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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

BACKGROUND GUIDE

ONE WORLD ONE NATION

INDIA

Agenda : Refugee and migrant crisis with special emphasis on child refugees



CENMUN
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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates

A very warm welcome to the UNICEF at CENMUN 2018. It is our humble privilege and extreme pleasure to serve as your Executive Board for the duration of the conference. The agenda for this session has been agreed upon as "Refugee and migrant crisis with special emphasis on child refugees".

Since we are all busy with all our schedules, the Executive Board has put in effort to make this concise document, which true to its name, aims to serve as a background for the committee and the substantive research possible. However, please bear in mind that under no circumstances would we want you to limit your research or learning to this document. Please take a step to use all that is at your disposal to build upon all the substance that is in the guide(and more) to ensure that you are at your best level of preparation when we see you in the meeting.

It is a humble request that first timers and experienced delegates read up the basic rules of procedure of a Model UN before coming to the committee. Although we will be spending a good portion of the first session explaining the same to you, it is necessary that you possess a basic knowledge of the same. We will be following UNA-USA Rules of Procedure in committee as closely as possible.

Additionally, it is emphasized upon greatly that do not trust everything on the internet. Please take in serious consideration the following points regarding the type of documents that you might want to produce in the committee so as to substantiate your stand.

Valid and Binding:

- All reports published by the United Nations and its agencies.
- Reports by Governments and its agencies. (With respect to their country only.)

Valid but not binding, in

- Al Jazeera
- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- Reporters without borders

Not Valid but can be used for reference purposes:

- Any report published by a recognized news agency or NGO.

Not accepted under any condition:

- Wikipedia
- WikiLeaks

The order of precedence:

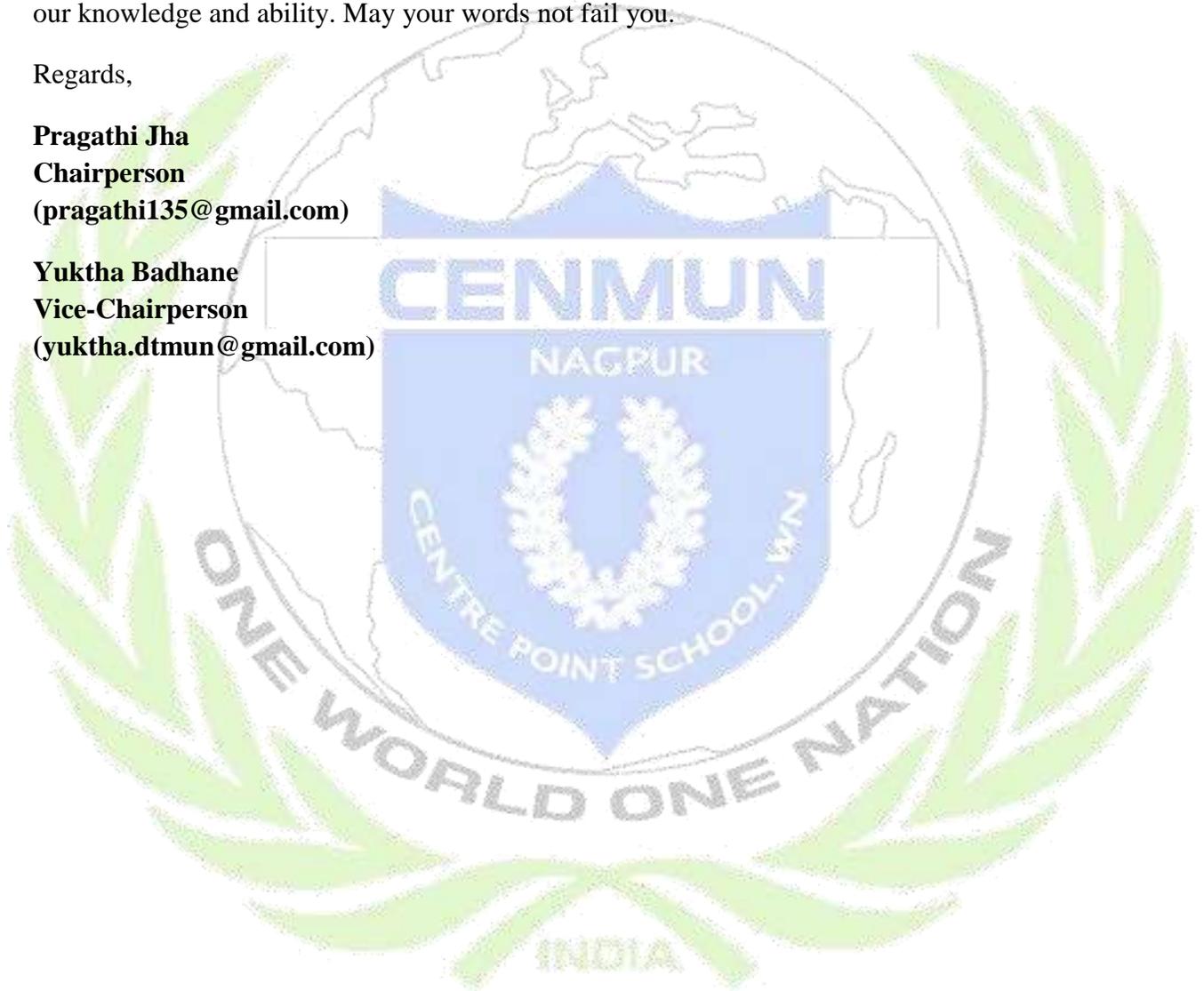
- Reuters
- Blog Articles
- The Background Guide itself

With that, we assure you that we will help you in whatever way is possible for us to the best of our knowledge and ability. May your words not fail you.

Regards,

Pragathi Jha
Chairperson
(pragathi135@gmail.com)

Yuktha Badhane
Vice-Chairperson
(yuktha.dtmun@gmail.com)



INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations Children's Fund is a United Nations program headquartered in New York City that provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. It is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children and insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress. The UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families which is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities and responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children and those who provide their care. UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

After WWII, European children faced famine and disease. UNICEF was created in 1946 by the United Nations to provide food, clothing and healthcare to them. In 1953, the UN General Assembly extended UNICEF's mandate indefinitely. UNICEF began a successful global campaign against yaws, a disfiguring disease affecting millions of children, and one that can be cured with penicillin. In 1959, UNGA adopted the Declaration of the rights of the child, which defines children's right to protection, education, health care, shelter and good nutrition. Following more than a decade of focus on child health issues, UNICEF expands its interests to address the needs of the whole child. Thus began an abiding concern with education, starting with support to teacher training and classroom equipment in newly independent countries.

In 1965, UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the promotion of brotherhood among nations. Year 1979 was marked as the International Year of the Child, by celebrations around the world; people and organizations reaffirmed their commitment to children's rights. In 1981, the WHA adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes in order to encourage breastfeeding and in so diminish threats to infant health. The very next year i.e. in 1982, UNICEF launched a drive to save the lives of millions of children each year. The 'revolution' was based on four simple, low-cost techniques: growth monitoring, oral rehydration therapy, breastfeeding and immunization. 1987, UNICEF's study Adjustment with a Human Face prompted a global debate on how to protect children and women from the malign effects of

the economic adjustments and reforms taken to reduce national debt in poor countries. In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly. It entered into force in September 1990. It is the most widely- and rapidly-accepted human rights treaty in history. An unprecedented summit of Heads of State and Government at the United Nations in New York City set 10-year goals for children's health, nutrition and education in the year 1990. Year 1996 saw the UNICEF provide support and serious attention to Machael Report: The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. In 1998, the UNSC's first open debate on the subject reflected the strength of international concern over the effects of war on children. In 2001, the Global Movement for Children began mobilizing every citizen of every nation to change the world with children. The Say Yes for Children campaign was built on this momentum, with millions of children and adults around the world pledging their support for critical actions to improve children's lives. 2002 saw a landmark Special Session of the UN General Assembly. It was convened to review progress since the World Summit for Children in 1990 and re-energize global commitment to children's rights. It was the first such Session devoted exclusively to children and the first to include them as official delegates.

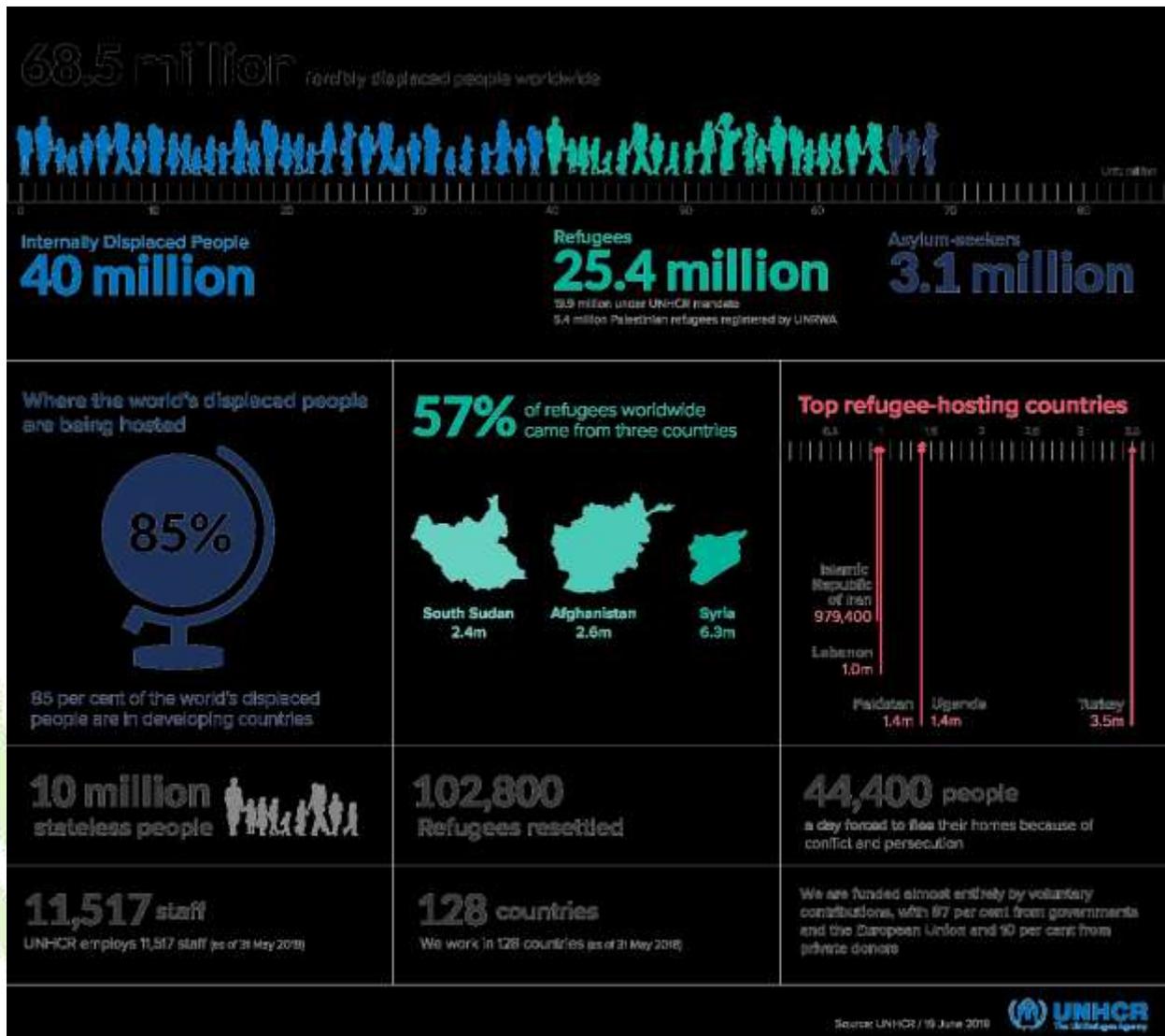
INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.

Who is a migrant?

While there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant, International Organisation for Migration defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.



Reiterating the Agenda: Refugee and Migrant Crisis with Special Emphasis on **Child Refugees**.

Over half of the world’s refugees are children. Many will spend their entire childhoods away from home, sometimes separated from their families. They may have witnessed or experienced violent acts and, in exile, are at risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking or military recruitment.

Children caught up in areas of armed conflict face a wide range of economic, social and developmental problems. Space does not permit a full explication of the number or range of these problems, but the first part of this paper seeks to identify, through the enumeration of a number of key problems faced by children in situations of armed conflict, the areas in which legal reform is needed. If reforms are to be effective, they must address the real needs of these children.

I. Current Crises

a. Syrian Child Refugee Crisis

It's one thing to see the statistics. After 7 years of war, Syria is now the most dangerous country to have a child. Not only that, but grave child rights violations continue. That means killing, maiming, sexual violence, abduction, recruitment into combat, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. Since the onset of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 5.3 million people, including 2.5 million children, have been living as registered refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (UNHCR data portal, 26 November 2017). More than 90 per cent of these refugees are living in host communities and facing challenging socio-economic conditions, including high poverty rates (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2018-2019), high costs of living, limited livelihood opportunities and the exhaustion of savings. These circumstances have led to negative coping practices—such as removing children from school, particularly girls, to work or marry—further exacerbating existing protection risks.

In September 2017, the United Nations Refugees Agency (UNCHR) announced that staggering numbers of refugee children do not have access to education. Of the 17.2 million refugees under UNCHR's mandate, 6.4 million are of school age. In 2016, more than half of them, 3.5 million children, did not go to school 1.5 Million of those school-aged children are Syrian refugees living in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Although there has been a vast improvement and education is becoming more accessible, at least 530.000 Syrian children living in these countries are still out of school. This problem is largely due to insufficient funding and to restrictive refugee policies. In 2016, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that globally, less than 2% of donor support was allocated to education in emergencies. On top of that, most of these funds go to primary education, rendering access to secondary education for refugee children even more uncertain than to primary education.

Education can also play a key role in the improvement of children's mental health. A sense of normalcy, safety and routine are crucial to children's development. Without schools and other support programs, there is a higher risk that children will suffer from depression, will become withdrawn and will begin feeling hopeless about their future.

The recent bombing of Syria by the U.S.A had a dramatic and perjuring effect on Syrian refugee children. The gas attack in Syria has killed families in their homes. At least 42 people are dead, including infants and toddlers, and another 500 are injured (UNICEF, 2018).

According to UNICEF statistics this year, more than 5 million Syrian refugee children will require education assistance 3.8 million will require protection support and 7.5 million will be in need of health assistance. The status of Syrian refugee children is of emergency. Children are facing the risk of losing their lives because of the chemical weapons launched because of the war. It is essential to take urgent actions on the matter before it is too late.

b. Child Refugee Crisis in Rohingya

The Rohingya, who numbered around one million in Myanmar at the start of 2017, are one of the many ethnic minorities in many countries. Rohingya Muslims represent the largest percentage of Muslims in Myanmar, with the majority living in Rakhine state. They have their own language and culture and say they are descendants of Arab traders and other groups who have been in the region for generations. But the government of Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, denies the Rohingya citizenship and even excluded them from the 2014 census, refusing to recognize them as a people. It sees them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. At least 6,700 Rohingya, including at least 730 children under the age of five, were killed in the month after the violence broke out, according to “Medecins Sans Frontieres” (MSF). Amnesty International says the Myanmar military also raped and abused Rohingya women and girls. This is being named as one of the worse ethnic cleansing cases. The plight of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people is said to be the world's fastest growing refugee crisis. Risking death by sea or on foot, more than half a million have fled the destruction of their homes and persecution in the northern Rakhine province of Myanmar (Burma) for neighboring Bangladesh since August 2017. Myanmar's military says it is fighting Rohingya militants and denies targeting civilians.

"Houses were burning. There were rocket launchers. They were killing people after arresting them, that's why we fled here." This are the words from Umme, a 12 year old living in a Rohingyan refugee camp. This is a story no child should tell. Yet, it's an all-too-familiar one in the Bangladesh refugee settlements, where UNICEF is helping Rohingya survivors of what UN Human Rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has deemed “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” More than 520,000 vulnerable Rohingya children like her are living in the path of a looming threat. With monsoon season approaching, the overcrowded camps they call home ran the risk of being swept away. Situated on land cleared for the influx of 390,000 Rohingya since August, the refugees' new homes are tents perched on barren hillsides that the coming rains will turn to mud. Landslides could claim countless lives, and severe flooding destroy the camps' fragile sanitation infrastructure, contaminating the water supply. For families living in cramped quarters, cholera outbreaks and other waterborne illnesses are all too likely. UNICEF is now mobilizing to keep Rohingya children safe, healthy and dry during cyclone season. Vital infrastructure is being reinforced and medical supplies prepositioned to handle the rise of illnesses like cholera — an acute diarrhoeal disease that can kill a child within hours if not treated. The water supply is being treated, and supplies families will need to keep their water safe and clean — hygiene kits, water purification tablets, chlorine, soap and buckets — stockpiled. Vaccination teams are administering the oral cholera vaccine to 1.1 million people, and community volunteers are fanning out to educate families about how to protect themselves. But it's a race against time to spare Umme and Rohingya refugee children like her another fight for their lives. “I've been in some difficult places,” says Martin Worth, UNICEF's Head of Water,

Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. "But this could get so much worse. What is already a dire humanitarian situation could become a catastrophe."

c. Venezuelan Refugee Crisis

Venezuela is in an economic free fall. As a result of government-led mismanagement and corruption, the currency value is plummeting, prices are hyperinflated, and gross domestic product (GDP) has fallen by over a third in the last five years. In an economy that produces little except oil, the government has cut imports by over 75 percent, choosing to use its hard currency to service the roughly \$140 billion in debt and other obligations. These economic choices have led to a humanitarian crisis. Basic food and medicines for Venezuela's approximately thirty million citizens are increasingly scarce, and the devastation of the health-care system has spurred outbreaks of treatable diseases and rising death rates.

President Nicolas Maduro is pushing the nation toward authoritarianism, shutting down the free press, marginalizing the opposition-led legislature, barring opposition parties from participating in elections, and imprisoning political opponents. This humanitarian and economic crisis, combined with rising political persecution, has forced millions of Venezuelans to flee away. The number of Venezuelans seeking asylum has increased yearly since 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, around 99,000 asylum claims were lodged, half of which in 2017 alone (as of September). The primary receiving countries of Venezuelan asylum seekers in the region between 2014 and 2017 have been: USA: 46,000, Brazil: 16,500, Peru: 9,500; Costa Rica: 3,300 and Panama: 3,000. Considering the evolving situation in Venezuela, it is projected that people will continue to leave the country over the coming months. Children migrating from Venezuela don't have the strength to endure the journey away from their nation, since they are severely malnourished. The government fails to provide families with food, in fact, according to the "Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida Venezuela 2016" by Venezuelan universities, nine out of 10 households in the country were "food insecure." But it appears to be affecting infants at an overwhelming rate. The number of children under the age of 1 who died increased 30 percent in 2015, according to a Ministry of Health report which was later removed by the government. Women and children are flocking to the Colombian border town of Cúcuta in desperate need of medical care, food and shelter. Mothers sometimes leave children behind to be looked after by fathers and other family members. Pregnant women make treacherous, daylong journeys for medical care. Others have left behind their normal lives to ensure their children will have a meal the next day.

CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

- People are fleeing their countries to seek safety
- Neighbouring countries have taken in the majority of refugees— but they can only do so much

- Lack of legal routes to safety

While the cause of the refugee crisis can be simply broken down to three aspects, there are yet deeper circumstances and incentives for migration that need to be explored.

The most gruelling facts and conclusions will come thru only when Statistical Data is collected and furthermore, is analysed to point to root causes.

IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

a. Mental Health Crisis

Children, who comprise at least a quarter of asylum seekers, are exposed to numerous risk factors for psychological disturbance, including exposure to violence, forced displacement, and multiple losses. Refugee children suffer both from the effects of coming from a warzone and of adjusting to an unfamiliar culture. These stressors also affect their families.

Moreover, consistent research findings show that as the number of risk factors accumulates for children, the likelihood that they will develop psychological disturbance dramatically increases. Studies of children in exile show that the prevalence of emotional and behavioral disorders is high, with the most frequent diagnostic categories being posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety with sleep disorders, and depression. A meta-analysis of data from 7,920 children affected by war found that 4.5 to 89.3 % of children met criteria for PTSD with an overall pooled estimate of 47 %, 43 % met criteria for depression, and 27 % met criteria for a non-PTSD anxiety disorder. According to the European Journal of Public Health, there is a lack of trauma and mental health screening and measurement tools developed directly for refugee youth, especially for young refugees below the age of six.

The improvements in the development and/or adaptation of mental health tools are of uttermost importance. This is necessary because mental health specialists are using tools that aren't validated nor follow the guidelines to detect mental health problems in children. Detection and treatment of mental health issues among refugee children and youth should be a priority both within the scientific community and in practice in order to reduce morbidity and mortality.

b. Acculturation and Adaptation

Acculturation has been described as a dynamic process in which groups and individuals experience cultural and psychological change. Common components of acculturation involve learning a new language, norms, and customs, and becoming familiar with the mainstream culture. Refugee students face immeasurable academic challenges in their adjustment to their new environments. They frequently suffer from marginalization and discrimination, social alienation, lack of adult support, and difficulties accessing education. Refugee and asylum children and youth confront the bureaucracy and expectations of schooling and must often

quickly learn to navigate a system whose policies and standards are unfamiliar and unknown. Few resettled refugees experience school programs that provide resources to meet their unique academic and linguistic needs. However, under the right conditions, education may help rebuild academic, social, and emotional well-being. Furthermore, refugees typically maintain high aspirations and optimism regarding schooling, which is a valuable educational resource. Schools need to learn how to develop welcoming learning communities for newcomers.

Whether their new homes are temporary or permanent, the future success of migrating and displaced children relies heavily on whether they are welcomed in those new homes. Research indicates that children are most likely to directly encounter discrimination in school settings, often in the form of insults, unfair treatment, exclusion and threats. Children who face these forms of discrimination and exclusion experience a range of direct repercussions such as distrust, hopelessness and problematic behaviors, as well as negative longer-term attitudes about schooling and their own potential.

Outside the classroom, migrant and refugee children and families can be subject to a wide array of discriminatory practices and behaviors that hinder their ability to settle into a new home. In many contexts, legal barriers continue to prevent migrant and refugee children from receiving services on an equal basis with other children. Even when legal barriers are removed, misinformation, prejudice and xenophobia continue to stand between children and the services they are entitled to receive. These problems can be intensified by formal and informal separation of refugee and other migrant families from host communities, making it more difficult to acquire relevant language and cultural skills or employment to overcome intense poverty.

In the worst cases, xenophobia may escalate to direct attacks. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, asylum reception centers throughout Europe have been repeatedly subjected to direct attack. In Germany alone, the Government tracked 850 attacks against refugee shelters in 2015.

c. Legal Status of Refugee Children

Bearing in mind children are faced with numerous amounts of threats while in the search for asylum, the UNHCR adopted a Policy on Refugee Children in October 1993. Synthesizing, the UNHCR was seeking to make clear that children are vulnerable, dependent and developing. This way, the difference between adults and children refugees is clearly stated, making it easier for authorities to take action regarding these minors. It is required for delegates to acknowledge that most children in search for asylum enter countries without company and illegally. It is a necessity to discuss about the responsibilities of different governments in the specific cases of illegal families with their children. It is stressed for the delegates to explore the possibilities of temporal visas or other alternatives to help solve these types of problems with optimum efficiency.

It is essential for different countries to adapt their policies in order to find the most humane solutions without withering their own countries economy nor creating social controversy among their populations. Even though refugee children are one of the troubles regarding refugee crises themselves, it is requested from the delegates to focus solely on the refugee children and not to get off tracks. However, it is important for delegates to adapt solutions that won't disturb other countries' aspects while still concentrating on the children. Refugee children may come with families or alone. Some countries may not be able to offer asylum or proper care to children, therefore it is of uttermost importance to point out how substantial it is for host nations to establish laws regarding refugee minors.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

- What should the legal status of refugee children be? Should they be provided with provisional or permanent visas? What measures should be taken to protect the rights of refugee children and ensure their right as established in the UNC?
- How should psychological disorders be classified in refugee children? What validated tools can be used to identify mental health issues in minors?
- What measures can be taken to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization in host nations? Should community-based approaches be taken for refugee children to adapt to their new environment?
- How can access to education and social protection, be increased for children? Is there anyway we can create opportunities for family income and youth employment?
- What should the approach of governments and the private sector be, when providing health, education and shelter to refugee children? In which way can the legal status of children become an opportunity and not a barrier for giving them access to basic need?
- What actions can be taken to improve the access to better data on children's movements and welfare? What guidelines should researchers and data analytics follow? How can we make better use of existing data, and share it?

FURTHER READING

1. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12470.doc.htm>
2. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sc8575.doc.htm>
3. <https://www.savethechildren.net/article/protecting-children-war-and-conflict-european-and-global-implications-child-rights>
4. https://www1.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story_id/000577.html
5. https://www.unicef.org/chinese/protection/files/Armed_Conflict.pdf
6. https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0577k_children_in_war_kit.pdf
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11. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children>
12. http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=2.78652692.1288777331.1537242459-1709178279.1537242459
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16. <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002438>
17. <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/abuse-exploitation-and-trafficking-stark-reality-migrant-children-trying-reach-europe-%E2%80%93-un-report>

