United Nations Human Rights Council

Protecting children's rights to elementary education

Bangalore Junior MUN 2019

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Message from the EB

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Human Rights Council. In this body, you will debate to establish basic human rights pertaining to this year's agenda; **Protecting children's rights to elementary education.** The United Nations Human Rights Council is a little different from the other organs of the United Nations.

To prepare for this conference we would urge you to research the various factors affecting our agenda. We recommend that you use this background guide only as the first step of your research and for you to surprise us with your sharp thinking skills and fresh perspectives. We fully understand the first time jitters and how daunting this might seem to you, but we assure you that together, we will be able to make this experience as enjoyable as possible. Now, a bit about us. I am Prasidh, your chair. I am an avid sports lover and I enjoy maths, all things technology related. Vanishree, my vice-chair, enjoys cracking horrible jokes almost as much as she loves meeting new people and will always be ready to help you out. Athmika loves to read and when she's not always talking, she passionately follows international affairs. Vaanishree, Athmika and I have 4 years of experience between us and realise what it is to be at your first MUN. We are really looking forward to working with you guys. Remember, bring your A-game and don't forget to have fun!

If you have any questions please email us at bangalorejmun@oakridge.in with the subject line: "**UNHRC_Queries**" or visit the website at bangalorejmun.com.

Sincerely,

The Bureau of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Chairperson: Prasidh Sivakumar
Vice-chairperson: Vaanishree Joshi
Rapporteur: Athmika Krishnan

Introduction

The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe. It is a part of the United Nations General Assembly and is considered as one of the main organs of the United Nations.

The HRC responds to all violations of human rights across the globe, by exposing violators and demanding change. The HRC addresses 7 main goals. These are:

- Ensuring all people understand their rights
- Ensuring all people have the same rights
- Checking if all people can use their rights
- Checking what governments do to protect the rights of their citizens.
- Ensuring that countries follow the terms they agreed to at the UN.
- Aiding people whose rights have been violated.

The HRC has adopted 1,675 resolutions since it began meeting in 2006, addressing around 120 themes and placing governments under intense scrutiny. The themes addressed by the Council include rule of law, democracy, terrorism, human trafficking, torture, freedoms of opinion, expression, assembly and association, women's rights and gender equality, migration, persons with disabilities, and LGBT rights.

One of the early acts of the General Assembly was to draft and adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, resolution 217 A of 10 December 1948.

More recent UN actions include the adoption of international human rights treaties, the creation of the position of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1993 and the establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2006. There is an on-going discussion about how to reform the treaty-body system.

The Human Rights Council has adopted a process known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member States once every 4.5 years. The UPR is one of the most innovative and powerful achievements of the Council. It is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed. It also provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations, as well as the challenges and constraints they are facing in doing the same.

What is elementary education?

Elementary education, also referred to as primary education, is the first stage in obtaining a formal education, beginning at about age 5 -7 and ending at about age 11 to 13. Elementary school is the most vital stage for every child, since they may evolve from a young child to a self-conscious person. An elementary education will always be an important threshold for all children around the world, no matter their financial or social stage. Teachers around the world consider elementary education the most important part of every person's educational life. These years determine a child's survival and thriving in life, and lay the foundations for her his learning and holistic development. It is during the early years that children develop the cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills that they need to succeed in life.

Elementary school is analogous to the first few steps a person takes, without which
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he/she will never be able to run since without a strong foundation. At the primary level, a child will be unable to excel at the later years of their education. It offers children a stable peer group to interact, play, and share with, whereas, adults who are associated with elementary education also play a key role in their development. It enables children to make friends who facilitate the acquisition and development of vocabulary as children attend preschool. When in school, they hone their listening skills and also acquire the concept of sharing and turn-taking in addition to boosting their self-esteem. In comparison to higher education, elementary education tends to be of a greater significance since it helps bring out the best in a child and is often the first milestone in their lives

Gender Discrimination

Of the children who lack primary education, females face more unique barriers. Gender discrimination leaves 15 million girls of primary school age without access to a safe education. These include social and religious practices, child marriage and youth pregnancies, and expectations related to domestic labour.

Lesser developed nations see the largest gender gap in primary education. Nearly half of the 15 million girls without primary education are situated in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, ensuring universal education will help end poverty and raise living standards. Higher educated women marry later, have fewer children, and are more inclined to have meaningful jobs outside domestic labour. In addition, educated people are more likely to understand their rights and facilitate safe education for the next generation as well,

slowly ending a cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

The right to education has been recognized as a human right in a number of international conventions, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which recognizes the right to free, compulsory primary education for all, an obligation to develop secondary education accessible to all, in particular by the progressive introduction of free secondary education, as well as an obligation to develop equitable access to higher education, ideally by the progressive introduction of free higher education.

Quality of education

Goal 4 in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals outlines one of the UN's main steps to ensuring universal, quality education.

Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

Education is instrumental in addressing sustainable human development, peace and security, universal values, informed decision-making, and the quality of life and individual, family, societal, and global levels. At elementary school, the quality of education affects both children's social behaviour and intellectual development. A conventional definition incorporates proficiency, numeracy and fundamental abilities, and is directly linked with teachers, content, methodologies, curriculum, examination systems, policy,

planning, and management and administration apart from basic scholastics. Not only is it useful in ensuring high literacy rates, but the quality of primary education also determines the level of intellectual capacity when they are adults. A higher quality of education is especially beneficial to those with special needs and for those who come from households that are not conducive to learning. It edifies as well as engages natives and empowers them to add to the greatest degree conceivable to the social and financial improvement of their networks. One approach to deliver quality education is to consider the sources of information, processes, environments and outputs that surround and foster, or hamper, learning. It can be assessed at two levels: at the level of the learner in his /her environment and the to which the system supports the experience. Quality can be ensured by regular school inspections, national education standards, rigorous teacher training, etc.

Education of Minorities

While education is described as a basic right for all people, minorities of a society often lack access to safe educational environments. Even in cases where minorities have access to primary education, conditions like long travel distances, language barriers, education systems that conflict with their practices and beliefs, and physical restrictions due to the lack of access to education prevent and discourage young students of minority groups from continuing their education. Often, curriculums

misrepresent minority groups and can leave out information about their history, race, or language, failing to protect their identity. In addition, minority groups also lack the laws to protect their rights, property, etc. and thus, the education of minorities is often overlooked.

Child Labour

Child labour is a huge factor in reducing the rate of education in certain countries. It leads to many children pulling out of school for financial needs. This does not help them pull out of the poverty line. To stop this, the United Nations International Labour Organization (UNILO) passed a bill known as the Minimum Age Convention in 1973. The age set by this Convention is 15, There are three main international conventions that govern policies on child labour. The United Nations Convention Child on the Rights of the Child, the International Labour Organization Convention number 138 (concerning minimum age for employment), and UNILO Convention number 182 (concerning prohibition and action of eliminating the worst forms of child labour). However, many countries have failed to follow. According to UNICEF, Sub-Saharan Africa contains the largest population of child labourers; 29 per cent of children aged 5-14 years. In the world's poorest countries, one in four children are child labourers. This is likely because of the lack of importance given to human rights and the need for employment. Single parents, poor families, and bad living conditions force children to drop education and turn to labour.

Under-developed nations with larger problems like civil wars, crumbling economies, or extreme poverty may disregard education or not enforce the protection of children from poor labour practices. Bangladesh, Eritrea, and Nigeria are amongst the highest number of child labourers.

Conflict impacting education

Conflict has impacted the lives of children worldwide. Not only does it deter their education process but it impacts their entire lifestyle. Organizations such as UNICEF have helped in protecting children, it is not enough. Only two per cent of humanitarian aid after a crisis is provided for education. This has left generations of children behind the world average for education. Across several of the world's poorest countries, armed conflict continues to destroy not just school infrastructure, but also the hopes and ambitions of a whole generation of children. The trends for most countries demonstrate that cohorts that were of school-going age during a time of conflict have lower educational attainment that persists over time, indicating that these children generally do not resume their education after a conflict. These lost years of schooling reflect the legacy of the conflict and its repercussions. Conflict has a major impact on education such as increased absenteeism, damage to infrastructure, increase in child involvement in the military, workforce or marriage to name a few. Of the 28.5 million

primary school-age children out of school in conflict-affected countries, 12.6 million live in sub-Saharan Africa, 5.3 million live in South and West Asia, and 4 million live in the Arab States. Initiatives such as the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack have emerged. By maintaining a commitment to education during conflict we can not only protect from physical, social and psychosocial damage but also provide the means by which societies can recover. Agencies such as UNHCR Education Strategy have included an explicit commitment to use conflict analysis as part of its response to displacement situations and working with communities recovering from conflict.

Human Rights and the HRC

UNHRC is committed to extending primary and secondary education opportunities to all children and youth. In an effort to address barriers to education, it has worked to improve access and retention of children in primary school through cash grants and vouchers, capacity building for teachers, expansion of safe learning spaces and strengthening partnerships with key education partners.

As defined by General Comment No. 13 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the States which are

party to it), "education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights." According to the Committee, "education in all its forms and at all levels shall exhibit the following interrelated and essential features:"

1. Availability
   a. functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity
2. Accessibility
   a. Non-Discrimination
      i. Education must be accessible to all without discrimnation on any of the prohibited grounds.
   b. Physical Accessibility
      i. Education has to be within safe physical reach.
   c. Economic Accessibility
      i. Education must be affordable to all.
3. Acceptability
   a. Curricula and teaching methods have to be relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality.
4. Adaptability
   a. Education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students

within their diverse social and cultural settings.

Suggestions for Further Research

Delegates are suggested to consider the following questions while doing further research:

1. What is Convention 138 of the UN International Labour Organization and what has it achieved?
2. What has your country done to ensure quality primary education?
3. Are there any prominent barriers to education in your country? How are they overcome?
4. What is the literacy rate in your country?
5. What is the role of the United Nations human rights council in securing the right to education?
6. What other actions has the United Nations taken to ensure primary education (see sustainable development goals)?

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. Should there be a standard set for the quality of elementary education?
2. How can quality elementary education take place for children in conflict zones?
3. How do countries reduce racial divides in education?
4. How do countries ensure that all young women are guaranteed primary education?
5. Should there be a right to elementary education?
6. Should the Minimum Age Convention be modified and enforced in a greater manner?
7. How do we ensure that children in conflict zones get quality education?

Position Papers

A position paper is a compilation of your research. Writing a position paper is an excellent way to streamline your understanding of a given topic and pinpoint the main ideas that you want to bring up in committee. A position paper is usually divided into 4 sections:

I. General Information

1st Paragraph – Opening Statement (3 – 4 sentences)

Why is this topic important for the committee to address?

Why does your country care about this topic?

What is your country's policy on this topic?

II. Specifics

2nd Paragraph – National Actions (3 – 5 sentences)

Is the topic an issue in your country?

What actions has your country taken to improve or address the issue on a national level?

3rd Paragraph – International Actions (3 – 5 sentences)

How has your country improved or addressed the issues on an international level? What actions has your country taken on the issues on an international level?

What conventions, treaties and resolutions has your country supported on this issue?

What organizations is your country a member of that addresses this issue?

Can you reference government officials on this issue?

4th Paragraph – Recommendations for Action (4 – 6 sentences)

What role would your country like to see the international community take to address the problem?

What are your country's recommendations to the committee on how to best resolve the issue?

Tips

Research, Research, Research

DO NOT restate information found in the topic guide.

DO NOT include information about your country that is not related to the issue.

DO NOT just list facts.

Give recommendations on issue specifics.

The final, and the most substantial section of your position paper should create the foundation for your participation in the committee. It should first detail your nation's general policy on the key points of contention presented in this background guide. Then, the most important part of your position paper is your presentation or original proposals for how to solve the issues at hand. These should be presented as specific solutions geared towards the nuances of the topic of the position paper. **Note that the position paper should not be more than 1 page long. The formatting should be as follows:**

Font-Times New Roman

Font size- 12.

An important point to remember is that a position paper is a formal document and not your own personal opinion.

Bibliography & Links for Further Research

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