

NHSMUN

National High School Model United Nations

2023

UPDATE PAPER: UNICEF

Topic A: Housing Insecurity for Children

Topic B: Literacy Education for Children

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Dear Delegates,

Hello and welcome to NHSMUN 2023! I am Alina Castillo, and I am very excited to be the assistant director for UNICEF Session I. Along with Maria Jose Martinez, we created an update paper to help guide your research toward more recent situations and to add to the incredible background guide the directors worked on.

This is my first year participating in NHSMUN as a staff member or as a delegate, and I am extremely excited about it. I have participated in Model UN since I was in 7th grade, and it has been one of the best experiences of my life. Through the conferences I attended, I was able to gain confidence and skills while doing something I grew to truly enjoy. I have learned a lot, been able to meet incredible people, and even visited new countries. The staff has worked extremely hard to make this a great experience and ensure you can both enjoy and learn from NHSMUN.

I am a freshman at the University of Costa Rica, which is where I am from. I am studying law, which is something I have been interested in for years now. This interest partly started by participating in Model UN. My hobbies include listening to any kind of music, binge-watching series on Netflix, and playing with my dog, even though he mostly just sleeps. I also spend a lot of time practicing sports. Right now, I am swimming and competing in a Track and Field team on a national level. Also, I like to spend time with my family and friends, especially if it involves going out to eat.

UNICEF's topics are both extremely important global issues. Through the background guides and update papers, you should gain a clear understanding of both housing insecurity and literacy education for children. Also, they should guide you in your preparation for the conference and should be an exciting idea of what NHSMUN 2023 has to offer.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or need help with your preparation. Even though participating in a big conference can seem overwhelming, you are already doing a great job. Please keep in mind that we are here to help you every step of the way. I am looking forward to meeting all of you, and I hope you are as excited as I am about the conference. I wish you all the best of luck.

See you soon!

Alina Castillo
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Session I

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2023! My name is María José Martínez, and I will be your Session II assistant director for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)! I hope to be helpful to you guys alongside my co-ad Alina Castillo, and our directors, Nicole Pilliod and Sam Kim.

This will be my first year attending NHSMUN. I participated in my school's conference in high school, but I am beyond excited to finally be a part of the real thing! I have spent a few months learning all about this thought-inspiring topic, and I can assure you that you will have as much fun as I have. Child literacy has many factors to it, and I'm excited to see which of these you explore and how you create your resolutions!

I am a first-semester college student majoring in Modern Languages and Cultural Management at Universidad Anáhuac Norte in México, where I learn about new cultures through many of the different literature classics. One of my biggest aspirations is to become a writer, so I am thrilled to finally start doing something related to my ultimate goals! This last semester I became a teacher. I worked with two homeschooled kids as their full-time educator. The funny thing is I taught one of them how to read. I guess literacy really is a fun topic, after all! My favorite thing to do is to sit down with a good book that sparks new ideas within me. I also love art and listening to music. I'm always trying to analyze the lyrics to every song I listen to. I do believe that songwriters are some of the most talented people nowadays. Sitting down and seeing how all the words can be fitted in like a puzzle scratches my brain in the best way.

I have had the chance to interact in the NHSMUN ambiance, and I love it! This experience is deeply molding you to become great public speakers and defenders of your ideas. This update paper touches upon very interesting subtopics that I am excited for you to study. Some issues I encourage you to research include access to reading materials and technological advancements and how mother tongue-based multilingual education can vary depending on different cultural backgrounds. Continue your research with good analysis and enthusiasm, as it will reflect on the documents you present to us!

Finally, if you have any doubts, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Dais, as we will be more than happy to guide you through any questions you may present!

I look forward to meeting you in New York!

María José Martínez

United Nations Children's Fund

Session II

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UNICEF

NHSMUN 2023



TOPIC A: HOUSING INSECURITY FOR CHILDREN

Photo Credit: Shutterstock

Introduction

Adequate housing is a human right guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹² That being said, over 1.6 million people around the world live in inadequate housing. This not only means the existence of a living structure but one with sustainable living conditions. According to the United Nations (UN), adequate housing means having quality infrastructure, accessibility, privacy, and space that provides security and stability. Individuals should have access to a secure lease and affordable housing. Furthermore, appropriate services, schools, and employment should be available.³ While these are fundamental rights, they are not being met. In fact, the problem is only getting worse. For 2023, the UN requested USD 51.5 billion for aid. This is the highest amount ever requested, representing a 25 percent increase from the previous year.⁴

It is essential to ensure equitable housing for all. This is required to achieve socially just and economically viable cities. Several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals are founded with this in mind. In 2022, more than 100 million people were displaced from their homes.⁵ Living conditions are a key indicator of children's survival, development, and protection. Those with worse housing are more vulnerable to disasters, climate change, and global pandemics like COVID-19. Children living in deficient housing are one of the most vulnerable groups. They are dependent on others to meet their basic needs and cannot always advocate for themselves.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a socioeconomic condition in which a family is unable to access enough food for all family members to live healthy lives. It is associated with limited food options necessary for a healthy and balanced diet, such as fruits and vegetables. Food insecurity is a prevalent issue, yet the problem has escalated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Food insecurity did not improve even as the world recovered

from the pandemic. On the contrary, it has become worse. In the past year, world hunger rose to 828 million, and 11.7 percent of the global population faced severe food insecurity.⁶ Additionally, the World Food Programme reported that when schools closed during the pandemic, over 370 million children in almost 200 countries were impacted by hunger and malnutrition.⁷

This year, the world faced many crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, fuel shortages, the Ukraine Crisis, and continuing regional conflicts have completely stopped any progress on food security. As of December 19, 2022, domestic food price inflation is spiking in almost every region in the world. Data collected between August and November of this past year reported high inflation rates in almost every low and middle-income country. Inflation levels were above five percent in over 88 percent of low-income counties, 90 percent in low-middle-income countries, and 93 percent in upper-middle-income countries.⁸ Steps must be taken to address worsening food security in times of crisis.

There is a direct connection between food insecurity and housing instability. Both of these are common in cases of poverty and extreme poverty.⁹ This has worsened as many

1 Sanjee D. Singh et al, *Children, Cities and Housing: Rights and Priorities* (Atlanta: Habitat for Humanity, 2022), <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/08/children-cities-and-housing-rights-and-priorities.pdf>.

2 "The Human Right to Adequate Housing," OHCHR, accessed January 22, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>.

3 Singh et al, *Children, Cities and Housing: Rights and Priorities*.

4 "UN seeks record \$51.5bn aid 'lifeline' for 2023," Aljazeera, December 1, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/1/un-seeks-record-51-5bn-aid-lifeline-for-2023>.

5 Aljazeera, "UN seeks record \$51.5bn aid 'lifeline' for 2023."

6 "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022," UNICEF, July 2022, data.unicef.org/resources/sofi-2022/.

7 "10 Facts about Child Hunger in the World," UN World Food Program, last modified July 12, 2022, <https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/10-facts-child-hunger/>.

8 "Food Security Update," World Bank, last updated December 13, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update>.

9 Erin Nolen, Catherine Cubbinm, and Mackenzie Brewer, "The Effect of Maternal Food Insecurity Transitions on Housing Insecurity

lost income streams and jobs during the pandemic. Parents often have to choose whether to provide their children with a nutritious meal or a place to sleep. This is especially concerning considering that housing and food insecurity are more likely to be experienced by minorities. Minorities are more vulnerable to facing poverty and hardships in finding employment and housing. According to a report by Northwestern University, in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of food insecurity among Black households with children was nearly twice as high as White households.¹⁰ On an international scale, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are the regions that have the highest scores in the 2022 Global Hunger Index.¹¹ It is important to keep in mind the various cultural and regional issues that affect food security.

Studies have also shown that housing and food insecurity are linked. Therefore, these issues must be addressed together.¹² Many families struggle with meeting their basic needs. They may also risk falling behind on rent or mortgage payments. A study with a sample of 2868 mothers of young children analyzed the correlation between food and housing security where children reside. It demonstrated that food insecurity was a significant risk factor for housing insecurity. This risk increased as time progressed.¹³ On the other hand, the lack of shelter also increases the risk of food insecurity. Many families will prioritize payments for a household over investing in enough food or in healthier options. A study based in South Korea focused on the impact of housing assistance on food insecurity. It showed that the “housing cost burden is likely to increase the probabilities of falling into food insecurity among low-income households.”¹⁴

Food insecurity also affects people’s physical health. In children, it is associated with obesity, psychological stress, and inadequate physical development.¹⁵ This is why many countries have been working towards reducing child malnutrition. Various programs have made progress in this area. In several countries, governments and other organizations have created assistance programs. These programs provide support in finding shelter and nutritious meals for those in need. For example, the European Union (EU) has implemented a food-assistance policy to help over 100 million people without access to food. Assistance is adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Children are provided with nutritious meals to support their development.¹⁶ In Afghanistan, the nonprofit Miyamoto Relief is building affordable housing for families in need. The organization worked with the community in the building of these multi-family compounds. As a result, the community learned to build additional housing in safe and resourceful ways.¹⁷

Despite the efforts in several regions to work on improving child nutrition, deficiencies in essential nutrients in children are still of great concern. According to UNICEF, approximately 39 million children are affected by being overweight, and about 45 million children under the age of five suffer from waste.¹⁸ Wasting, or “low weight-for-height,” occurs when children suffer recent and severe weight loss. It indicates malnutrition and can put a child at a higher risk of death if not properly treated.¹⁹ Additionally, around 149 million children worldwide suffer from stunted growth and development.²⁰ Stunting describes “low height-for-age” and is a result of chronic undernutrition. Children with stunted growth are at a

in a Population-Based Sample of Mothers of Young Children,” *AIMS Public Health*, no. 1 (vol. 9, November 2021): 1–16, 10.3934/publichealth.2022001.

10 “Racial Disparities in Food Insecurity Persist: Institute for Policy Research,” Northwestern, 2020, <https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/news/2020/food-insecurity-by-race-ethnicity.html>.

11 World Bank, “Food Security Update.”

12 Jeannette Sanchez, “Research Shows Bidirectional Relationship between Housing Instability and Food Insecurity,” UTHouston, 12 Oct. 2020, www.uth.edu/news/story.htm?id=a0d3bb4f-f0d8-4d89-a8be-b0ad35da03fd.

13 Nolen, “The Effect of Maternal Food Insecurity Transitions,” 1-16.

14 Bo Kyong Seo and Gum-Ryeong Park, “Food Insecurity and Housing Affordability among Low-Income Families: Does Housing Assistance Reduce Food Insecurity?” *Public Health Nutrition* 24, no. 13 (2021): 4339–45, 10.1017/S1368980021001002.

15 Seo, “Food Insecurity and Housing Affordability.”

16 “Food Assistance Factsheet,” European Commission, accessed January 30, 2023, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/food-assistance_en.

17 “Miyamoto Relief Rebuilds 19 Multi-Family Compounds,” Miyamoto Relief, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.miyamotorelief.org/afghanistan-housing-crisis/>.

18 UNICEF, “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022.”

19 “Malnutrition,” World Health Organization, accessed January 22, 2022, https://www.who.int/health-topics/malnutrition#tab=tab_1.

20 UNICEF, “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022.”

higher risk for frequent illness, which prevents children from developing physically and cognitively.²¹ Children facing food insecurity face possible consequences that can affect them for the rest of their lives.

Food insecurity occurs when a household does not know when or where they can obtain their next nutritious meal. This problem is connected directly with housing insecurity, and it can be both a cause and an impact. Food and housing insecurity affect millions of households worldwide, many of them with children. The impact of these issues has worsened as a result of the pandemic. According to UNICEF, the escalating food crisis has forced over 260,000 children to experience severe waste. Every minute, one child is suffering the consequences of food insecurity.²² It is key to include the prevention and treatment of severe waste in all global food crisis response plans. Countries must ensure that budgets include preventive nutrition interventions and diets that treat malnutrition. In June 2022, UNICEF proposed to deliver an essential package of nutrition services and care to the 15 highest-burden countries to prevent millions of child deaths.²³ However, further action is needed to prevent food insecurity

in order to address the lack of adequate housing for children.

Climate Crisis

Disasters due to climate or extreme weather have always been a part of the Earth. In recent years, these disasters have increased in amount and intensity. Currently, 90 percent of disasters are classed as weather or climate-related. According to the UN, climate disasters cost the world economy USD 520 billion each year.²⁴ Climate and weather-related disasters are risk multipliers because they worsen already existing challenges. Annually, about 26 million people are forced into poverty as a result of natural disasters.²⁵ Climate change has also become a threat to international peace and security. Global warming and climate disasters have contributed to economic tensions and have led to mass displacement. The climate crisis has also heightened competition for basic resources. Tensions over food, water, and land have increased.²⁶ Populations around the world suffer from the impacts of climate change. However, these impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.

21 World Health Organization, "Malnutrition."

22 "Global Hunger Crisis Pushing One Child into Severe Malnutrition Every Minute in 15 Crisis-Hit Countries," UNICEF, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-hunger-crisis-pushing-one-child-severe-malnutrition-every-minute-15-crisis>.

23 UNICEF, "Global Hunger Crisis."

24 "The Climate Crisis – a Race We Can Win," United Nations, 2020, <https://www.un.org/en/un75/climate-crisis-race-we-can-win>.

25 United Nations, "The Climate Crisis – a Race We Can Win."

26 United Nations, "The Climate Crisis – a Race We Can Win."

Women and children living in dirty and inadequate conditions before the low cost housing project in Solapur, India.

Credit: Indian Ministry of Labor and Employment



Climate change and the affordable housing crisis are deeply connected. According to the UN, “climate-fuelled disasters were the primary driver of internal displacement during the past decade, forcing an estimated 20 million people a year from their homes.”²⁷ As climate change intensifies, so will housing instability. On the other hand, housing is a key factor in preventing the effects of extreme weather. This includes the loss of life and of property.²⁸ Unaffordable and insecure housing leaves families unprotected from unexpected expenses caused by a climate crisis. This creates a cycle between the climate crisis and housing insecurity, as climate disasters can lead to housing instability due to damages to property, extensive repairs, or rebuildings. Consequently, housing insecurity will leave families unprepared and more vulnerable in these situations. This can make the expenses and impact of a disaster greater, leading to a housing crisis.²⁹ According to a report by Save the Children, over 30 million people, a third of them children, were forced from their homes in 2020 alone due to climate-related disasters.³⁰

An average of over 20 million people are displaced each year as a result of extreme weather events. This includes prolonged droughts, environmental degradation, and cyclones.³¹ A significant percentage of those affected are children. In Bauchi, Nigeria, the Gara community is facing the effects of a devastating flood that washed through over 240 houses.³² Many families were separated and are currently displaced in the resulting harsh conditions. The flood destroyed the farmland, ruining the food and crops that had been ready for harvest. As a result, many are suffering food insecurity despite living in one of the country’s most fertile areas.³³ Additionally, the flood destroyed the primary and secondary schools,

preventing children from accessing basic education. The only pharmacy accessible to the community was lost to the flood. As a result, 10 members of the community, mostly children, died from treatable and preventable diseases.³⁴ Not only is the climate disaster affecting housing stability for children, but also their access to education, food security, and health.

Children are the least equipped to cope with the effects of being cast from their homes. UNICEF reports that there are “around 500 million children living in areas with very high risk of flooding and nearly 160 million living in areas of extreme or high risk of drought.”³⁵ Therefore, they are more susceptible to suffering the consequences of climate disasters and housing insecurity. Climate disasters have led to over 50 million children worldwide being forced from their homes. They have even been forced to migrate across borders and, as a result, are displaced from their own countries.³⁶ Despite the impact of climate change on children, they have been overlooked in many policies looking to solve this issue. It is essential for delegates to prioritize finding measures to protect children from the impact of climate-related disasters.

Case Study: Housing in African Countries

Africa is facing an acute housing shortage as a result of fast urbanization and population growth. In recent years, there has been a shortfall of 51 million housing units. This has been a growing problem because about 40,000 people are moving to African cities every day.³⁷ This quick urbanization is straining affordable land and housing. As a result, the government is

27 “Climate Change and the Right to Housing,” OHCHR, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/climate-change-and-right-housing>.

28 Singh, *Children, Cities and Housing: Rights and Priorities*.

29 Taylor Gauthier and Financial Security Program, “The Devastating Effects of Climate Change on US Housing Security,” *The Aspen Institute*, 9 Apr. 2021, www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/the-devastating-effects-of-climate-change-on-us-housing-security/.

30 “Climate Crises Force Rising Numbers of Children from Their Homes Every Year with No Way Back,” Save the Children, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2021-press-releases/climate-crises-force-rising-numbers-of-children-from-homes-every-year>.

31 “Climate change and disaster displacement,” UNHCR, accessed January 22, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/climate-change-and-disasters.html>.

32 Kamal Ibrahim, “Flood: Inside Bauchi, Gara Community Where Residents Count Losses, Seek Relocation,” *Leadership*, December 24, 2022, <https://leadership.ng/flood-inside-bauchi-gara-community-where-residents-count-losses-seek-relocation/>.

33 Ibrahim, “Flood: Inside Bauchi, Gara Community.”

34 Ibrahim, “Flood: Inside Bauchi, Gara Community.”

35 “Climate Mobility and Children,” UNICEF, accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/climate-mobility-and-children>.

36 UNICEF, “Climate Mobility and Children.”

37 “Africa Housing Forum in Nairobi Highlights Need for Innovative and Inclusive Approaches to Solve Housing Challenges,” *Habitat for Humanity*, May 13, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/africa-housing-forum-nairobi-highlights-need-innovative-and-inclusive>.



This image shows the damage to a soccer field in Cape Town, South Africa after a flood.

Credit: Amanda Solomon

struggling to meet the increasing demand for housing. The lack of affordable housing affects 14 out of 16 million people in Nigeria, many of them children. In Kenya, the housing demand consists of 250,000 units, with a supply of only 50,000. South Africa has a housing shortage of over 3.7 million units.³⁸ A lack of adequate housing exposes children to poverty from a young age. They grow up in a difficult and unstable environment which leads to a lack of access to education and causes health problems in the long term.

Housing is a human right, and ensuring access to affordable and adequate housing should be a priority. Housing security would improve the living conditions for all Africans, including children. It would help to improve their health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life. Over 40 percent of all child deaths in the region are linked to malnutrition, resulting from food and housing insecurity.³⁹ In Africa, the leading cause of death for children under five is infectious diseases such as diarrhea and malaria. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that housing security is an effective defense against contagious diseases. These diseases could be reduced with adequate housing conditions.⁴⁰ Adequate housing provides access to

approaches-solve.

³⁸ Habitat for Humanity, “Africa Housing Forum.”

³⁹ “Child Health,” WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2017, <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/child-health>.

⁴⁰ WHO Regional Office for Africa, “Child Health.”

⁴¹ World Bank, *Adaptive Social Protection in Southern Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022), <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/38256>.

⁴² World Bank, *Adaptive Social Protection in Southern Africa*, 1.

water and sanitation, which are essential for basic hygiene and preventing the spread of disease.

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated the already existing vulnerabilities in the region. This affected the lives of thousands of children. According to the World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook, the pandemic pushed 97 million people into poverty in 2020.⁴¹ The pandemic worsened food insecurity worldwide. By September 2020, 40 percent of the population of Lesotho was expected to be in a food crisis by 2021. In Botswana, 30 percent of children are stunted, and seven percent are wasting. Furthermore, climate shocks also contribute to food insecurity in households. For example, while Namibia was suffering its worst drought in over 90 years, a third of its population went hungry, leading to a state of emergency.⁴²

Several African countries are also facing adverse weather conditions that make them more vulnerable to the impacts of housing insecurity. The Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) countries are often most exposed to climate shocks. Extreme weather events pose a threat to the lives of everyone in the region. However, those living in poverty are more vulnerable to its effects. Since poorer households have limited

assets to use to recover from climate shocks, they are often forced to cut other resources in order to survive.⁴³ This includes cutting budgets for food, selling belongings, and pulling children from school to work. School is essential for children to develop academically and socially. Removing a child from school can impede access to opportunities in the future.⁴⁴

The African region is currently facing one of the biggest housing shortages in the world. This is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, mass migration, and climate disasters. Many children are facing food insecurity, health issues, and lack of access to education as a result of housing insecurity. To cope with a lack of adequate shelter, many families make choices that result in short-term solutions. While these actions are driven by necessity, they result in long-term harm and a slow recovery. These measures often negatively impact a child's growth and development. Due to the severity of the situation, many African countries have taken action to reduce the consequences of housing insecurity. Many countries have implemented policies for social protection and assistance that support affected families. These policies require financial investments but can significantly help vulnerable communities.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Adequate housing is a fundamental right. It is essential for an individual's wellbeing, and fundamental for the development of children. Many children do not have access to housing that can meet this standard. Housing insecurity negatively impacts the lives of those facing it, especially those at an economic disadvantage. Many people are vulnerable to housing and food insecurity and are forced to choose between vital resources. As a result, many people cannot have a balanced diet and make their housing payments. Children are caught in the middle of this issue, as they cannot always advocate for themselves. Climate change also impacts food security, as it hinders the growth of crops and access to healthy

food. Those who cannot afford adequate housing are more vulnerable to natural disasters. They often cannot afford repairs after a weather-related disaster, or their shelter cannot withstand extreme weather. The ongoing climate crisis and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing inequalities faced by children living in informal settlements and inadequate housing.

UNICEF has been working to achieve the goals in its Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Specifically, the Fund hopes to improve spatial planning in urban communities. Additionally, the Strategic Plan hopes to address unique barriers for children living in inadequate housing.⁴⁶ Finding secure housing for children is an urgent issue. Therefore, it requires immediate concern to protect the millions of children without homes worldwide. This committee must take action to reduce the number of children living in inadequate housing. When addressing the housing crisis, it is essential to understand the needs of children. Solutions must consider the challenges they face each day. This committee must collaborate to develop policies and programs to solve this problem.

43 Claudia D. Solari and Robert D. Mare, "Housing Crowding Effects on Children's Wellbeing," *Social Science Research* 41, no. 2 (March 2012): 464–76, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.09.012>.

44 Solari and Mare, "Housing Crowding Effects on Children's Wellbeing."

45 World Bank, *Adaptive Social Protection in Southern Africa*, 139.

46 *Strategic Note on UNICEF's Work for Children in Urban Settings* (New York: UN Children's Fund, 2022), <https://www.unicef.org/media/133761/file/Strategic%20note%20on%20UNICEF's%20work%20for%20children%20in%20urban%20settings.pdf>.



UNICEF

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**TOPIC B:
LITERACY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN**

Photo Credit: UNICEF

Introduction

Literacy pushes people to become independent and opens doors to new opportunity. Unfortunately, literacy is not universal, and many children lack access. Thus, a lot of children do not reap its benefits. More than 600 million children in schools today are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.¹ This is due to a combination of problems. To name a few: lack of resources, poor teacher training, and bad data. By looking at the issue closely, we can hope to solve this. Delegates must look for smart solutions dedicated to current concerns.

For this topic, it is important to review the five reader stages. These are emergent, alphabetic, word and pattern recognition, intermediate, and advanced. These groups have clear classifications. The goal is to create advanced to intermediate readers. This is important because the first three groups can only read with no comprehension. Contrastingly, the last two groups can understand reading materials. However, many countries consider emergent readers as literate. Simply put, a country can claim high literacy rates when most of its population cannot understand what they read. The ability to recognize words has no use if those words cannot be applied. UNICEF must work to increase the bar for literacy. Only then can we see true progress.

The Where Are We On Education Recovery report introduced the RAPID framework earlier this year. It is used as a tool to monitor and improve education after the pandemic. This framework tries to establish a new learning recovery program. Its goals are to help sure children stay in school. To add, it tries to create regular checkups and focus on psychosocial health. Furthermore, it highlights fundamental material and streamlines teaching through catch-up learning.² It is crucial to empower children from affected groups to achieve literacy goals. This also helps combat social challenges. Early prevention can offset future issues. For example, this framework can prevent early pregnancy, early marriage, and child labor.³ Thus, it is important to look at the roots of the problem. Education is one of the pillars of child development.

This report suggests areas for children to receive support when learning. For example, teachers should be ready to utilize technology and close gaps among their students.⁴

To improve education equity, we must change current structures. Many institutions are corrupt and do not prioritize learning. In addition, instructors are often underpaid and lack training. As a result, they cannot improve education as it stands. With the RAPID framework, there is a push for change. Many other initiatives have begun to help solve this problem. For example, after the pandemic, UNICEF launched the “From Learning Recovery to Education Transformation” initiative. Its focus is to help governments gain adequate resources. Not only that, but it aims to make sure they use them efficiently. Countries assess the policy actions in the RAPID framework. Then, they can cater to their individual policies to create new learning programs.⁵ All in all, this committee must work to transform education systems to be efficient, resilient, and equitable.⁶

Emerging technologies are the future of education. With the rise of the Digital Age comes new learning potential. Software and devices are constantly being created that can be used to help improve literacy. Now, students can master skills faster than ever. Reading programs and applications can push new boundaries. Applications can alter teaching strategies to encourage children to continue their education. Children need to be able to comprehend what they are

1 “Can tech solve the global education crisis?” UNICEF, accessed December 21, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/xtc-unicef-edtech-award-finalists>.

2 “RAPID - From Learning Recovery to Education Transformation,” The World Bank, accessed January 1, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/rapid-from-learning-recovery-to-education-transformation>.

3 UNESCO-UIS et al., *From Learning Recovery to Education Transformation*, (Montreal, New York, Washington D.C.: UNESCO-UIS, UNICEF, The World Bank and The OECD, 2022), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/523b6ac03f2c643f93b9c043d48edc1-0200022022/related/From-Learning-Recovery-to-Education-Transformation-Main-Report.pdf>.

4 UNESCO-UIS et al., *From Learning Recovery to Education Transformation*.

5 Stefania Giannini et al., “From learning recovery to education transformation,” UNICEF, accessed December 21, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/blog/learning-recovery-education-transformation>.

6 UNESCO-UIS et al., *From Learning Recovery to Education Transformation*.

learning. Despite this, many students lack access to education that they can understand. Native language education can help teach more children. In addition, culturally sensitive learning environments have a variety of benefits. UNICEF can help make these tools more accessible. This would help to close the literacy gap.

Illiteracy Prevention Through Technology

New technology allows us to change how we teach. Technology can drastically improve children's literacy. For example, every person learns differently. Recently, there has been a large focus on how technology can help with this. With growing access comes new tools which kids can use to learn. For example, reading games and interactive platforms can help teach different types of learners.

Innovations allow new cultures and ideas to be brought to the classroom. This includes engaging and evidence-based digital learning materials. One app, One Globe Kids, centers on "day in the life" stories told by children from different countries. It is designed to encourage cross-group friendship while keeping up with Language and Social Studies. Struggling students can collaborate with more knowledgeable learners and measure their progress.⁷ Peer-to-peer teaching allows students to get together and interact with one another to attain an educational goal. This method encourages top-class students to instruct those who are falling behind. It is important to note that peer-to-peer instruction does not only benefit the student being taught but also the student who is doing the teaching. Through teaching, students can better recognize their learning gaps and share different understandings.⁸ Today, tools like One Globe Kids allow children to talk to friends worldwide, not just their classmates.

Reading is a step-by-step process that can be challenging for many people. For decades, countries have tried to raise reading standards. Yet, many students still fail to achieve basic reading at the end of elementary school. The use of technology while learning can benefit students in several ways. Learning in an engaging digital environment can increase attention and motivation. This can lead to acceptance, drive, and concentration. Furthermore, tools like e-books and search engines make it easier for children to discover reading materials that spark their interests. In addition, technology-based teaching can reduce cognitive load. Cognitive load is the mental effort required to do a particular task. By decreasing the mental resources required, it is easier to understand the learning material.⁹ This helps students focus on the target lesson. All in all, with the correct use of technology, students can dedicate saved time to understanding new content.

More schools are giving all students their own mobile devices. Leaders should look at the benefit of tablets for literacy students.¹⁰ These devices can open students to the auditory, tactile, and visual experiences that are important in the learning process. Educational technology is generally known as EdTech. It allows students to be creative and learn in more comfortable ways.¹¹ The tactile learner thrives on activities that are interactive and computer-based. These assignments allow students to engage in games and activities that help them learn new concepts.¹² For example, children can trace letters on a screen with their fingers. Additionally, a tablet can provide access to more reading materials. With these devices, students can access entire digital libraries. This helps students explore and learn about interesting topics.¹³

A study conducted by Griffith University of Queensland tested the use of tablets to boost literacy skills in children.¹⁴ They tested two groups. The experimental group got to work

7 "One Globe Kids," Academics' Choice, accessed January 2, 2023, <http://www.academicschoice.com/apps/one-globe-kids.php>.

8 June Brown, Jan Bryan, and Ted Brown, "Twenty-First Century Literacy and Technology in K-8 Classrooms," *Innovate: Journal of Online Education* 1, no. 3 (February, 2005): 1552-3233, <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/107300/>.

9 Hossein Jamshidifarsani et al., "Technology-based reading intervention programs for elementary grades: An analytical review," *Computers and Education* 128, no. 1 (October, 2019): 427-451, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.10.003>.

10 "One-to-one," The Glossary of Education Reform, last updated August 29, 2013, <https://www.edglossary.org/one-to-one/#>.

11 "Tactile Learning in Literacy Education – Barry Online," Barry University, accessed December 21, 2022, <https://online.barry.edu/degrees/education/masters-science/reading/tactile-learning-in-literacy-education/>.

12 Monica Mccutchen, "Kinesthetic and Tactile Learners: Hands-On Experience with Technology," TechDaily, last modified November 12, 2022, <https://techdaily.ca/lifestyle/kinesthetic-and-tactile-learners-hands-on-experience-with-technology>.

13 Rebecca Torchia, "Three Tech Tools for Teaching Literacy," *EDTech Magazine*, August 27, 2021, <https://edtechmagazine.com/k12/article/2021/08/three-tech-tools-teaching-literacy>.

14 Michelle M. Neumann, "Using tablets and apps to enhance emergent literacy skills in young children," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*,

with different apps that focused on helping their learning. On the other hand, the control group went on with their education as they normally would. 48 English-speaking children were tested. Each was either three or four years old. The study consisted of a nine-week iPad literacy intervention program that tested a range of skills. This included letter names, sound knowledge, and writing. The apps used for the study were carefully selected to be easy, engaging, and effective. Every application contained key literary features and activities such as letter matching, letter tracing, and drawing. It focused on examining the effects of apps and tablets to help improve youth literacy skills. Each of the different literacy skills was tested with distinct activities.¹⁵ The study found that children in the iPad group scored significantly higher in letter knowledge, print concepts, and name writing than in the control group. The results showed that children could use apps and tablets for literacy learning. Not only that, but it showed how important technology is for the future. It can provide a range of tools that positively affect children's experiences when learning to read and write. With teacher assistance, the use of tablets can create easier literacy teaching methods.¹⁶

Many gamified reading programs can make class activities more engaging for children. Game-based learning helps students stay engaged for longer periods. One example of an effective platform is LeapFrog.¹⁷ LeapFrog programs provide tutoring and learning activities to 60 third graders in Lafayette County and Oxford public schools. Students are selected for the program based on teacher and counselor recommendations, reading scores, parent support, and good behavior. The model focuses on providing homework help for children who are falling behind their classmates. Eventually, the program evolved to focus specifically on improving literacy. Students met four times a week with an assigned volunteer tutor. Once they completed their curriculum, students read with their tutor. Finally, an active game or enrichment program was offered following learning time. Reading score systems are used to track their students' progress. Mid-year data revealed

that 59 percent of the students enrolled in these programs made moderate to significant progress in reading.¹⁸

Another example of a product that assists students is Reading Progress from Microsoft. By integrating with Microsoft Teams, it allows students to build fluency through independent reading practices and educator insights.¹⁹ The app records students reading out loud and can pinpoint where they are struggling. Educators can upload reading passages as Teams assignments and have access to them at any time. This app can be used as a tool for educators to recognize focus areas to work on with younger students. This helps children reach the appropriate reading level.²⁰

Many technologies are being used today to help children's literacy. EdTech can break barriers for young children. Delegates should watch for tools that could help their own and other countries. Delegates should also consider which types of technologies would be most effective where. Different countries have different capabilities and needs. The international community should work together to increase the standards for learning. Exploring new programs and technologies can quickly lead to higher literacy.

Language Barriers in Education

Language barriers are a large obstacle in education. When children are taught in a foreign language, they are greatly limited. Learning is difficult when students cannot understand the language they are being taught in. This issue is especially important to countries with a lot of native languages. The failure to use children's mother tongues for initial education prevents equal opportunity. Children who only speak local languages are frequently denied access to education because of teacher and facility shortages. Even when they are given a chance to enroll, students who are not proficient in the language of instruction are greatly limited. Many children drop out before finishing primary school. That means

42 no. 1, (October, 2018): 239-246, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.006>.

15 Neumann, "Using tablets and apps to enhance emergent literacy skills in young children."

16 Neumann, "Using tablets and apps to enhance emergent literacy skills in young children."

17 Torchia, "Three Tech Tools for Teaching Literacy."

18 "Our Program," LeapFrog, accessed January 10, 2023. <https://theleapfrogprogram.org/our-program/>.

19 "Microsoft Teams: Reading Progress," Wab Learns, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://learn.wab.edu/edtech/teams/ReadingProgress>.

20 Torchia, "Three Tech Tools for Teaching Literacy."

children leave school before mastering basic reading skills. These disruptions also prevent them from improving literacy in their mother tongue.²¹

Research indicates that using a child's mother tongue in classrooms increases participation from children. Not only are children more likely to engage with learning, but so are their families. A shared language at school and at home helps reinforce learned concepts. Using mother tongue languages at school improves a child's cognitive learning processes and increases classroom effectiveness. This is important because there is a high correlation between learning outcomes and school attendance. Many schools in Africa use non-indigenous languages in their classrooms. As a result, children who are fluent in their native language often struggle to adjust to the language used inside the classroom. This can be particularly discouraging for children, who will be less motivated to attend school. This further affects the literacy levels in such countries.²²

Many Southeast Asian countries have experimented with mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)

programs in recent years. MTB-MLE is an education program designed for children who do not understand or speak their school's official language. Students enrolled in these programs first learn to read and write in their mother tongue. It is used as the language of instruction for learning to read, speak, understand, and write in the official school language. MTB-MLE programs help students become fully bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate.²³ However, many formal education systems are hesitant to embrace local mother tongues inside the classroom. While findings have shown good results, there has been some pushback. Some educators believe that emphasis on MTB-MLE could result in poor performance. There are concerns it could lead to increased struggles in the national language and tension among ethnic groups. However, these have been largely disproven by several studies conducted to test the effectiveness of MTB-MLE programs.²⁴ Before coming to the conference, delegates should consider their country's policies on this type of education.

Some challenges of implementing this program include the lack of learning materials. This can result in poor listening,

²¹ Nadine Dutcher, *Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2001), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED466099.pdf>.

²² Barbara Trudell, *The impact of language policy and practice on children's learning: Evidence from Eastern and Southern Africa*, (Kenya: United Nations Children's Fund, 2016), <https://www.unicef.org/esa/sites/unicef.org/esa/files/2018-09/UNICEF-2016-Language-and-Learning-FullReport.pdf>.

²³ Asia Multilingual Education Working Group, *MTB-MLE: mother tongue-based multilingual education; lessons learned from a decade of research and practice* (Bangkok: UNESCO, 2014), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000231865>.

²⁴ Asia Multilingual Education Working Group, *MTB-MLE*.

A young student in Nigeria.
Credit: USAID Africa Bureau



reading, speaking, and writing skills. Training teachers is also difficult and can create issues for working in a classroom.²⁵ Despite this, the growing body of evidence surrounding these programs has revealed that children are more engaged during these lessons. They are more likely to respond to questions and participate in class. Marginalized communities can preserve their cultural and linguistic identities while engaging with other cultures. Inside the classroom, students receive better results, dropout rates decrease, and higher literacy rates are achieved.²⁶ In addition to cognitive improvements, MTB-MLE improves a child's emotional development. Members of minority ethnic groups are empowered when their first language is used. Discouraging the use of their mother tongue can make children feel as if they are rejecting part of their identity. The program aims to address these challenges, providing quality education and engaging with the community.²⁷

Two recent studies used the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to evaluate the effectiveness of MTB-MLE programs. These studies occurred in Thailand and Timor-Leste, both of which are multilingual countries.²⁸ However, the studies were conducted in regions where only the minority language was spoken. The EGRA is a well-known literacy instrument that tests a wide range of early literacy skills in children. In this study, the EGRA was used to document the progress of MTB-MLE students in their mother tongue from preschool to grade two. These performances were compared against children who spoke only one language and had received education in each country's official language of instruction. The results showed that 72 percent of the Ethnic Minorities Based Language of Instruction (EMBLI) students became good readers by grade two, compared to 36 percent for the regular public program administered in the dominant language.²⁹

MTB-MLE programs require the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the classroom. The EMBLI project also aims to prepare children to use other languages.

Starting in the language they know gives children the confidence to build strong foundations that enable them to make effective transitions into other national or international languages. The goal of multilingual or mother tongue-based teaching is effectiveness. Governments need to recruit teachers from minority language groups. As conveyed by the aforementioned studies from Thailand and Timor-Leste, learning outcomes are significantly improved when students first learn and develop in their mother tongue.³⁰

Conclusion

While there are countless issues related to a child's education, literacy is a priority. The best way to fight against it is by being informed about the situations that different countries face. Technological advancements and personalized education programs are possible ways to achieve universal literacy. It is important to recognize that there is no perfect solution to this issue. Sometimes, the simplest solutions can create the biggest impacts. Countries can work together towards the same goal to create excellent resolutions. Events such as COVID-19 have shown us how the international community is capable of working together to find innovative solutions. The same actions can be taken to transform education.³¹

Through new learning methods and programs, a better understanding can be reached to create new generations of advanced readers. Peer-to-peer learning, MTB-MLE programs, and Leap-Frog are just some tools that can be used to improve literacy rates worldwide. These programs help children develop while feeling safe, happy, and excited to interact with new people in diverse contexts.³² Fortunately, the programs created have realistic paths and goals. It is imperative to use these inventions and focus on the factors of literacy that have been neglected. Tackling these issues can create the perfect solution to this topic.

25 Rosario Alberto, Sunny Gabinete, and Vanessa Rañola, "Issues and Challenges in Teaching Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Grades II and III: The Philippine Experience," *JSRN* 11, no. 1, (April 2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2768558>.

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The National High School Model United Nations Conference (NHSMUN) is a project of IMUNA, a non-profit organization formally associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications (UNDGC). IMUNA is dedicated to promoting global issues education through simulation.

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