expansion of industries and the need

[166] Matthew A McIntosh, "A History of Education since Ancient Civilizations," *Brewminite*, June 23, 2021. https://brewminate.com/a-history-of-education-since-ancient-civilizations/.

[167] Joshua Mark, "The Medieval Church," *The World History Encyclopedia,* June 17, 2019. https://www.worldhistory.org/Medieval_Church/.

[168] Guido Alfani, "Economic Inequality in PreIndustrial Times: Europe and beyond," *American Economic Association*, March 2021. https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=11151.

[169] James Bowen, "Education in Asian Civilizations," *Britannica*, March 1, 2010. https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/lay-education-and-the-lower-schools#ref47520.

[170]Asma Sayeed, "Hadith: Development and Early Transmission," *Britannica*, July 9, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hadith.

[171] Ekrem Ekinci, "World's First Higher Education Institutions," *Daily Sabah*, September 16, 2016. https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2016/09/23/worlds-first-higher-education-institutions.

[172] S.N. Mukerji, "The Establishment of Education during the Tang Dynasty," *Britannica*, April 28, 2009. https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/The-Mughal-period.

[173] "Tang Dynasty - Clothing, Period and Achievements," *History.com*, June 23, 2023. https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-china/tang-dynasty.

[174] Anna Ortiz-Ospina, "The Evolution of Education Outcomes," *Our World in Data*, 2016. https://ourworldindata.org/global-education.

[175] Kenneth Bartlett, "Education in the Renaissance," *Wondrium Daily*, December 15, 2016. https://www.wondriumdaily.com/education-in-the-renaissance/.

[176] Braidyn Womer, "Education and Women Renaissance Period: Why Not?" *Cedar Crest College*, November 10, 2007. http://www2.cedarcrest.edu/academic/eng/lfletcher/shrew/bwomer.htm.

[177] Corrie Decker, "Education and the Study of Africa," *Oxford Bibliographies*, May 6, 2016. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/.

[178] Ibid.

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for a skilled workforce prompted the creation of public education systems in many countries.[179] Compulsory education laws were enacted to establish basic education for children, though accessibility to higher education still considered gender and social class as deciding factors. However, for low-income families, the lack of working regulations and the allure of consistent wages, albeit minimal, popularized child labour across Europe and the US. During the height of the Industrial Revolution, nearly one in five children under the age of 16 in the US was working.[180] Consequently, children from low-income families were significantly less educated than children from wealthy backgrounds, providing them with less opportunities to succeed.[181]

By the 20th century, social and political reforms started becoming a focal point on the international stage, expanding policies that promoted inclusive education.[182] UN agencies and Regional Bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the G7 launched their own efforts to promote accessibility to education worldwide.[183] These measures included providing free and compulsory primary education and designing equitable education programs such as all girls schools, that led to significant improvements in school enrollment rates.[184] For instance, the G7's UNGEI project increased female completion rates of secondary school in Kenya during the pandemic by 131%.[185] Other international UN involvements to improve primary educational systems in developing countries propelled similar effects that worked towards reaching gender equality in education. Currently, over two-thirds of countries globally have reached gender parity in primary education, a roughly 32% increase since 2017.[186] Many challenges, however, continue to hinder accessibility to education for millions of children worldwide.[187] Currently, nearly 260 million children worldwide do not have access to primary or secondary education.[188] In addition to gender inequality, poverty is another major impediment, as impoverished families struggle to afford school expenses, including tuition fees, uniforms and supplies.[189] Moreover, war and conflict have caused devastating consequences on education, as schools are frequently targeted, damaged, and destroyed.[190] This creates an unsafe learning environment, displaces students and teachers, and disrupts the delivery of instruction, denying continual access to education. [191] Such regions experiencing conflict, then, encounter frequent interruptions and ultimately endure a continual cycle of inequality where their limited educational opportunities constrain the overall development of both individual and communities.

[179] Jim Carl, "Industrialization and Public Education: Social Cohesion and Social Stratification," *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, 2009. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6403-6_32.

[180] Vox Media, "These Photos Ended Child Labour in the United States," *Youtube*, June 28, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddiOJLuu2mo&t=131s.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Oskar Anweiler, "Education in the 20th Century," *Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/Education-in-the-20th-century.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Colm Harmon, "How Effective Is Compulsory Schooling as a Policy Instrument?"*World of Labor*, 2017. https://wol.iza.org/articles/how-effective-is-compulsory-schooling-as-a-policy-instrument/long.

[185] "UNGEI Working Paper: A Summary of Evidence on Gender Gaps in Education in the Context of Covid-19," *United Nations Girls' Education Initiative*, April 12, 2022. https://www.ungei.org/publication/evidence-gender-gaps-education-covid-19.

[186] "Most Countries Have Achieved Gender Parity in Primary Enrolment, but in Many Countries, Disparities Disadvantaging Girls Persist," *UNICEF*, June 2022. https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-disparities-in-education/.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Max Roser, "Global Education," *Our World in Data*, 2021. https://ourworldindata.org/global-education.

[189] UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "It's a Fact: Education Reduces Poverty," *60 Million Girls*, July 18, 2017. https://60millionsdefilles.org/en/education-reduces-poverty/.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Springboard Compass, "School Related Gender Based Violence," *United States Agency for International Development*, July 21, 2015. https://thecompassforsbc.org/trending-topics/school-related-gender-based-violence.

Past UN/International Involvement

United Nations Girls Education Initiative

Launched by the G7, the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) is an international UN body that works to create equitable education systems on a global scale by eliminating barriers that hinder girls' education.[192] Firstly, UNGEI's research and data collection strategies allow UNGEI to evaluate local communities to shape, inform and guide future policies and programs.[193] The data collected through surveys of classroom enrollments and classroom performances allows UNGEI to identify the largest problems in certain regions. They would then use funding or other resources to minimize the disparities and ameliorate access.[194] The data can also provide insight into the effectiveness of different regional policies and if they should be implemented in other areas. In Guinea, the UNGEI's research revealed a significant improvement in enrollment numbers following its construction of more schools. The organization was able to advise the Guinea government how to redistribute funds to target focus areas in efforts to raise the standards of education on a widespread level.[195] Although this has been quite successful, the Guinean education outcomes still remain below the global average. Additionally, UNGEI is able to use resources from its founding countries such as Canada, the European Union and United States to effectively advocate for safety in girls' education at the community level.[196] UNGEI coordinates a coalition of over 50 organizations with a shared commitment to making schools safe and with gender-sensitive spaces. Through data collection, establishment of guidelines and joint advocacy, members are calling attention to how gender-based violence can be eliminated in and around schools.[197] By working together, UNGEI and the coalition aim to raise awareness of the violence against females at school and make efforts to designate specific "safe" areas for girls to significantly reduce that violence. Doing so successfully will hopefully eliminate the overwhelming fear and barrier for girls entering education. Of the 28 countries UNGEI partners with, it is important to recognize that these countries, in fact, are not the primary oppressors of girls' freedom. UNGEI's status as a UN body allows them to partner directly with cooperating nations, but in other repressive nations with a patriarchal societal focus, they are severely limited in their power. Finding a compromise is key to ensuring the effectiveness of UNGEI cooperatives in the oppressive states to enable broader access to education.

Room to Read

Room to Read is a global NGO that has focused on promoting literacy and education in rural regions across Asia and Africa.[198] With a strong focus on gender equality, the organization is committed to ensuring that children, especially girls, have the opportunity to develop the necessary literacy skills for a brighter future.[199] One of the

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[192] "UNGEI at 10: A Journey to Gender Equality in Education," *MacArthur Foundation*, May 2010. https://www.macfound.org/media/files/ungei_at_10.pdf.

[193] United Nations Girl's Education Initiative, "Unlocking the Gender Transformative Power of Education."*UNGEI*, https://www.ungei.org/.

[194] Cecile Leno, "Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) Report on the Gender Equality in Education Snapshot Results," *UNGEI*, April 2023. https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/GCI_Guinea_GES_workshop_report_V4.pdf.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Yona Nestel, "Ending Gender-Based Violence in Schools: Working Together to Make Schools Safe Spaces," *UNGEI*, July 26, 2021. https://www.ungei.org/what-we-do/school-related-gender-based-violence.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Geetha Murali, "World Change Starts with Educated Children," *Room to Read,* September 2022. https://www.roomtoread.org/.

[199] "Our History," *Room to Read*, https://www.roomtoread.org/our-history/.

key initiatives of Room to Read is the establishment of libraries and teaching resources in poverty-ridden, underfunded regions. These libraries are equipped with a wide array of age-appropriate books, enabling children to expand their knowledge.[200] The impact of this NGO is widespread as they were able to distribute nearly 6 million books to children in 2022. In their Girls Education Program, their provision of education, sexual health classes, and textbooks allowed girls in the program to develop independence and gain access to secondary education which they would not have been able to do before. As a result, nearly 74% of graduates from the Girls Education Program by Room to Read went on into tertiary education or were employed after their first year following graduation which is unprecedented in the developing world.[201] Through this program, Room to Read is able to provide comprehensive support that includes scholarships, mentorship, life skills training, and educational materials.[202] It is one of the only NGOs focusing on rural communities with the aim to bring the same quality of education in other urban centres.[203] The lack of consistent teaching and inability to keep pace with the developments in digital literacy, however, are key areas of improvement for this NGO. Additionally, they have no control over the classroom demographics of the schools to which they provide books and teacher training. This constitutes a risk of furthering gender inequalities in the educational system.

UNESCO CapED Programme

UNESCO's CapED Programmer is a global initiative that works on improving the quality and capacity of developing education systems through teaching. Since 2003, they have implemented programs in 20 of the world's least developed countries following the Sustainable Development Goals plan.[204] The goal of the CapED programme is to expand teacher training to cater to the rapidly growing populations in Africa and South Asia.[205] The CapED program mimics educational curricula and teacher resources found in developed countries to train teachers in developing countries in hopes of achieving a similar education quality.[206] In Uganda, for example, the programme transformed a six year curriculum from Portugal that educates illiterate adults and children into a curriculum that spans four years.[207] This programme also serves to better prepare students for the skills required in their unique local communities by educating children about local languages common to their region. "CapED's support in this priority area focuses on helping countries … to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET), literacy and non-formal education."[208] Lastly, CapEd aims to decentralize global

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[200] "Room to Read's School Libraries Improve Reading Habits," *Room to Read*. https://www.roomtoread.org/the-latest/room-to-read-s-school-libraries-improve-reading-habits/.

[201] "Tracking Our Impact and Sharing Results," *Room to Read*, February 22, 2023. https://www.roomtoread.org/impact-and-reach/.

[202] John Wood, "Room to Read: Model and Strategy," *Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation*, October 2014. https://www.drkfoundation.org/organization/room-to-read/.

[203] Alicia Procello, "Witnessing the Gift of Education in Rural Vietnam," *Room to Read*, August 5, 2017. https://www.roomtoread.org/the-latest/witnessing-the-gift-of-education-in-rural-vietnam/.

[204] Stefania Giannini, "The CapED Programme Results Report 2022," *UNESCO*, February 2023. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385347.

[205] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Capacity Development for Education (CapED)," *UNESCO*, June 2023. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/capacity-development-education-caped.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Capacity Development for Education, "How UNESCO Is Helping Youth and Adults Return to Primary Education in Mozambique," *UNESCO*, July 27, 2023. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/how-unesco-helping-youth-and-adults-return-primary-education-mozambique.

[208] United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization, "What You Need to Know about Capacity Development for Education," *UNESCO*, May 2023. https://www.unesco.org/en/caped/need-knows.

education funding to make the process of classroom expansion easier.[209] By providing resources to schools and teachers rather than governmental educational ministries, it allows the programme to plan school capacity expansions according to communities' specific needs, and to reduce the hurdle encountered when garnering funding.[210] While many of these programs are effective at improving capacity, quality, and gender equality within classrooms, it is not an entirely sustainable programme. CapED is funded entirely by donations and a widespread expansion of the programme would require enormous investments, which is unlikely to occur. The fundamental approach of the CapED programme is to work directly with schools rather than governments, narrowing the programme's scope and failing to holistically address the broader factors contributing to this crisis.[211]

Charity Water

Charity Water is a multinational organization that addresses the education crisis by providing clean water to vulnerable communities.[212] While Charity Water's primary focus is on providing clean water, it has an indirect impact on improving access to education. By creating accessible sources of clean water, they help eliminate the need for children to spend unnecessarily long hours each day collecting water.[213] For example, in Alogien Ethiopia, the organization established a well, providing the small community of 350 people with clean water.[214] Charity Water has established over 135,000 of these small scale projects in 29 countries and significantly reduced the walking time to access clean water from an average of 4 hours to only 30 minutes.[215] In addition to relieving the water burden on children, it also creates numerous economic opportunities for communities to capitalize on. With clean water, families can engage in small-scale agriculture, livestock rearing, or various entrepreneurial ventures.[216] This additional income can help meet household needs and reduce the financial barriers that prevent children from getting an education. To provide a relationship in context, with a mere 10% improvement in accessibility to clean water, school attendance rates increase by up to 8% in some regions, demonstrating the importance of clean water in increasing access to education.[217] Despite the impacts Charity Water's clean water projects have on education, they are simply not enough to address the widespread inaccessibility to education in Africa. With 31% of schools globally lacking access to safe water, millions of children continue to prioritize their survival over their education.[218] Additionally, these water projects fail to address other causes such as war, government restrictions, and geographic challenges.[219]

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[209]Stefania Giannini, "UN CapEd 2020 Annual Report," *UNESCO*, January 1, 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377903.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Hénard Fabrice, "Evaluation of UNESCO's Capacaity Development for Education for All (CapEFA) Programme: Final Report," *UNESCO Digital Library*, February 2, 2016. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248070.

[212] Afdhel Aziz, "The Power of Purpose: How Charity: Water Is Reinventing Philanthropy with Data and Compassion," *Forbes*, December 19, 2018. https://www.forbes.com/sites/afdhelaziz/2018/12/19/the-power-of-purpose-how-charity-water-is-re-inventing-philanthropy-with-data-and-compassion/.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Ibid.

[215] "Together, We Can End the Water Crisis," *Charity Water.* https://www.charitywater.org/#.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Jon Strand,"Water Hauling and Girls' School Attendance," *World Bank*, May 2013. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/406001468032642724/pdf/wps6443.pdf.

[218] Mani Karmacharya, "Back to School: Water Aid," *WaterAid Canada.* https://www.wateraid.org/ca/back-to-school.

[219] "Why Charity: Water's 100% Model is Bad for Non-Profits and Donors Alike," *The Fundraising Authority,* 2022. https://theurgetohelp.com/articles/a-critical-investigation-of-charity-waters-effectiveness-as-a-clean-water-provider-in-sub-saharan-africa/.

Current Situation

Gender Exclusive Education Barriers

Gender inequality has been one of the largest barriers to education for women and girls, and is deeply rooted in cultural norms and societal expectations.[220] Currently, it is estimated that 130 million girls across the world are denied access to education.[221] This is particularly true in non-secular states such as Iran and Syria where discriminatory policies severely restrict the freedoms of women and girls.[222] In Iran, for example, girls are taught curricula that include only a selective focus on arts and humanities. The content taught is intended to reinforce and further ingrain the societal belief that girls are physically and cognitively inferior to boys.[223] Such policies, which are heavily influenced by traditional beliefs, pose significant challenges to girls' access to education which, in turn, limits their opportunities for personal growth and development.[224] They are also never given the opportunity to question or change these strict gender roles which prohibit their participation in public life and preclude their voicing of opposition.[225] Additionally, the marriage of young girls in developing countries is not only allowed but, in fact, encouraged, preventing many from attending school. This has limited women's advancement in education and has limited their advancement opportunities in the workforce. As a result of a decline of girls continuing education beyond the primary school level, there is a notable decrease in support and resources allocated to their education in later years. This includes fewer available schools, fewer qualified teachers, and inadequate learning materials.[226] Thus, this leads for their work opportunities, and economic, and social mobility to be acutely hindered, compelling them to resort to traditional roles in the home or low positions in the workforce. Promoting education and increasing awareness of the benefits of advanced education can encourage female independence such as choosing to graduate before marrying and having children. "Each year of secondary education may reduce the likelihood of marrying before the age of 18 by five percentage or more in many countries."[227]

Another factor that has been a consequential barrier to access to education globally is the school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) against girls.[228] "SRGBV can be defined as acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in, and around, schools."[229] Such violence originates from gender norms and stereotypes that are enforced, encouraged and perpetuated by those in power and with greater power, which historically and currently still tend to be males. Many girls experience threats, abuse and severe physical, psychological and emotional trauma. For many, the detrimental impacts of such targeted violence discourages

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[220] Carli Rowell, "Education Policies and Issues in Developing Countries,"*Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods,* April 2020. http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.ukwp-content/uploads/2020/04/Education-Policies-and-Issues-in-Developing-Countries-Literature-Review-April-2020.pdf.

[221] United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "The World Is Failing 130 Million Girls Denied Education: UN Experts," *OHCHR*, January 23, 2023. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/01/world-failing-130-million-girls-denied-education-un-experts.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Noha Alkamcha, "Iran Regime Continues Relentless Crackdown on Women's Rights," *Vital Voices*, April 10, 2023. https://www.vitalvoices.org/news-articles/opinion/iran-regime-crackdown-on-womens-rights/.

[224] David McClendon, "Women's Education in the Muslim World,"*Jstor*, June 2018. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26622914.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Raja Kattan, "Girls' Education," *Word Bank*, February 10, 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid.

many girls from attending school.[230] Many countries are either ignorant, turn a blind eye, or simply lack the resources to report and address this violence.[231] Consequently, the discrimination and violence towards girls continue to serve as an insurmountable barrier to education with little being done to punish those responsible for these gender-based violent acts.[232]
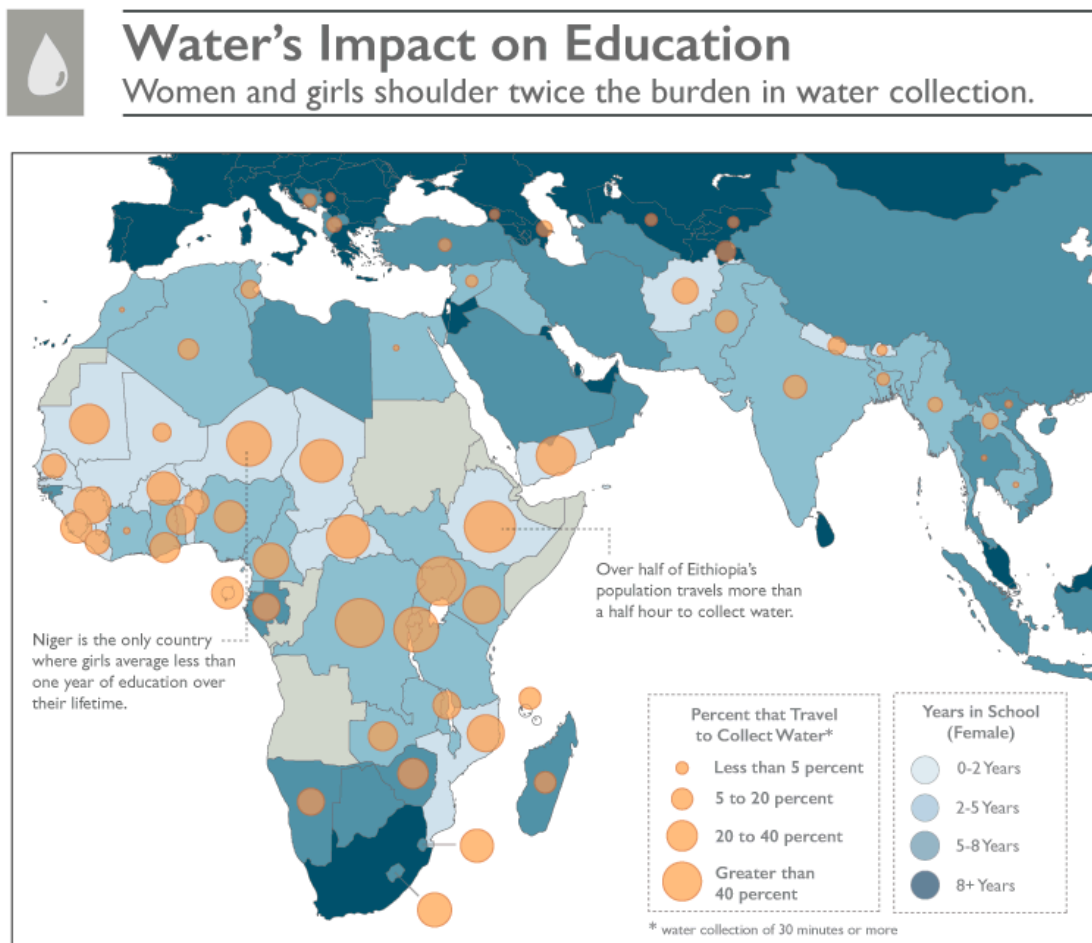
Water Crisis

Figure 1: The Impact of Access to Clean Water and Education.[233]

[230] Ashley Baldwin, "School Related Gender Based Violence Is Preventing the Achievement of Quality Education for All," *Reliefweb*, March 11, 2015. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/school-related-gender-based-violence-preventing-achievement-quality-education.
[231] International Centre for Research on Women, "Are Schools Safe and Gender Equal Spaces?" *Global Girls Innovation Programme*, October 10, 2016. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ICRW_SRGBV-Report--2015.pdf.
[232]Ibid.
[233]World Vision Staff, "Behind the Curtain: Best, Worst Places in the World to Be a Girl," *World Vision*, October 16, 2016. https://www.worldvision.org/gender-equality-news-stories/behind-the-curtain.

The water crisis in developing countries is a major issue that has severe impacts on the accessibility of education, particularly for millions of children.[234] For many households, individuals, especially children, are forced to walk on long and arduous journeys in search of water.[235] In Kenya, girls and women travel an average of 16 km per day to collect water, often requiring multiple trips to supply a family's needs.[236] This often entails walking for hours, enduring physical exertion and harsh conditions.[237] The time spent collecting water prevents children from attending school and receiving an education, leading to lifelong impacts. In addition to expected lower literacy levels and reduced cognitive ability, the lack of time being spent on education is also linked to lower wages, poorer health, lower standard of living and shorter life expectancy.[238] Moreover, the effects of the water crisis on education also encompass health issues, such as waterborne diseases which further impede not only their educational opportunities but also their very lives.[239] The burden of water collection predominantly falls on the shoulders of young girls, who are often responsible for household chores.[240] 7 out of 10 households without direct access to water rely on women and girls aged 15 and over for water collection.[241]

Child Labour

Child labour has been a particularily concerning issue, impacting the accessibility of education for countless children worldwide. Stemming from causes including poverty, forced labour, inadequate legal protection, and family struggles, child labour deprives children from the opportunity to access education.[242] Currently, an estimated 160 million children are engaged in child labour around the world.[243] Children who are tied into child labour spend significant amounts of time working, taking away their opportunities to go to school. From cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sweatshops in China, child labour is commonly the result of the consumerist demands of Western economies.[244, 245] Children, however, often choose to work in these conditions instead of attending school because their employment allows them to earn an income and simply survive.[246] In comparison, having to attend schools would be extremely difficult as it is oftentime unaffordable

[234] Mackenzie Bagayas, "Water Scarcity Affects Education - International Education Day," *Kraken Sense*, January 23, 2023. https://krakensense.com/blog/water-scarcity-affects-education.
[235] "One in Five Children Globally Does Not Have Enough Water to Meet Their Everyday Needs - UNICEF," *UNICEF*, March 17, 2021. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/one-five-children-globally-does-not-have-enough-water-meet-their-everyday-needs.
[236] "Walk for Water: Your 6K Vs. Theirs," *World Vision*, March 19, 2020. https://www.worldvision.org/clean-water-news-stories/walk-water-6k.
[237] Anna Carolina Ortiz, "Impact of Clean Water on Education," *Esperanca*, March 2022. https://esperanca.org/impact-of-clean-water-on-education/.
[238] GGI Insights, "Access to Education: The Impact of Inequality on Education," *Gray Group International*, March 14, 2023. https://www.graygroupintl.com/blog/impact-of-inequality-on-education-access-and-quality.
[239] Mara Abubakar, "Water-Borne Diseases, Cost of Illness and Willingness to Pay for Diseases Interventions in Rural Communities of Developing Countries," *National Library of Medicine*, June 30, 2012. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3469006/.
[240] Mussa Nzogela, "How Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Contribute to Girl' Education in Tanzania," *UNESCO*, June 7, 2021. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/how-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-contribute-girls-education-tanzania.
[241] Ibid.
[242] "Child Labour: Causes," *International Labour Organization,* https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/child-labour/WCMS_248984/lang--en/index.htm.
[243] 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.
[244] Tomáš Zdechovský, "Cobalt Mines – Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *European Parliament,* June 17, 2022. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002207_EN.html.
[245] "Sweatshops in China," *Traid*, 2012, https://www.traid.org.uk/projects/sweatshop-in-china.
[246] Diane Putnick, "Is Child Labor a Barrier to School Enrollment in Low- and Middle-income Countries?" *International Journal of Educational Development 41*, March 2015. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.02.001.

for children in abject poverty with tuition costs, books, uniforms and classroom essentials.[247] Limited awareness and support systems further exacerbate this issue as families may not fully grasp the long-term benefits of education. Oftentimes, they focus on the short-term financial gains received through child labour and disregard the far greater earning potential that comes with education. It is imperative to stop child labour and urgently address the deeply rooted systemic issues that allow it to persist. Efforts must be made to reduce the costs associated with attending school and to raise awareness of the longer term economic, social development and health benefits of education. Education for children of all socioeconomic classes must be readily available and attainable.

Inadequate Rural Education Accessibility

In particular, accessing education in rural environments has been especially difficult for many children. Proper education systems are often too expensive for many countries to develop in rural communities.[248] Thus, this makes it difficult for children to travel far to school and consistently access education. In the Philippines, a large proportion of low-income households live in these rural areas.[249] Communities near mountain ranges and small islands that do not have consistent transportation to developed areas are unable to attend school because of their geographical barriers. Some of these regional disparities have been addressed by implementing small ferry systems and providing educational material directly to families. However, these solutions have not addressed the widespread gap in quality and full access to education.[250] The tradeoff of pulling significant amounts of funding for only a limited increase in access to education has discouraged many governments from providing widespread access to education in rural areas.[251]

Another aspect of this issue is the shortage of qualified teachers in these areas.[252]Attracting and retaining educators with specialized training is challenging as urban areas often offer better job prospects with better pay and more advanced curricula.[253] Consequently, rural schools struggle to provide quality education due to this shortage.[254] Moreover, education systems often fail to include unique cultures or languages of Indigenous and minority groups into curriculum, and as a result, these marginalized communities have a harder time developing an understanding of their material in schools. For many Indigenous communities in Canada, children living on reserves are reported to have some of the worst literacy and numeracy rates in the country.[255] Due to the fact that the curriculum is taught in English, it has not only hindered the comprehension of this education from

[247] Global Education Monitoring Report, "8% of Families in the Poorest Countries Have to Borrow Money to Send Their Children to School," *World Education Blog*, January 19, 2022. https://world-education-blog.org/2021/12/14/8.
[248]Daniel Bailey, "Addressing the Challenges of Rural Students," *Edutopia*, June 8, 2021. https://www.edutopia.org/article/addressing-challenges-rural-students/.
[249] "The Problem of Rural Education in the Philippines," *Study Moose*, October 26, 2016. http://studymoose.com/the-problem-of-rural-education-in-the-philippines-essay.
[250] Intel Education, "Transforming Education in Rural Philippines," *Intel*, 2014. http://www.critical-links.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/intel-case-study-transform-education-philippines.pdf.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Neil Morton, "Rural Schools Have a Teacher Shortage. Why Don't People Who Live There, Teach There?" *The Hechinger Report*, April 13, 2021. https://hechingerreport.org/rural-schools-have-a-teacher-shortage-why-dont-people-who-live-there-teach-there/
[253] William Swing, "Migration: Making the Move from Rural to Urban by Choice," *UN Migration*, October 16, 2017. https://www.iom.int/news/migration-making-move-rural-urban-choice.
[254] Dianne Gereluk, "Community-Based Teacher Education," *EdCan Network*, September 26, 2018. https://www.edcan.ca/articles/community-based-teacher-education/.
[255] Ken Coates, "Indigenous Education Can and Must Be Fixed: Ken Coates for Inside Policy," *Macdonald Laurier*, May 18, 2022. https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/indigenous-education-can-and-must-be-fixed-ken-coates-for-inside-policy/.

Indigenous children, but also risked the eradication of Indigenous languages which are essential to their communities.[256] Many policy advocates have suggested that Indigenous authorities should have control to design the curriculum so it is taught to Indigenous needs.[257] Overall, children in these rural areas face several significant challenges to their access to education.

War and Conflict

War and conflict continue to prevent safe access to education. Specifically, conflict in certain regions have led to two key effects. Firstly, in war torn zones, schools are often damaged and disrupted, leaving many children without a place to learn.[258] The schools that choose to continue to operate, however, constantly face the risk of being attacked, leading to many families taking their children out of school in fear.[259] In Yemen, for example, a civil war forced over two million children out of school and another five million children with limited and uncertain access to education.[260] "Students and teachers have been killed or injured at or on their way to school, while a lack of salary has forced thousands of teachers to look for other work. The danger and economic impact of the conflict has also forced thousands of families to stop sending their children, notably girls, to school."[261] Additionally, the second major effect is that these conflicts have forced millions of families to be displaced. As children are displaced from their homes, they often face difficulties in finding schools or receiving adequate education services in their new locations.[262] Even when families settle in refugee camps, where they often have to wait months to years to be processed, educational opportunities are severely limited.[263] Out of the 43 million children who are considered refugees, an estimated 20 million children remain out of schools.[264] As these children spend longer in refugee camps, they become further behind in their educational curriculum which amplifies disparities in education levels for refugees.

However, there are more instances of education initiatives within refugee camps to accommodate children. In Rohingya refugee camps, UNICEF was able to provide education to nearly 300,000 refugees, despite the lack of a permanent home.[265] Through this initiative, UNICEF was able to provide much needed education to these children in need. However, this is not the case for all refugee camps and many children have to wait for refugee acceptance until they access education. When children are ultimately accepted into host countries, they are still set to face numerous challenges including linguistic barriers as well as an educational gap between the developed

[256] Masud Khawaja, "Consequences and Remedies of Indigenous Language Loss in Canada." *Societies 11*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc11030089.

[257] Dawn Zinga, "Indigenous Education in Canada: Challenging the Status Quo," *Open Access Government*, July 6, 2017. https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/indigenous-education-canada-challenging-status-quo/27205/.

[258] Susan Raqib, "Far-reaching Consequences of Wartime Attacks on Education," Human Rights Watch, October 5, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/05/far-reaching-consequences-wartime-attacks-education.

[259] Hanna Arhirova, "Ukrainian Children Go Back to School in the Midst of War," *National Post*, September 1, 2023. https://nationalpost.com/news/world/ukraine-back-to-school.

[260] Basheer Omar, "Yemen: Conflict Leaves Millions of Children Without Proper Education," *International Committee of the Red Cross*, October 13, 2022. https://www.icrc.org/en/document/yemen-conflict-leaves-millions-children-without-proper-education.

[261] Ibid.

[262] Khanyi Mlaba, "How Do War and Conflict Impact Education?" *Global Citizen*, June 26, 2023. https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-do-war-conflict-impact-education/.

[263] Rizka Prabaningtyas, "Refugee Children Have a Right to Be Educated in Indonesia: Research Shows the Barriers in Their Way," *Phys Org*, September 1, 2023. https://phys.org/news/2023-09-refugee-children-indonesia-barriers.html.

[264] Their News Team, "Half of the World's Refugee Children Don't Go to School," *Their World*, September 12, 2017. https://theirworld.org/news/half-of-all-refugee-children-do-not-go-to-school/.

[265] Faria Selim, "UNICEF: Against the Odds, Children Begin the New School Year in Rohingya Refugee Camps," *UNICEF*, July 23, 2023. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-against-odds-children-begin-new-school-year-rohingya-refugee-camps.

education system and their current learning abilities.[266] Adapting to a new language is often a difficult task. Additionally, these young learners may face a significant educational gap, as their prior educational experiences may not align with the standards and curriculum of the developed host country's education system.[267] Bridging this gap requires specialized support and resources to ensure these children can catch up and thrive academically in their new environment.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Quotas in Schools

Quotas in education can play a transformative role in improving access to education, particularly for marginalized and underrepresented groups. They work by designating specific percentages of spots within education systems to marginalized groups. By establishing specific targets or percentages for enrollment, quotas aim to ensure equal opportunities, increasing the representation of disadvantaged communities within the education system.[268] This proactive approach has several significant benefits. Firstly, quotas can promote inclusive enrollment by reserving a certain percentage of seats in educational institutions for students who have historically been denied access to education.[269] This ensures that individuals who face socio-economic barriers or discrimination are given a fair chance. For example, Brazil's Federal Universities in 2013 established quotas, mandating that 12.5% of spots within these post-secondary institutions were reserved for minority groups including Indigenous and African students.[270] As a result of this policy, representation from Indigenous and African students rose 400% in the span of three years, providing more opportunities to previously marginalized communities and allowing for more diversity within educational systems.[271] By allocating spots for education positions more equitably, quotas play a crucial role in reducing societal inequalities.[272] For marginalized groups, gender, race or socioeconomic status quotas enable individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome the many disadvantages they face in their environment.[273] If funding is contingent on quotas, it will incentivize developing countries to promote more inclusive education programs as these countries would continue to receive more resources if improvements are made.[274] That being said, quotas are often perceived as a short term solution, and concrete measures to maintain high quality and inclusive education systems should be

[266] Ibid.
[267] "Supporting Refugee Students from Ukraine in Host Countries," *OECD*, August 3, 2022. https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/supporting-refugee-students-from-ukraine-in-host-countries-b02bcaa7/.
[268] "The Importance of the SDGs in Education," *eTwinz*, September 6, 2021. https://www.etwinz.com/post/the-importance-of-the-sdgs-in-education.
[269] Aletta Grisay, "The Quality of Education in Developing Countries: A Review of Some Research Studies and Policy Documents," *UNESDOC Digital Library*, April 1991. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000088661.
[270] Dyane Reis, "Wins and Uncertainties after 10 Years of Brazil's Quota Law," *Nacla*, June 27, 2022. https://nacla.org/affirmative-action-brazil.
[271] Maria Arréllaga, "Brazil's Racial Quotas Have Given Rise to a New Generation of Black Graduates," *Le Monde*, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/08/15/brazil-s-racial-quotas-have-given-rise-to-a-new-generation-of-black-graduates_6094394_4.html.
[272] "Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools," *Equity and Quality in Education*, February 9, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264130852-en.
[273] Joseph Karani, "The Quota System of Education and Its Influence on National Unity: A Study of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa," *Education Journal*, November 5, 2014. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.edu.20140305.14.
[274] "International Monetary Fund Quotas: Overview," *International Monetary Fund*, October 2022. https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2022/IMF-Quotas.

implemented in congruence with quotas.[275] Another flaw that comes with education quotas is that it fails to address other direct aspects of educational inaccessibility such as geographical barriers, financial constraints and traditional gender roles that continue to prevent equal access to education.

Expansion of Secondary and Post-Secondary Services

Although there have been improvements in children's access to primary school, girl's access to secondary and post-secondary education is significantly lower compared to their male counterparts.[276] Currently, only an estimated 42% of countries worldwide have achieved equal representation in lower secondary education, and 24% in upper secondary education.[277] Addressing the incapacity and ineffectiveness of equal representation in secondary education can be confronted through multiple solutions. Firstly, investments from developed countries to expand the capacity of these higher education institutions is crucial to broadening the accessibility of this education.[278] For example, the construction of new schools and classrooms and the provision of necessary resources can improve the general situation of education.[279] Additionally, teacher training and curriculum sharing initiatives in partnership between developing nations and developed countries can help bolster the overall education quality.[280] Moreover, post-primary education can also be made more accessible and inclusive by delivering affordable or free education through subsidies and incentives. These subsidies would promote participation in education from low-income families by ensuring they wouldn't have to bear the financial burden. Expanding secondary and post-secondary services is crucial for developing nations to break the cycle of poverty, promote economic progress, and attain sustainable development.

Flexible Learning Approaches

Particularly for rural regions, mobile education and e-learning could be alternatives to education that are much more attainable and widespread.[281] Remote learning became especially popular within the developed world during the COVID-19 pandemic as global lockdowns closed schools. Schools in wealthier countries transitioned to virtual classrooms, allowing students to continue learning despite the circumstances.[282] In other countries, remote learning in the form without digital technology was used as a replacement for the traditional schools during the pandemic.[283] In a study conducted by UNICEF, some students in Nairobi, Kenya were given textbooks to review over the year.[284] Although the quality of education was not as high compared to those with access to

[275]Ankur Sarin, "Quotas Under the Right to Education: Not Leading Towards an Egalitarian Education System," *Jstor*, September 20, 2014. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24480707.

[276] Ibid.

[277] UNICEF, "Girls' Education: Gender Equality in Education Benefits Every Child," *UNICEF*, May 27, 2020. https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education.

[278] Mary Burns, "Sub-Saharan Africa's Secondary Education Challenges," *UNESCO*, February 6, 2020. https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/blog/sub-saharan-africas-secondary-education-challenges.

[279] Rebecca Winthrop, "Improving Access to Quality Public Education in Africa," *Brookings Institute*, February 11, 2022. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/improving-access-to-quality-public-education-in-africa/.

[280]Anna Popova, "Teacher Professional Development around the World: The Gap between Evidence and Practice," *The World Bank Research Observer*, June 4, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkab006.

[281] Cathy Li, "The Covid-19 Pandemic Has Changed Education Forever. This Is How," *World Economic Forum*, April 29, 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Henrietta Fore, "Globally, 1 in 3 Children Missed out on Remote Learning When COVID-19 Shuttered Schools," *UN News*, August 27, 2020.https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1071112.

[284] Ibid.

technology, these students were still able to learn when educational resources were provided to them. For communities which may not have enough students to support an entire school, an online or flexible learning approach would work as an alternative, providing access to education online in lieu of in-person education.[285] It would allow for most rural regions to access education, granted with internet infrastructure and technology. These could be supported by online teachers and provide students living in rural communities with a greater range of resources online.[286] However, these online and flexible learning approaches require immense investments in establishing fast-speed internet as well as providing these communities with laptops and electricity. These costly investments may not be attainable for all countries and alternatives need to be considered on a case by case basis. These alternatives can follow remote learning practices that provide children who do not have access to the internet with learning resources such as textbooks to educate themselves.

Bolstering Clean Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

In the short term, providing clean water and other humanitarian aid to communities can provide immediate relief to water-insecure regions, relieving children from spending hours collecting water.[287] Throughout the world, water-related illnesses contribute to roughly 443 million missed school days each year.[288] Additionally, the cost of medicines to treat said diseases is a significant burden on families, which often detracts from money for education.[289] The expansion of clean water would not only reduce time spent collecting water as mentioned previously, but also reduce the contraction of water-borne diseases. Moreover, this solution would help women and girls, specifically, as they have historically been likely to bear the responsibility of collecting water in developing countries.[290] That being said, the financial barrier of implementing clean water infrastructure is extremely high and will require significant investments from developed countries. With costs to address the water crisis approximating USD 1 trillion, the feasibility of these projects is unlikely.[291] Rather, smaller scale projects that prioritize reducing the walking time may be a more realistic solution to solving the water crisis and improving access to education.

[285] Rishabh Saxena, "E-Learning Challenges and Trends in Developing Reigons," *Totara*. https://www.totara.com/us/articles/e-learning-challenges-and-trends-in-developing-regions.

[286] Tarun Nagar, "How Can Developing Countries Leverage eLearning Platforms?"*eLearnig Indsutry*, August 26, 2022. https://elearningindustry.com/how-can-developing-countries-leverage-elearning-platforms.

[287] Mihai Andrei, "Providing Water in Schools Could Be Key to Lifting People out of Poverty," *ZME Science*, March 17, 2014. https://www.zmescience.com/medicine/water-schools-education-cambodia-17032014/.

[288] "443 Million Lost School Days." *WAMI*, November 23, 2021. https://wa-mi.org/en/blogs/wamimag/443-milioni-di-giorni-di-scuola-persi-1.

[289] "How Do Developing Countries Get Clean Water?" *Healing Waters International*, May 18, 2021. https://healingwaters.org/how-do-developing-countries-get-clean-water/.

[290]Sara Alhattab, "Women and Girls Bear the Brunt of Water and Sanitation Crisis - New UNICEF-WHO Report," *World Health Organization*, July 6, 2023. https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2023-women-and-girls-bear-brunt-of-water-and-sanitation-crisis---new-unicef-who-report.

[291] Colin Strong, "It Could Only Cost 1% of GDP to Solve Global Water Crises," *World Resources Institute*, January 21, 2020. https://www.wri.org/insights/it-could-only-cost-1-gdp-solve-global-water-crises.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty plays a major role both directly and indirectly in contributing to barriers that limit access to education worldwide.[292] Nevertheless, reducing these financial barriers to education is key to breaking the perpetuation of inaccess to education in poor and developing regions.[293] In developing countries, "poor families are less able to afford school fees, uniforms and textbooks for all of their children."[294] In a school in Burkina Faso, the provision of Math textbooks by UNESCO increased school attendance by nearly 48%, demonstrating the severe barrier of cost to access education.[295] Therefore, to address this barrier, education related costs can be further subsidized by developed countries. However, countries such as Afghanistan may oppose these provisions to protect their national sovereignty.[296] NGOs could be an alternative source for countries to receive these school resources, but funding for these NGOs would likely also be required. Through these programs, it would bolster local communities and eliminate the financial barriers contributing to inaccess to education.[297] This solution would also help to break the cycle of poverty that limits low-income families from job opportunities that require an education. Likewise, addressing the indirect implications of poverty on access to education is equally important. Investing in local communities to increase jobs and wages would increase household income and reduce the necessity for child labour.[298] This could be done through opening regions to allow foreign direct investment or promote microloans that all aim to grow economic activity in the region. At the same time, incentives such as school feeding programs, access to clean water and transportation support all work towards alleviating the burden of education and promote an education over employment for children.[299] However, donor countries may be hesitant to provide financial aid to these developing countries without any incentives. Corruption and little spending oversight in developing countries may hinder the effectiveness of these programs.[300]

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[292] Leah Rodriguez, "Understanding How Poverty Is the Main Barrier to Education," *Global Citizen*, February 6, 2020. https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/poverty-education-satistics-facts/.

[293] "What Are the Barriers to Education?" *60 Million Girls*, March 31, 2016. https://60millionsdefilles.org/en/six-barriers-to-education-in-developing-countries/.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Global Education Monitoring, "Every Child Should Have a Textbook," *UNESCO*, January 2016. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243321.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Omoniyi M.B.I, "The Role of Education in Poverty Alleviation and Economic Development: A Theoretical Perspective and Counselling Implications," *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2013. https://ucanapplym.s3.ap-south-1.amazonaws.com/RGU/notifications/Syllabus/pdf.

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

[299] Ibid.

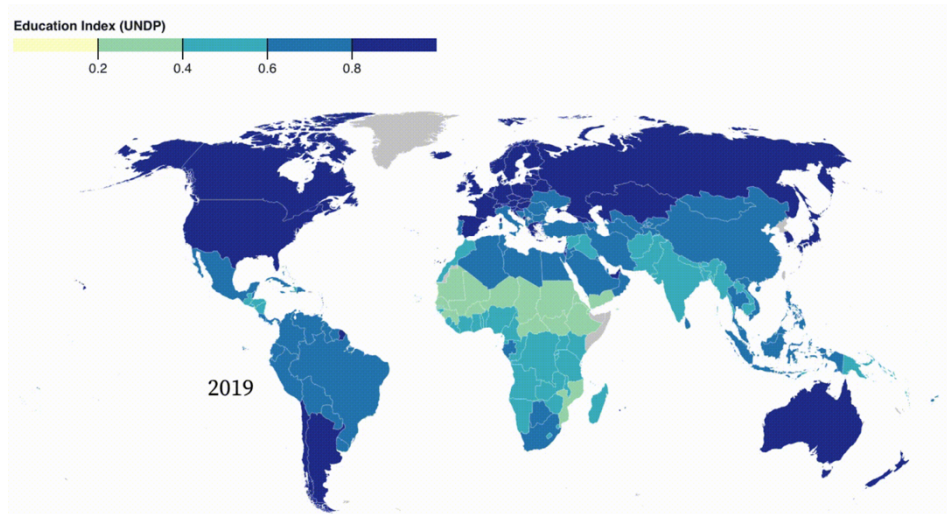[300] CHR, Michelsen Institute. "Education Sector Corruption: How to Assess It and Ways to Address It." *Anti-Corruption Resource Centre*. https://etico.iiep.unesco.org/en/mapping-risks#.

Bloc Positions

Figure 2: UNDP's Global Educational Index in 2019.[301]

Southeast Asia and Latin America

Countries within this bloc have made significant improvements in the accessibility and quality of education.[302] However, the pace of educational development has been lackluster in rural regions. For example, isolated islands in Indonesia have considerably lower literacy and attendance rates in comparison to urban areas.[303] The same can be said in rural communities in Brazil with learning outcomes appearing significantly poorer in rural areas.[304] Addressing these disparities in education between rural and urban communities would be the focus of this bloc. Adopting adaptive learning approaches including e-learning or remote learning can help bridge the gap and move towards resolving the issue. Additionally, considering their progress in improving access to education, bolstering the quality of education for existing schools is another important step. The provision of educational resources, including books and classroom supplies, from wealthier countries can improve the access and quality of education of those living in industrializing and developing countries in this bloc.[305] Moreover, digital literacy has been a core aspect of this transition to improving their educational quality. Digital literacy skills are essential to allow these countries to develop more specialized industries. By offering digital literacy programs in schools and establishing more post secondary education institutions, these countries have been able to increase the share of the workforce equipped with skills to fill advanced positions.[306] Overall, countries in this bloc are likely to

[301] Human Development Report Office, "UNDP's Education Index," *Wikipedia*, May 1, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_Index.

[302] William Ratliff, "Doing It Wrong and Doing It Right: Education in Latin America and Asia," *Hoover Institution*, March 1, 2003. https://www.hoover.org/research/doing-it-wrong-and-doing-it-right-education-latin-america-and-asia.

[303] "Improving Education Quality in Indonesia's Poor Rural and Remote Areas," *World Bank*, December 22, 2017. https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2017/12/22/improving-education-quality-in-indonesia-poor-rural-and-remote-areas.

[304] Carolina Esther, "Rurality and Education in Brazil: Inclusion of Rural and Remote Populations in Formal Education in Brazil," *UNESCO*, January 1, 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374673.

[305] "Delivering Quality Education in Rural Communities," *OECD*, May 2020. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/5ff868c8-en/.

[306]"Asian Development Outlook (ADO)," *Asian Development Bank*, September 2023. https://www.adb.org/outlook/editions/september-2023.

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continue advocating for more complex learning curriculum and digital literacy to advance their education systems and subsequent economic potential further.

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh

Child labour and poverty in these countries contribute to a significant proportion of educational absences.[307] In these countries, industries such as manufacturing, textiles, mining, agriculture and the informal sectors draw children away from schools and into sweatshops and factories.[308] More commonly, poverty is at the core of this issue, placing numerous cost burdens on families who simply cannot afford their children to attend schools.[309] For families who can afford some of their children to attend schools, this opportunity is often given to boys in the family due to their social and cultural norms.[310] This bloc would likely prioritize subsidizing education through increasing taxes or accepting foreign aid that would help provide equal opportunities to children, especially those of lower socioeconomic status.[311] That being said, these countries must consider the drawbacks of reducing child labour.[312] For example, in India, the manufacturing sector accounts for 16-17% of the total GDP and employs almost 20% of the population.[313] A complete ban of child labour would shrink the workforce by nearly 10.1 million positions, thereby, creating a worker shortage in India.[314] At the same time, India has been seeking to develop its advanced industries and higher education would supplement this growth.[315] Considering this, these countries may seek for a more gradual reduction in child labour rates to ensure their economic growth is not hindered through these policies.

The European Union and North America

The European Union (EU) and North America currently have strong, existing education systems.[316] Although their educational systems and institutions are still riddled with disparities in access and quality to education based on wealth, race and social status, they are still the key players in the global stage.[317] This bloc holds immense power in dictating education projects; they have been the key financiers of education projects including the

[307] Aitor Perez, "Eradicating Child Labour in South Asia," *Ecoper*. July 26, 2022. https://ecoper.eu/2022/07/26/eradicating-child-labour-in-south-asia/.

[308] Ibid,

[309] Amita Chudgar, "Child Labor as a Barrier to Foundational Skills: Evidence from Bangladesh and Pakistan," *Prospects 52*, August 30, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-022-09614-9.

[310] "All Children in School by 2015: Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: South Asia Regional Study Covering Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; Executive Summary," *UNESDOC Digital Library*, 2014. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000226223.

[311] LataB Godale, "Why Children Are Taking up the Job?" *Indian Journal of Community Medicine 38*, 2013. https://doi.org/10.4103/0970-0218.112453.

[312] Ibid.

[313] "India Manufacturing Market Size and Share Analysis - Growth," *Mordor Intelligence*, January 1, 2023. https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/india-manufacturing-sector-market.

[314] "Child Labour in India," *International Labour Organization*, November 2011. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/.pdf.

[315] "How India Is Emerging as the World's Technology and Services Hub," *Ernst & Young Global*, January 27, 2023. https://www.ey.com/en_in/india-at-100/how-india-is-emerging-as-the-world-s-technology-and-services-hub.

[316] Mike Colagrossi, "10 Reasons Why Finland's Education System Is the Best in the World," *World Economic Forum*, September 10, 2018. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/10-reasons-why-finlands-education-system-is-the-best-in-the-world.

[317] Anne Case, "The Great Divide: Education, Despair, and Death," *Annual Reviews*, April 14, 2022. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-economics-051520-015607.

UNESCO CapED project.[318] Likewise, they will continue to support development of education projects on a global scale. However, in recent years, their development aid has been less effective at exerting influence.[319] Loans offered by banks in China have had lower interest rates and as a result, countries have often financed projects through loans issued by Chinese banks.[320] Because of this, the influence of the EU and North America has been limited, especially in developing countries. This bloc may attempt to continue supporting countries which uphold democratic values and gender and racial equality in their education systems compared to other nations, but also needs to address the challenges of Chinese influence.[321] Likewise, they may consider revoking funding if the prerequisite gender or racial equality conditions are not met in these developing nations.[322] The funding provided by these countries may be contingent on specific quotas set by donor countries to ensure the resources provided go toward improving access to education for marginalized children.[323] These requirements for the funding may also include monitoring the funding to developing countries to minimize corruption and mishandling of funds. These countries may also support developing educational systems by expanding existing curriculum sharing and teacher training.[324] Moreover, they may also look into providing technology to both urban and rural schools to allow for more advanced technology literacy or the promotion of e-learning alternatives for isolated communities.[325]

Singapore, Japan, South Korea

These countries are home to some of the strongest and most advanced education systems in the world, meaning they can significantly help address disparities in education in other nations. Particularly, expanding existing teacher training can help bolster both existing, and future UN initiatives and improve the quality of education in developing nations.[326] They could help empower other teachers, address the teacher shortage, and encourage the expansion in capacity of schools in developing countries. Thereby, these countries can help close the educational gap between developing and developed countries and pave the way for equitable access to education.

Southwest Asia and North Africa

Access to education in Southwest Asia and North Africa has improved slightly due to education reforms, but significantly more must be done to approach equal access to education.[327] Countries in this bloc are often subjected to significant influence from religion and cultural norms. Specifically, certain religious practices

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[318] Ibid.

[319] Amy Damon, "Education in Developing Countries. What Policies and Programmes Affect Learning and Time in School?" *OECD*, February 1, 2016. https://www.oecd.org/derec/sweden/Rapport-Education-developing-countries.pdf.

[320] Ibid.

[321] Ibid.

[322] Ibid.

[323] Marika Lerch, "Promoting Democracy and Observing Elections," *European Parliament*, April 2023. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/166/promoting-democracy-and-observing-elections.

[324] Ibid.

[325] Daniel Rodriguez-Segura, "Educational Technology in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review," *University of Virginia*, August 3, 2020. https://education.virginia.edu/documents/epwworkingpaper-72edtechindevelopingcountries1202-08pdf.

[326] Mary Burns, "How Can We Improve Teacher Training in the World's Poorest Countries," *Global Partnership for Education*, May 9, 2013. https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/how-can-we-improve-teacher-training-world%E2%80%99s-poorest-countries.

[327] Heidi Morrison, "Education in the Middle East," *Children and Youth in History*, August 10, 2021. https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/459.html.

prevalent in these regions may drive ideologies, such as enforcing traditional gender roles, early marriages, and other societal expectations that hinder access to education for girls in secondary and post-secondary education systems.[328] Although many of these countries have begun to recognize the importance of education for children, they have been slow to repeal gender policies that restrict freedoms of women and girls.[329] Since the establishment of the Taliban government in Afghanistan in August 2021, the government has imposed strict restrictions on women and girls.[330] These restrictions have prevented any access to education or apprenticeship for women and girls, essentially undoing any progress made in years prior.[331] These restrictions have prevented nearly 3 million girls, who previously had access to education, from pursuing their academic endeavors, exacerbating the already existing challenges of gender inequality in Afghanistan.[332] Additionally, childhood marriage and recruitment of young boys for the military has further hindered access to education for children.[333] Although the restrictions in this bloc may not be as severe as those in Afghanistan, they are still prevalent. Therefore, these countries will likely be more conservative with any solutions in place, but still may support gradual repealing of oppressive laws.[334]

Moreover, many countries in this bloc are in the midst of conflict, leading to the displacement of millions of children.[335] Measures to protect schools and students should also be implemented to ensure the safe accessibility of education in this region. These can include simple solutions such as building walls and transportation for students to get to and from school.[336] One limitation is the scalability, considering the sheer number of schools within this bloc. As a result, extensive funding through loans or foreign direct investment to meet the upfront cost are required. For example, Kipevu Primary School in Kenya was able to protect their school by simply building a perimeter wall and putting up mosquito nets outside of classrooms that ensured the safety of students. Remote and learning opportunities could also help re-establish education for children who have been deprived of education. In the worst conflict zones, advanced solutions, including the designation of schools under peace zones or the involvement of military intervention to protect students, are other alternatives countries can choose to take. Lastly, school related gender based violence in this bloc often is underreported and continues to prevent access to education for victims of such violence.[337]

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[328] Muslim Aid, "What Is Education like in the Middle East?" *Muslim Aid: Serving Humanity*, December 2021. https://www.muslimaid.org/media-centre/blog/what-is-education-like-in-the-middle-east/.
[329] Abdeljalil Akkar, "Education in the Middle East and North Africa: The Current Situation and Future Challenges," *International Education Journal*, November 2, 2004. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ903844.pdf.
[330] Richard Bennett, "Experts: Taliban Treatment of Women May Be 'Gender Apartheid,'" *OHCHR*, July 11, 2023. https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2023/07/experts-taliban-treatment-women-may-be-gender-apartheid.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Robyn Huang, "'I'll Be Sacrificed': The Lost and Sold Daughters of Afghanistan," *Aljazeera*, August 14, 2022. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/8/14/ill-be-sacrificed-the-lost-and-sold-daughters-of-afghanistan.
[334] Marcello Bonatto, "A Revolution in Education: What Lies Ahead for MENA," *Middle East Institute*, October 21, 2021.https://www.mei.edu/publications/revolution-education-what-lies-ahead-mena.
[335] Mark Tran, "War Denying Millions of Children an Education," *The Gaurdian*, July 12, 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/jul/12/war-denying-children-education.
[336] Jason Weaver, "How Can We Protect Education from Attack? A Focus on Western and Central Africa," *World Bank*, September 10, 2021. https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/how-can-we-protect-education-attack-focus-western-and-central-africa.
[337] Ibid.

Sub-Saharan Africa

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the causes of disparities in access to education may vary. The water crisis has caused severe disruptions in accessing education for children.[338] For instance, in Ethiopia, where roughly 40% of the population has to travel to collect water, girls spend on average less than 2 years in educational institutions.[339] Developing clean water and sanitation infrastructure may alleviate some of the barriers, but a multifaceted approach to address the other challenges such as school related gender based violence, poverty and war and conflict within each country is essential.[340] In some regions, girls face significant barriers to education, including limited access to schooling, early marriages, cultural norms that prioritize boys' education, and gender-based violence.[341] In Mali, one of the poorest countries in the world, more than half of girls are married before the age of 18 . Marrying off young daughters is sometimes driven by the belief that it offers economic relief for parents and secures a future away from poverty for their children.[342] However, the practice of early marriage significantly hampers girls' access to education, leading to early pregnancies and premature withdrawal from school.[343] Moreover, war and conflict continues to impact access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ongoing conflicts such as the South Sudan civil war have disrupted education systems by destroying schools and making the journey to school too risky for some children, thereby limiting access to education for those living in conflict zones.[344] Peacekeeping missions and military intervention can help protect these schools to ensure children have access to a safe, consistent school environment.[345]

However, solutions such as peacekeeping or military involvement, sexual education, and the establishment of water systems require significant investment and foreign aid. These countries would be in favour of aid, particularly through NGOs and certain UN bodies. They would also be receptive to some direct foreign aid but would recognize the risk of limiting their national sovereignty and domestic decision making. Additionally, conditions can sometimes prioritize the donors' interests over the recipients', leading to tensions and concerns about the true motives behind the aid. For example, China's Belt and Road initiative has been a notable instance of this tension. With their "debt trap diplomacy" practices, China intentionally overwhelmed developing countries with unsustainable debt, forcing them to surrender strategic assets or concede increased political leverage.[346] Additionally, many lenders have stipulations that can revoke funding if actions adverse to the interests of the Chinese government are undertaken. As a result, these developing countries have less national sovereignty and these investment projects would become more for political gain, rather than supporting these countries' developments.

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[338] Ibid.

[339] "Behind the Curtain: Best, Worst Places in the World to Be a Girl," *World Vision*, October 16, 2016.
https://www.worldvision.org/gender-equality-news-stories/behind-the-curtain.

[340] Zipporah Musau, "Africa Grapples with Huge Disparities in Education," *Africa Renewal*, March 2018.
https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2017-march-2018/africa-grapples-huge-disparities-education.

[341] Julius Agbor, "Poverty, Inequality and Africa's Education Crisis," *Brookings Institute*, September 26, 2012.
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/poverty-inequality-and-africas-education-crisis/.

[342] Ibid,

[343] Ibid,

[344]UNICEF Child Alert, "Education under Threat in West and Central Africa," *UNICEF*, August 2019.
https://www.unicef.org/child-alert/education-threat-west-central-africa.

[345] Ibid.

[346] Bloomberg Quicktakes, "The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap in Africa," *Youtube*, March 17, 2022.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-QDEWwSkP0.

Discussion Questions

1. How can countries counteract discriminatory stigma and societal gender roles to ensure girls have access to advanced educational opportunities?

2. Are quotas an effective solution to mandate access to education? If so, how should these targets be implemented and what should the specific targets be?

3. How can education be provided to those living in rural communities without placing a significant economic burden on countries?

4. Should adaptive or mitigative strategies be implemented to address the educational disruptions caused by war and conflict?

5. In what ways can child labour be reduced to ensure children go to school?

6. What solutions can be implemented to improve access to clean water and sanitation?

7. How can developing countries reduce their reliance on developed countries to sustain and manage educational systems in the long term?

8. How can linguistic, disability and cultural barriers to education for minority groups and refugees living in host countries be addressed?

9. How can victims of school related gender-based violence be better supported?

Additional Resources

Breakdown of key factors influencing access to education across the world:
https://reliefweb.int/report/world/20-reasons-why-2020-there-are-still-260m-children-out-school

Video report on the impacts of clean water on education:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCHhwxvQqxg&t=1s

Interactive map outlining different measurements of education quality around the world:
https://ourworldindata.org/global-education

A Report on The Impact of Poverty on Education:
https://concernusa.org/news/how-does-education-affect-poverty/.

Published Jounral on the implications of child labour on access to education:
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4448724/

Forbes technology focused approaches to improve accessibility to education:
https://www.forbes.com/sites/hp/2017/09/26/improving-access-to-education-in-the-developing-world/?sh=658a6e1f75ff

UNICEF analysis on the efficacy of equitable and inclusive education programs and future recommendations:
https://www.unicef.org/media/142921/file/Global%20annual%20results%20report%202022:%20Goal%20area%202.pdf

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