

COMMISSION GUIDE

UNICEF



CCB MUN XVIII

United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

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1. Presidents' Letter

Dear delegates,

We welcome each one of you to this year's CCB Model of United Nations; it is an honour for us to be the presidents of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, and to have you as the delegates of this commission. This model is an excellent opportunity for you to learn about global issues, improve your research and debate skills, and most importantly, it is a way to create a bigger connection between yourselves and the rest of the world.

As presidents, we expect the biggest effort from each of you. You will use your research, debate and social skills to put yourselves in the role of a country's representative. Throughout the model, you will have to debate with other delegates, always defending what your country stands for, in order to find adequate solutions to the problems that are affecting children.

We hope that all of you feel prepared, confident and eager to use all of your knowledge and skills during this model. We would like to congratulate you in advance, for choosing this commission, and to thank you for trusting us to be your presidents. This is a first-time experience for both of us, and as much as we are nervous, we are also excited to preside over this commission with our best attitude.

We are fully aware of the challenges that being a delegate brings to every student, especially taking into account that this may be the first virtual model for many of you. Therefore, you must know that we will be there for you whenever you need help or advice. We hope that you can find interest in the topics and truly enjoy the model, as it is a unique and enriching experience. We are looking forward to meeting all of you!

Best regards,

Emilia and Laura.

UNICEF Chair

2. Commission Information

i. History

After the Second World War, millions of children in Europe lived without shelter, clothing or food due to the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict. On the 11th of December of 1946, the UN General Assembly founded the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to help the vulnerable children of the continent. This program vowed to aid children without discrimination. The work of UNICEF has been guided by principles of equity since the very beginning.

In the 1950's, UNICEF shifted its efforts to the general improvement of children's welfare around the world, particularly in developing countries. It changed its name to the United Nations Children's Fund in 1953. UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace on the 26th of October, 1965 because of its efforts towards creating a peace among nations. In 1989, world leaders came together to establish the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The idea of this convention was groundbreaking, as it was one of the first treaties to address the special rights and needs of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, with 196 countries becoming State Parties to it.

UNICEF works in many areas, such as adolescent development, education, sanitation and hygiene, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and child protection. With the help of nations, other committees and organizations, UNICEF builds a better world for children.

ii. Structure

Each one of the 190 countries that receive help from UNICEF have an office that carries out a five-year program that focuses on improving the quality of life of children according to each country's situation.

UNICEF's policies are shaped, managed and administered in New York, United States. In Copenhagen, Denmark, the Supply Division provides essential products and services to children in need. The Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest, Hungary administers the UNICEF staff. The Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Japan and Brussels are in charge of fund-raising and communication with leaders.

The governing body of UNICEF is called the Executive Board, which is made up of 36 government representatives. The members of this group are chosen by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for three-year terms and they are in charge of establishing policies and approving programs.

The 33 National Committees work as the public faces of UNICEF, as they promote the rights of children in difficult situations. The National Committees raise about one-third

of UNICEF's annual income and they also partner up with different organizations and corporations to address issues on children's rights.

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3. Topic 1: *Rising rates of malnutrition in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa in children below 5 years of age*

i. History/Context

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person’s intake of energy and/or nutrients.” Although adults with malnutrition represent a serious problem, children tend to be the most prejudiced, as proper nutrition is vital to ensure the healthy growth and development of a child. A balanced alimentation in the first five years of life contributes to proper organ formation and function, a strong immune system, and neurological and cognitive development. Children who experience malnutrition over a long period of time are likely to be chronically underweight, resulting in devastating long term consequences.

There are three types of malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient-related malnutrition and obesity. These have long lasting impacts on children and are caused by many economic and social issues. According to WHO (2020), 45% of deaths among children under 5 are caused by undernutrition, whilst the rates of children who are overweight or who suffer from obesity are increasing rapidly. Data shows that children in developing countries are most at risk of being undernourished, while children in developed countries are most likely to be obese or overweight. Malnutrition has developmental, economic, social, and medical impacts that are serious and lasting.

Underweight, wasting and stunting

In children, wasting is the life-threatening result of deficient nutrition. The term refers to a child who has a low weight for his or her height. It is the result of recent and rapid weight loss or the failure to gain weight. It can happen when a child is not receiving enough food or when suffering from a disease that causes weight loss such as diarrhea. Children who suffer this type of malnutrition “are susceptible to long term developmental delays, and face an increased risk of death, particularly when wasting is severe.” (UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, 2020) However, treatment is possible for a child who is moderately or severely wasted.

The term *stunting* refers to a child whose height is low for his or her age; it is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition (WHO, 2020). According to the World Health Organization, this form of malnutrition can be associated with “poor socioeconomic conditions, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness, and/or inappropriate infant and young child feeding and care in early life.” These children can suffer severe irreversible and cognitive damage. They may never reach their full possible height, and their cognitive potential may not develop fully. Consequently, these children will most likely present learning difficulties at school, earn less when adults, and have a low

participation in their community. The effects of stunting in children can last a lifetime, and even transfer to the following generations.

Overweight and Obesity

Being overweight or obese is when a child's weight is too high for his or her height. These conditions result from an imbalance between the energy consumed and the energy expended. The energy intake of obese and overweight children exceeds the energy they require. This makes these children more vulnerable to diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). According to WHO, unhealthy diets and poor nutrition are among the top risk factors for NCDs. These types of disease include cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and strokes, certain cancers and diabetes.

To determine whether a child is overweight or obese, it is crucial to measure his or her Body Mass Index (BMI). This index is calculated by dividing the child's weight by the square of height in metres. A child's weight status is determined using age-and-sex-specific percentile for BMI. The reason for this is that a child's body composition varies according to age and gender. The CDC states that a child is overweight when his or her BMI ranges somewhere between the 85th to just under the 95th percentile. A child is considered obese when his or her BMI corresponds to the 95th percentile or greater.

*A child can suffer from more than one form of malnutrition. He or she can be both stunted and overweight or stunted and wasted.

The importance of child nutrition for socio-economic development

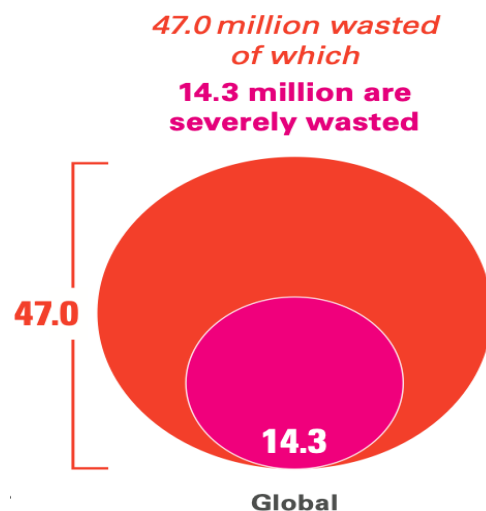
Nutrition has been lately recognized as a determining factor for social and economic development. According to a study conducted by UNICEF, WHO, and The World Bank (2012) one important factor of economic growth and human development is the nourishment of a population. This aspect determines whether individuals can learn new skills, think critically, and contribute positively to their communities. Therefore, "Child malnutrition impacts cognitive function and contributes to poverty through impeding individuals' ability to lead productive lives."

ii. Current Situation

According to the 2020 Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition published by UNICEF, WHO and The World Bank, "Malnutrition rates remain alarming. Stunting is declining too slowly while wasting still impacts the lives of far too many young children." These organizations believe that we are still far away from a world without child malnutrition. Data published earlier this year, which includes indicators for wasting, stunting, and overweight among children under 5 years of age, reveal insufficient progress to reach the to achieve the World Health Assembly targets set for 2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030.

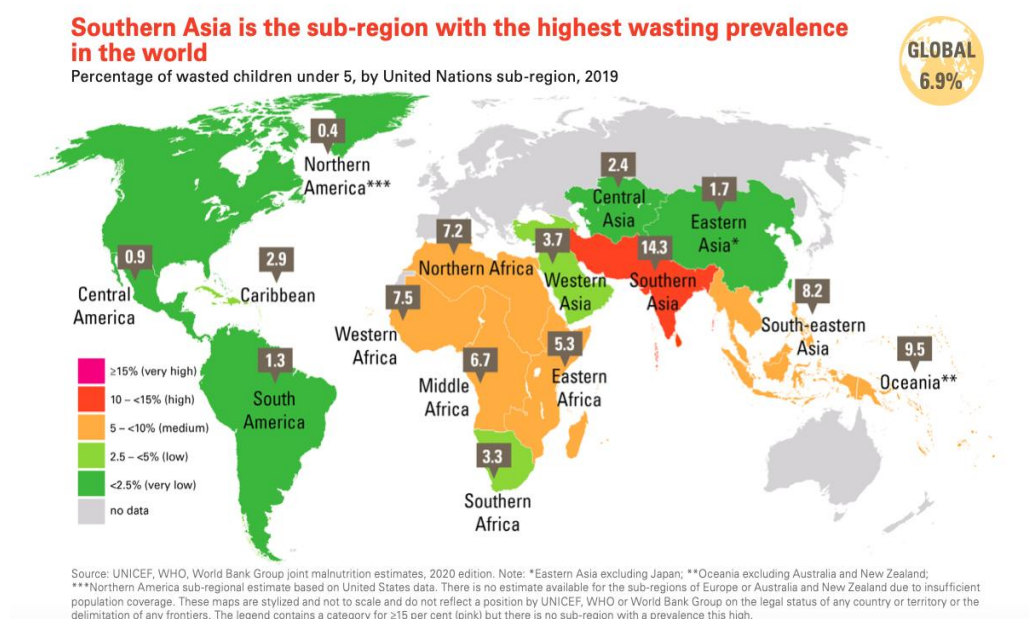
Wasting

The 2020 Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition published by UNICEF, WHO and The World Bank, show that 47 million children under 5 years of age are wasted, of whom 14.3 million are severely wasted. These studies also show that Asia is the region with most wasted children, with 32.6 million wasted and 10.5 million severely wasted. This means that in Asia, as well as in Oceania, one out of ten children under 5 are wasted.



Moreover, more than half of all wasted children in the world are from Southern Asia. Africa is second with 12.7 million wasted children and 3.5 million severely wasted. This makes Africa the continent with more than one quarter of all wasted children under 5. The publication also highlights that 75% of all wasted children live in lower-middle-income countries.

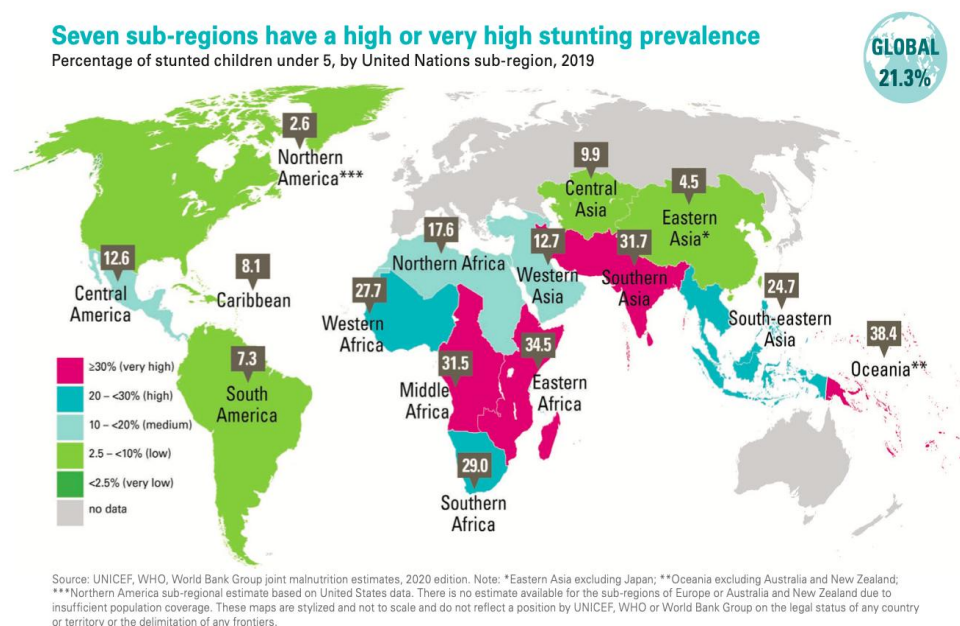
(Image retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Joint-malnutrition-estimates-2020.pdf>)



(Image retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Joint-malnutrition-estimates-2020.pdf>)

Stunting

The same publication reveals that seven sub regions have a high or very high stunting prevalence. Oceania (38.4%), Eastern Africa (34.5%), Southern Asia (31.7%), and Middle Africa (31.5%) are the regions with the highest rates of stunting worldwide. More than half (54%) of stunted children under the age of 5 lived in Asia, and 40% in Africa. Additionally, 64% of all stunted children live in lower-middle- income countries. Currently, 144 million children under the age of 5 are stunting, this means a decrease of 11.1% since 2000, when almost 200 million children were stunting. Although the prevalence of this form of malnutrition is decreasing, this narrowing will not be sufficient to accomplish the goals for 2025 and 2030.



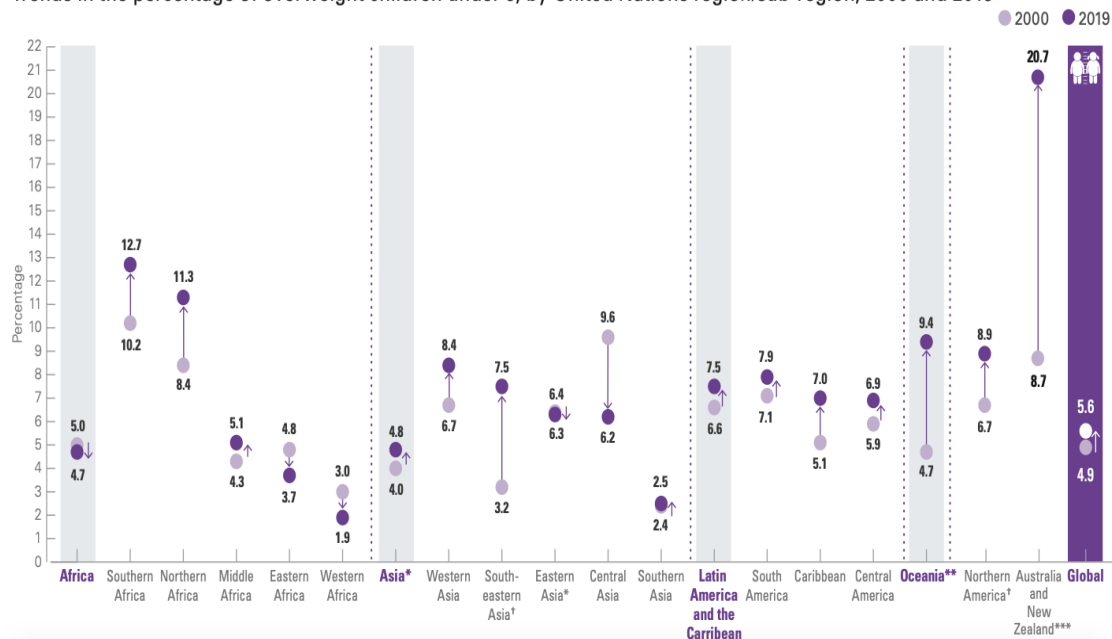
(Image retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Joint-malnutrition-estimates-2020.pdf>)

Obesity

According to WHO, childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. The prevalence of this form of malnutrition has increased globally at alarming rates in the last decades. Data shows that there has been no progress made for the decrease of the overweight rate in nearly 20 years as seen in the graph below. The 2020 Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition published by UNICEF, WHO and The World Bank, show that 41% of all overweight children under 10 live in upper-middle-income countries. Australia and New Zealand are the regions with the highest prevalence with 20.7%, followed by Northern and Southern Africa with 11.3% and 12.7% respectively.

There has been no progress to stem the rate of overweight in nearly 20 years

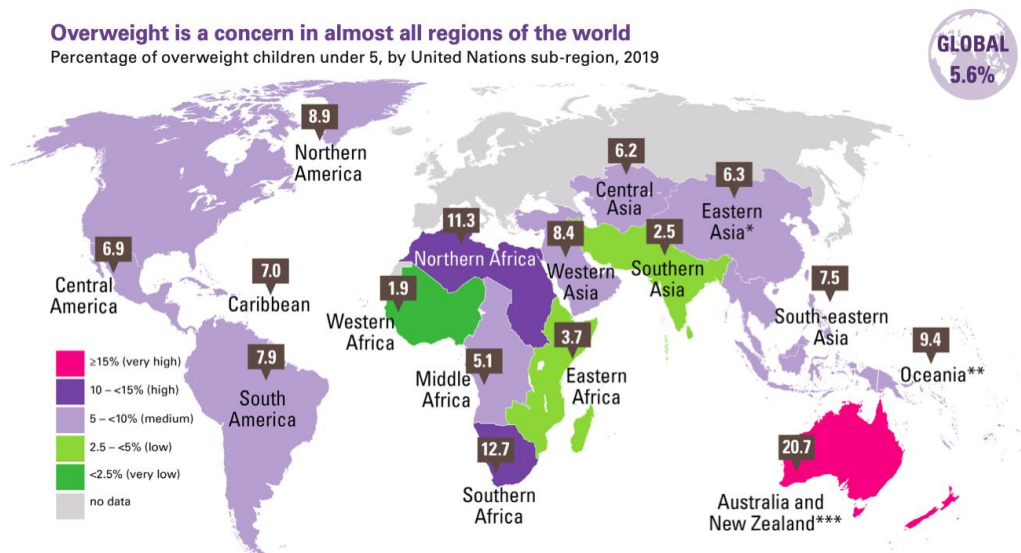
Trends in the percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations region/sub-region, 2000 and 2019



(Image retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Joint-malnutrition-estimates-2020.pdf>)

Overweight is a concern in almost all regions of the world

Percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2019



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: *Eastern Asia excluding Japan; **Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; ***The Australia and New Zealand sub-regional estimate is based only on Australia data. There is no estimate available for the sub-region of Europe due to insufficient population coverage. These maps are stylized and not to scale and do not reflect a position by UNICEF, WHO or World Bank Group on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

(Image retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Joint-malnutrition-estimates-2020.pdf>)

Global targets 2025

In 2012, the World Health Assembly Resolution 65.6 called for a “*Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition*”. This plan specified 6 targets; achieve a 40% reduction in the number of children under-5 who are stunted,

achieve a 50% reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age; achieve a 30% reduction in low birth weight; ensure that there is no increase in childhood overweight; increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months up to at least 50%; reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%.

Up to date, the world is definitely off track to meet any of the mentioned goals. For the first target, the aim was to reduce the number of stunted to 100 million, however, as mentioned previously, this number is currently 144 million. Additionally, the rate of overweight prevalence in children under 5 continues to increase worldwide. Reducing and maintaining childhood wasting under 5% also seems to be a very unrealistic goal, when taking into account the current estimates that show an estimate of 6.9%.

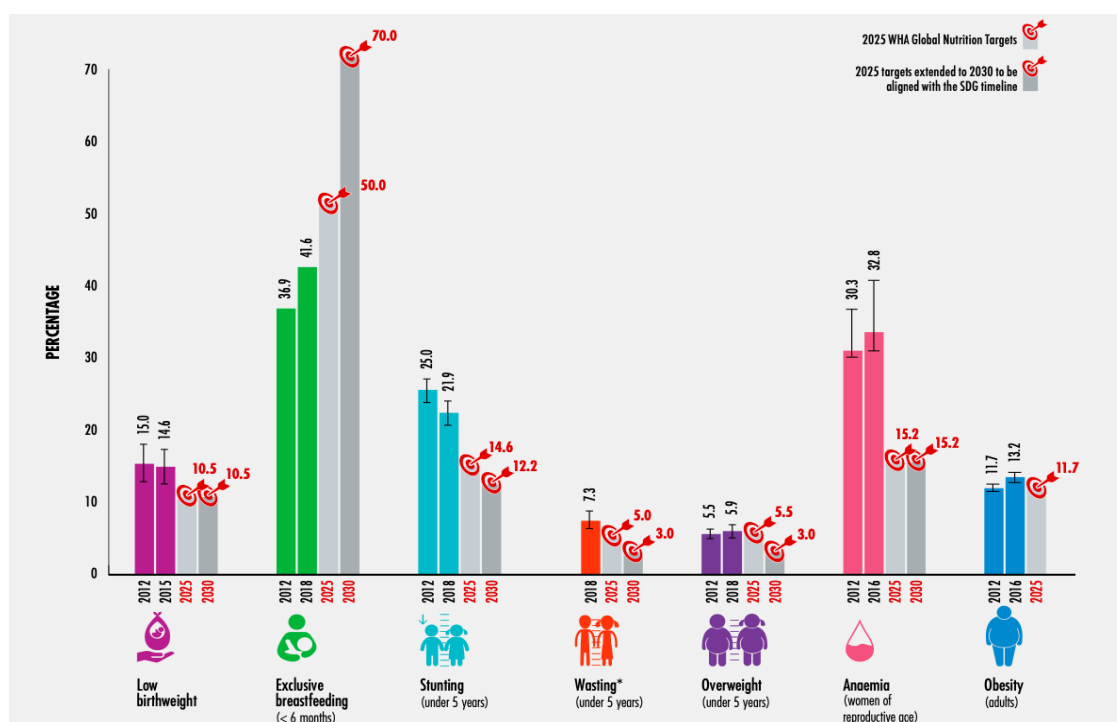
In an attempt to accomplish these goals by 2025, WHO has listed the foundational policy actions that should be implemented. These include: the correct assessment of the resources available; setting targets at each country's level; ensuring that nutrition is included in development programs; creating partnerships between state and non-state actors; and the development and implementation of suitable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to improve the collection and analysis of the data regarding these issues.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals were an initiative of the United Nations to transform our world. The seventeen goals were chosen by all nations as a call for action to promote prosperity while taking care of our planet. The first targets include no poverty, zero hunger, and good health and wellbeing. Although zero hunger is at first sight the goal in which infant malnutrition plays an important role, the resolution of this issue is actually correlated with many of the goals, including good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth amongst others.

The most relevant targets for infant malnutrition from goal number 2 include; “By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular people with low income resources and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.” and “By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.” (UN, n.d).

If a faster decrease in global prevalence of stunting, wasting and overweight does not happen in the next few years, neither the Global Targets of 2025 nor the SDGs will be accomplished by their corresponding times. The following graph shows the prevalence of stunting, wasting and overweight on children under 5 in 2019, along with the aimed prevalence for each for 2025 and 2030.



(Image retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf#page=53>)

iii. Key points of the debate

- Consequences of malnutrition in a child's early life.
- Possible strategies to decrease malnutrition in children under the age of 5 in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- Current programs to address this issue; their vulnerabilities and possible improvements.
- Proper nutrition for children below 5 years of age as a basic pillar for social and economic development.
- The importance of this issue for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
- Africa and Asia bearing the greatest share of all forms of malnutrition in children under 5 years of age.
- Possible international action to speed up the eradication of child malnutrition in children below 5 years of age.

iv. Participating Organisms

- United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- The World Bank
- Human Rights Watch
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)

v. Guiding Questions

1. Does your country suffer from any type of malnutrition in children under 5 years of age? If so, which type of malnutrition is most prevalent and why is this?
2. What is your government doing to combat malnutrition in the under-5's in your country?
3. How is your country addressing child malnutrition on a global scale, if at all?
4. Does your country belong to an existing international program to fight child malnutrition? If so, which?
5. What needs to be done on a global scale in order to attain the 2025 sustainable goals with regard to child malnutrition?

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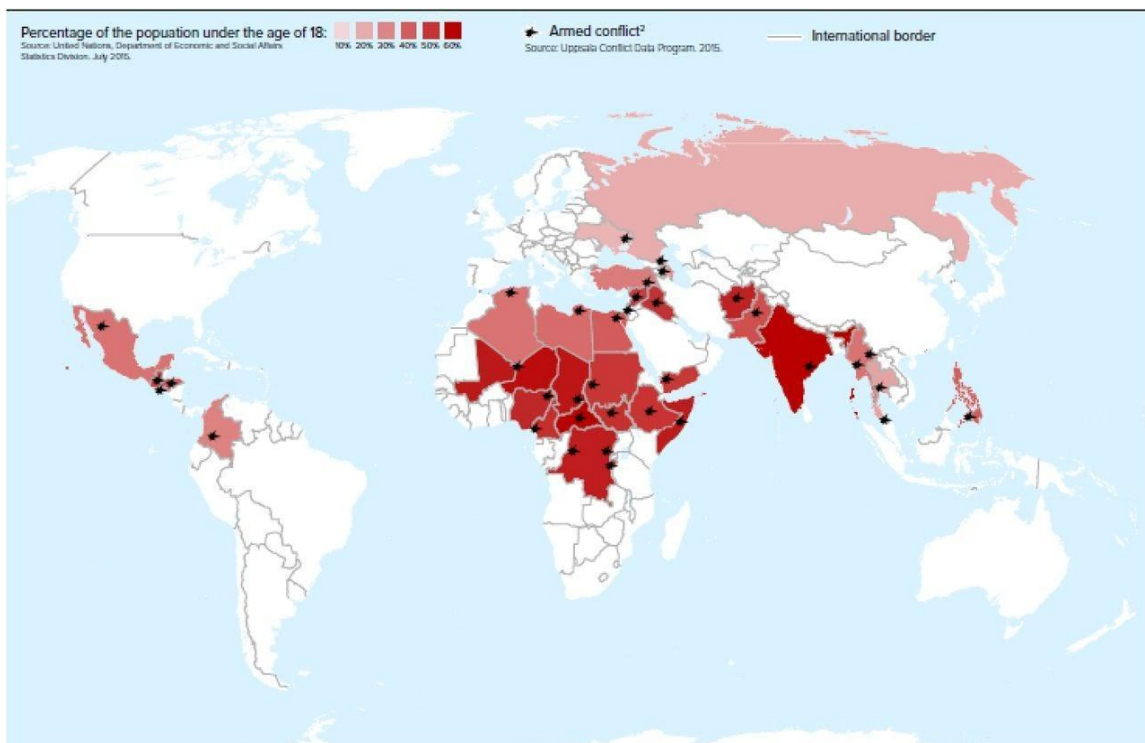
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4. Topic 2: *Recruitment of child soldiers in conflict-ridden countries*

i. History/Context

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines child soldiers as people under the age of 18 who are associated with military organizations. In recent years, about 250,000 to 300,000 children under the age of 16 have fought in wars in 25 countries. In fact, according to UNICEF (2006), 200,000 children fought in wars in 1988 alone. But this problem isn't new at all. During the Second World War, as many as 8.8 million young boys in Nazi Germany formed part of the Hitler Youth group and were trained to fight. The ages of these boys varied from 14 to 17, and they had to defend their cities against the British air raids. In the 1800s, boys who lived in the Zulu Kingdom in southern Africa had to serve in the military. A 13-year-old boy called Willie Johnston was awarded the Medal of Honour during the American Civil War, as he would use his drums to command orders (cease fire, retreat, etc) to those in combat. During the Middle Ages, children under 18 took part in conflict; Joan of Arc was only 17 years old when she fought in the Hundred Years War and Edward, Prince of Wales, was only 16 when he fought in the Battle of Crecy in that same war.



(Image retrieved from: <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/6/e20182586>)

The rise of armed groups such as the Islamic State during the 20th and 21st centuries has increased the involvement of children in belligerent groups. Conflict in Latin American countries such as Colombia also led to the recruitment of children to armed guerrilla groups such as the ELN and FARC. Likewise, conflicts in countries such as South

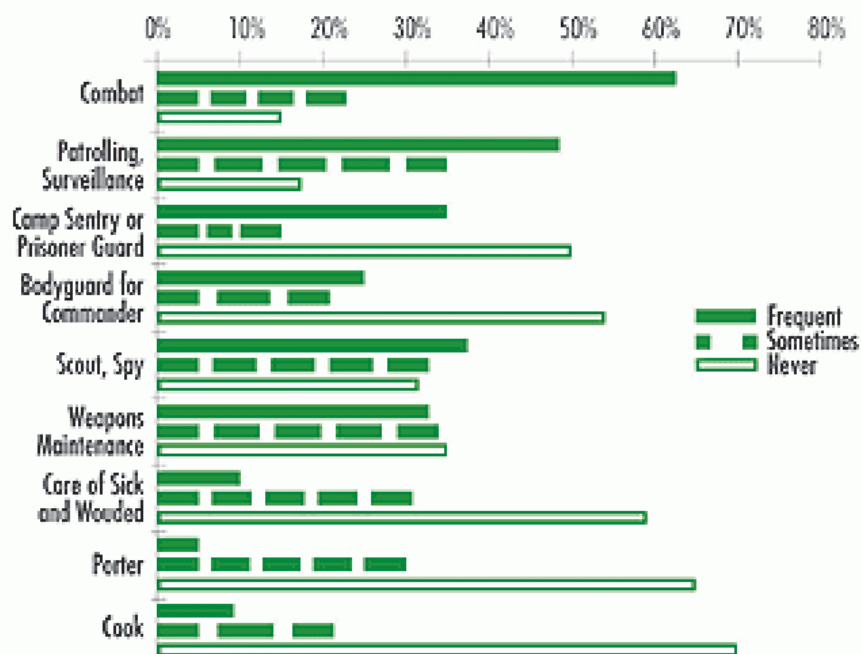
Sudan or the Democratic Republic of Congo have increased the number of child soldiers in Africa to about 120,000 according to Human Rights Watch (2004).

Children in countries that are going through armed conflict are very likely to end up directly involved with it, as they are unprotected and their rights are not taken into consideration. The figure above shows the percentage of the population under the age of 18 in countries affected by conflict. Various countries, such as the Central African Republic and India, have populations where the percentage of people under the age of 18 is 60%; this means that a great number of children are exposed to recruitment.

Current laws and protocols regarding child soldiers

In 1977, the First Protocol of the Geneva Conventions on International Humanitarian Law prohibited children under 15 from participating in hostilities. However, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 2002 raised the age to 18. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court states that the use of children in armed conflict is a *“war crime and a crime against humanity”*, and the International Labor Organization’s Convention No. 182 classifies child soldiering as child labour. It’s important to note that, as many of the countries in which child soldiers are used are in difficult situations of conflict, laws are not strongly enforced, and this leaves children unprotected.

Sample Child Soldier Tasks and Duties



(Image retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2016/06/singer20051215.>)

The role of children in armed organizations

Children often take different roles within armed organizations. According to UNICEF (2015), about 40% of child soldiers are girls, who are kidnapped and forced to “marry” older men that work in those organizations. In current years, there has been a rise in the number of children used as suicide bombers. According to an annual report done by Child Soldiers International (2017), 203 children were used as suicide bombers by the armed organization Boko Haram in 2017. Other roles children take within armed groups are as messengers, guards, cooks, spies or human shields. The chart above by P.W Singer from the book *Children at War* (2006), shows the tasks and duties of child soldiers of guerrilla groups in South America; 60% of the child soldiers do participate in conflict and only 10% work as cooks. This chart concludes that, at least in South America, children are most likely to participate in conflict, rather than working in other tasks.

Psychological consequences of child soldiering

The involvement of children in conflict is a violation of their human rights. No child should be in such a violent and cruel environment, as it causes them extreme physical and mental trauma. Children who have participated in situations of armed conflict have an 80% chance of developing post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a study by Elisabeth Schauer and Thomas Elbert about the psychological impact of child soldiering (2010).

Theresa S. Betancourt, Ivelina Borisova, et. al (2012) wrote a research paper about the psychosocial adjustment and mental health in former child soldiers. Groups of former child soldiers in different countries were studied to see the psychological effects of child soldiering. In Cote d'Ivoire, 53% had PTSD, 20% had depression, 13% had psychosis and 12% had anxiety, whilst in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo 35% had PTSD. This study also concluded that those children who were abducted and forced to become child soldiers had higher levels of depression and anxiety than those who voluntarily joined.

Physical consequences of child soldiering

In the same study, the authors discovered that 70% of child soldiers were beaten by their superiors in criminal armed groups, and that 44% of female child soldiers in Sierra Leone were sexually abused. This contributes to the increment in HIV/AIDS or accidental pregnancies in female child soldiers, as they are less likely to seek medical attention, which puts them at higher risk. A study on the effects of armed conflict on children by Ayesha Kadir, Sherry Shenoda, et. al (2018), shows that the most common forms of trauma in child soldiers are blast injuries caused by explosions, resulting in burns or severe head and neck injuries, and bullet injuries. Children are at higher risk of chemical weapons than adults, because of their small mass, high respiratory rates and limited cardiovascular stress response. Child soldiers are also exposed to illness, due to the lack

of food, safe water and sanitation they might be forced to endure. Child soldiers have high mortality rates due to the severity of their injuries and lack of proper healthcare.

Causes of child soldiering

Child soldiers can be either forcibly recruited, or they can join voluntarily. Joining the army or belligerent groups brings safety and essentials such as food to children from poor backgrounds or difficult home lives. Children are recruited because they are easier to manipulate due to their lack of education and of understanding of violence and danger, and because they do not demand payment. Children are taught how to become effective fighters, and they have advantages because of their size and strength. They can be taught how to use assault rifles, which are cheap and widely available. According to National Geographic (2019), some children join these groups to fight for their beliefs, and the groups teach them ideas of hate; for example, the LIDER camp in Kiev, Ukraine, teaches children to fight against Russia to protect their homeland.

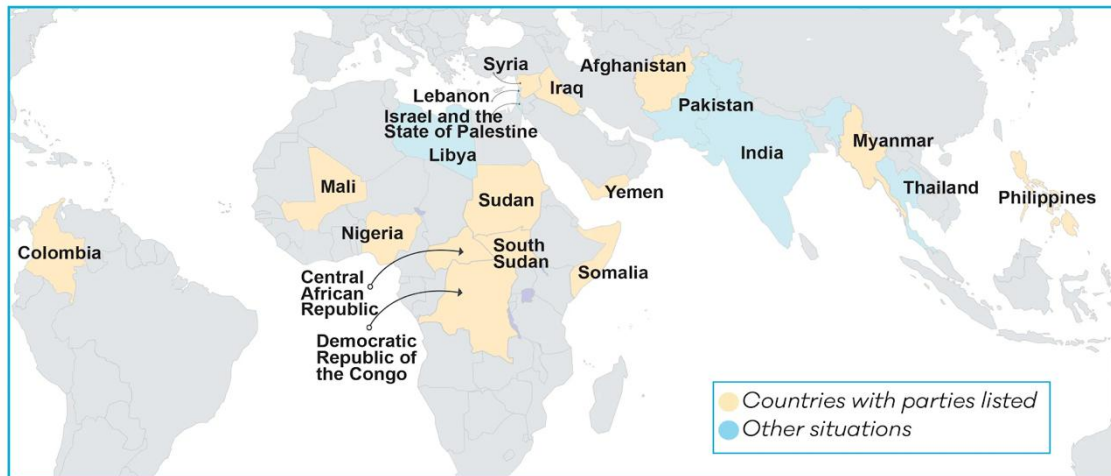
Reintegration of former child soldiers

Since 1998, more than 100,000 children in over 15 countries have been released from armed forces and reintegrated into their communities according to UNICEF (2011). Reintegrating child soldiers into their communities is vital for the improvement of their health, and according to UNICEF (2018), the main principles of reintegration are the following:

- Every step of the reintegration process that directly affects the child must be done according to their best interest.
- Children associated with armed groups should always be considered victims first, even if they are accused of crimes.
- Former child soldiers have the right to life, survival and development. They have the right to achieve physical, spiritual, moral and social integrity.
- States must ensure that all children formerly associated with armed conflict must have the same rights as all other children.

In order to effectively reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities, they must have psychosocial support to ensure that they will be able to go back to their normal lives. Former child soldiers must be given education or jobs, so they can reconcile themselves with their communities and get used to living as civilians. A key step in reintegration is adapting support to the needs of each child, according to the situation they went through, or their gender. For example, adapting the psychosocial help to girls that endured sexual violence.

ii. Current Situation



(Image retrieved from: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>)

Human Rights Watch (2004) has listed 14 countries where children are recruited as soldiers. These countries are: Afghanistan, Burma, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Iraq, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Thailand and Yemen. Since 2012, the use of children in armed conflict around the world has risen approximately 159% according to the UN annual reports on Children and Armed Conflict (2013); this is due to conflicts currently taking place in the Middle East, Africa, South America and other areas of the world.

Child soldiers in ISIS

The growth of belligerent groups such as ISIS has led to the recruitment of children in Iraq, Syria and other Muslim territories. These children, between the ages of 8 and 15, are known as “Cubs of the Caliphate”; the Caliphate is the political and religious state of the Muslim community. These children are recruited due to the unsafe environment in which they live, as ISIS offers them “protection” and “education”. According to a study done by Noman Benotman and Nikita Malik about the children of the Islamic State (2016), child soldiers take on different roles in the conflict in Syria. These roles are the following:

- Children are manipulated into sharing information about people they know who do not support the caliphate. They are also trained to spy on the enemy.
- They are used as “preachers” to spread the message of the caliphate.
- Children are taught military skills, such as manufacturing explosives or sniping.
- They are used as executioners, as they are taught to hurt the enemy, and that killing the enemy is an honour.
- Children are also used as suicide bombers. In fact, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights stated that in 2015, 19 child soldiers for ISIS were suicide bombers. Children are taught that dying for the caliphate is an honour, so they do not fear becoming suicide bombers.

Female child soldiers are sexually assaulted and forced to marry older soldiers, and they are taught that they need to bring male children into the world. Child soldiers in ISIS are manipulated and taught extreme ideas of religion and nationalism; they are taught to hate and to harm the enemy.

Child soldiers in South American guerrilla groups

In Central and South America, the ongoing issues with drugs or belligerent groups has led to an increase in the recruitment of child soldiers. For example, in Colombia, children are recruited by left-wing extremist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), or by right-wing paramilitary groups, like the United Self-Defence Forces (AUC). Children in towns under paramilitary or guerrilla group rule are exposed to recruitment, due to their lack of monetary resources and education, and some join these groups to escape difficult situations. As of 2006, 30% of some FARC units were made up of minors, according to P.W Singer in the book *Children at War* (2006). In fact, according to Human Rights Watch (2005), 11,000 children had been recruited as child soldiers between 1972 and 2004 by the FARC alone. The peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the FARC, from 2012 to 2016, established releasing and reintegrating child soldiers as one of the main goals.

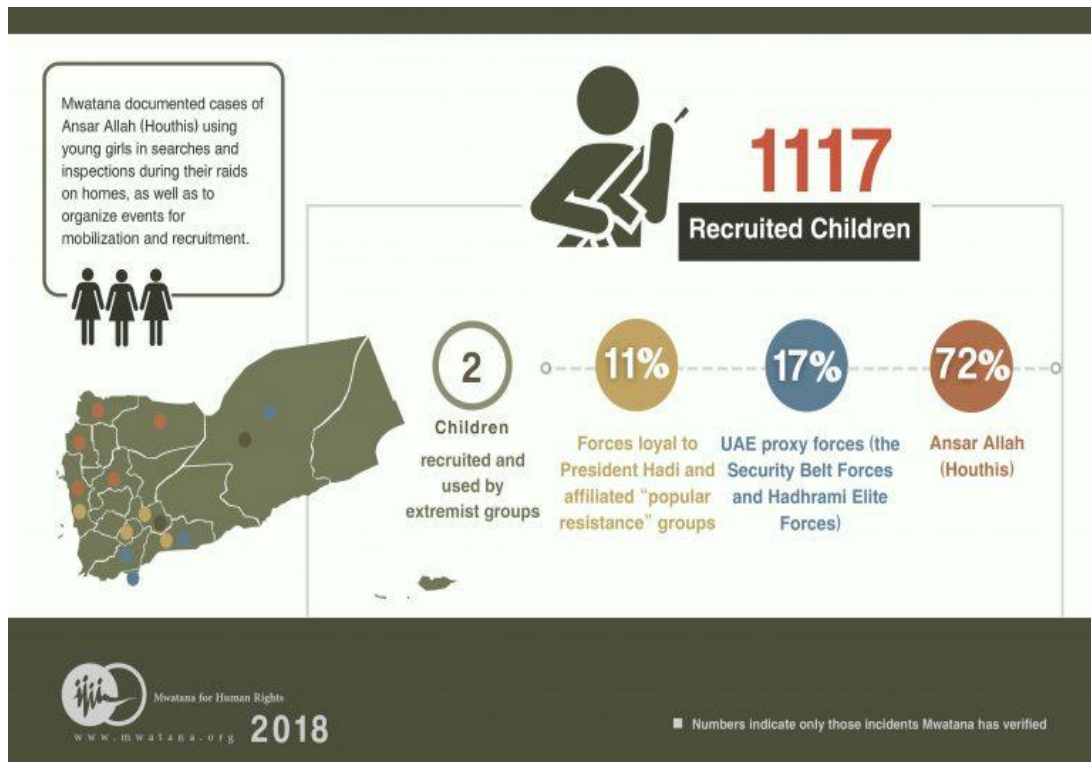
Child soldiers in Eastern Europe

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine against Russia since 2014 has led to the recruitment of child soldiers. In a summer camp located in Kiev called LIDER, children from 6 to 17 are trained to become soldiers. The children are taught how to fight, handle weapons, use gas masks, and to hate the ones who antagonize their country. Similarly, in Russia, children participate in the Yunarmia or Young Army, established by Russia's Defence Ministry. According to its official website, the group is conformed of 708,000 children, ranging from the ages of 8 to 18. The goal of the group is to teach children to defend and be loyal to the Motherland.

Child soldiers in Africa

According to the Child Soldiers International annual report of 2017, 14,000 children had been recruited by armed groups, such as Séléka and Anti-Balaka, since the start of conflict in the Central African Republic in 2012. In June of 2020, 855 children were released with the help of UNICEF, and another 963 children were in reintegration programs. However, many children in the Central African Republic, both former child soldiers and those still associated with armed groups are in danger, due to the poor funding of reintegration programs and violence of these armed groups. The conflict in South Sudan, that began in 2013, has led to the recruitment of 19,000 children to armed forces. 2,300 children have been either killed or injured, according to UNICEF (2014). In

2018, UNICEF and Child Soldiers International helped release 800 children from these groups.



(Image retrieved from: <https://mwatana.org/en/withering-life/part-two/section4/>)

Child soldiers in Yemen

According to the organization Mwatana for Human Rights, 1117 children were used by armed groups in 2018. 72% of these children were recruited by the Ansar Allah group, 17% were recruited by Emirate proxy forces, and groups loyal to President Hadi were responsible for 11% of the cases. The figure above illustrates these numbers. Other issues in Yemen, such as famine and lack of healthcare, combined with the threat of recruitment to violent armed groups, puts Yemeni children in great danger. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates formed a coalition to fight against the Houthis in 2015, however, they were accused of recruiting children in 2018.

Child soldiers in Southern Asia

Armed groups in Myanmar, such as many Burmese ethnic groups, or the Karen National Liberation Army, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) or the Shan State Army (SSA), have recruited child soldiers. In fact, a Human Rights Watch report in 2002 estimated that 70,000 children were involved with armed groups in Myanmar, making it one of the countries with the highest number of child soldiers. Many socio-economic and political issues in the country lead to children voluntarily joining armed groups. Some of these

issues are the large number of the population living below the poverty line (about 25.6%), and the lack of government-funded schools in rural areas. Similarly, the Asian Centre for Human Rights (2013) estimates that at least 3,000 Indian children were involved with armed groups in 2013. About 500 of these were in North East India, Jammu and Kashmir and the remaining 2,500 in Left Wing Extremism groups. In India, there are no rehabilitation and reintegration programs which cater for former child soldiers because the existing rehabilitation policies focus on adults, not children.

Child, Not Soldiers Campaign

The Child, Not Soldiers Campaign, launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF from 2014 to 2016, helped thousands of child soldiers around the world. Some of the changes done by this campaign are the following:

- The government of Afghanistan criminalized the recruitment of children.
- More than 800 children were released from armed forces in Myanmar.
- Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2015.
- Yemen and South Sudan signed Action Plans with the UN. However, the implementation of these has stalled due to conflict in both countries.

Many actions have been taken by governments and organizations, but the fact remains that thousands of children are robbed of their childhoods by armed groups. The future of the world will always be compromised as long as children are not protected from armed conflict. Every child has the right to be educated and loved, and not forced to fight for a country that doesn't fight for them.

iii. Key points of the debate

- International laws regarding child soldiers.
- Psychological and physical consequences of child soldiering.
- Reasons why children are recruited as child soldiers.
- The actions taken by governments and organizations.
- Organizations that use child soldiers.
- The reintegration of former child soldiers into society.

iv. Participating Organisms

- United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Security Council of the UN
- Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAAC)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

v. Guiding Questions

1. Are child soldiers used in your country? If so, how many are there, and who recruits them? If not, how does your country ensure that there are no child soldiers?
2. What actions has your country taken towards criminal armed groups that recruit children?
3. If your country has child soldiers, what are the reasons that they are recruited? What can be done to address this?
4. If your country has child soldiers, what actions has it taken to prevent recruitment? If not, how is your country helping to prevent recruitment of child soldiers in conflict-ridden countries?
5. Has your country reintegrated and helped former child soldiers? If so, how? If not, what could be done to help former child soldiers become reintegrated into society?

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