United Nation’s International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
Background Guide

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The United Nation’s International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is a special program of the United Nations founded in 1946. The goal of UNICEF is to aid nations in improving the health, education, and general well-being of children. UNICEF is currently in 190 countries and territories working to focus their program in aiding the most disadvantaged children including, but not limited to, those affected by rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, disabilities, diseases, and domestic abuse. UNICEF’s statement “…to save children’s lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence,” highlight’s their objective to drive change for children every day, across the world. ¹

I. A Movement to End Child Trafficking

Statement of the Issue:

Child trafficking is not often addressed by major media outlets and news networks, even though an estimated 1.2 million children are being trafficked each year and 100 million children are engaged in child labor each year worldwide.² UNICEF defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transfer, transportation, harboring, or receipt of children ages 5-17 for the purpose of exploitation. Child trafficking is a violation of children’s rights and it denies them of opportunities to fulfill their potential. By denying children opportunities such as obtaining an education, child trafficking exposes children to

violence and reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty. Child trafficking continues to have a negative effect on national economies and has severe negative consequences on children’s rights guaranteed by the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child. These rights will be discussed later in the guide.

Child trafficking can take many different forms. The International Labour Organization labels the sale of children, debt bondage, forced labor, forced recruitment into armed conflict, child prostitution, and forced participation in the production and trafficking of drugs as the worst forms of child labor and trafficking. The most common types of trafficking are prostitution, forced labor, and debt bondage. Child labor is most commonly found in agricultural industries and in manufacturing industries. People across the globe are affected by child trafficking in their communities. Additionally, the areas of the world most ravaged by child trafficking tend to be poverty stricken communities of less-developed countries. The regions with the largest number of child laborers are Asia and the Pacific region. However, when factoring the amount of child laborers compared to the population of children within, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of child laborers with over one out of five children forced into child labor. There have been trends of decreasing amounts of child labor both in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, in Asia, and the Pacific region. In the period between 2008 and 2012, child labor decreased in Asia and the Pacific region by 36 million and in the Sub-Saharan Africa region a decrease of 6 million child laborers has been noted.

Child trafficking and human trafficking in general can involve the crossing of international borders but it can also occur domestically. According to the United Nation’s Office on Drugs and Crime 2016 global report on “Trafficking in Persons,” around 42% of detected trafficking victims are trafficked domestically; the majority of the victims being comprised of women and children. Around 57% of trafficking victims are trafficked

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trans-nationally. This report also demonstrates similarities between cross-border trafficking flows and regular migration flows. People who migrate trans-nationally and refugees escaping from persecution or conflict are more vulnerable to being trafficked. Most of these trafficking flows occur over short distances, where victims are either trafficked domestically or from a neighboring country. In the following regions, over 90% of trafficking victims’ flows are across short distances: Sub-Saharan Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, South Asia, as well as Eastern Europe and Central Asia.\(^6\)

Attempting to address child labor in these regions can be difficult due to underlying causes that perpetuate child labor in the first place such as poverty, lack of available education, increasing rates of orphans, and domestic violence. Child labor must be addressed in the context of child protection.

UNICEF has found that their strategy of small-scale issue based projects is not as effective as a larger systems approach. UNICEF’s systems approach includes creating legal policies and frameworks that comply with the Convention on the Rights of a Child, employing effective regulation and oversight in order to implement standards, creating services and service delivery mechanisms for victims, and collaborating with local governments as some of their strategies. UNICEF partners with other international organizations, such as the International Labor Organization and the World Bank, to employ these strategies in order to incite change.

As an example of one country-level program, the UNICEF child labor program in Nepal was successful in partnering with the local government and Nepalese community to lower the incidence of child labor in Nepal. UNICEF accomplished this by working with the Nepalese government to establish structures, mechanisms, and services in urban municipalities, which allowed them to develop and strengthen a child protection system in urban areas. Their efforts resulted in 9,000 child laborers to be reunited with their families and provided with reintegration services.\(^7\) The method of creating systemic mechanisms of protection was effective due to integrated support from not only local government but also development partners and the Nepalese private sector. UNICEF’s

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involvement in Nepal demonstrates the international and interagency cooperation needed to address child labor. It also shows that addressing child labor involves complex systems protecting to both prevent child labor from happening and to address its aftermath.

**History:**

Child labor has existed throughout most of human history. Child labor is both cheap and reliable; children do not have platforms to advocate for greater pay or better working conditions, so employers have long exploited the benefits of child labor. Child labor began to sky-rocket during the Industrial Revolution. This was partially due to the fact that children could more easily maneuver into small spaces to run machinery. Post-Industrial Revolution, the international community began to establish child labor laws. In 1959, the United Nations built upon the rights of people that had been acknowledged in the League of Nations Declaration of 1924 by creating the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child. This Declaration established that a child is entitled to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation, medical services, and an education. It also specified that children need “special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection.”

Following the Declaration of Rights, the International Labor Organization held the Minimum Age Convention in 1973. At this convention, they adopted a binding document to establish a minimum age of 15 years old for children to begin working, with exceptions for special circumstances.

To date, the most comprehensive document for the rights of children is the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) that was established by the U.N. in 1989. The CRC largely focused on four aspects of child’s rights, commonly known as the four P’s: participation by children in decision’s affecting them; protection of children against discrimination and all forms of neglect and exploitation; prevention of harm to them; and provision of assistance to children for their basic needs. New rights created by the CRC that had previously not existed under international law include, amongst others, a child’s right to preserve their identity, and the rights of indigenous children to practice their

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culture. The United Nations continued to build and adapt the CRC throughout the 20th century. In 2000, the U.N. adopted two optional protocols to the CRC. These protocols include the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, and the Optional Protocol on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict. This protocol is "optional" because the mechanisms needed to enforce these protocols are possibly more demanding than those in the original CRC; therefore states independently choose whether or not to be bound by them.

The measures taken by the international community to create child labor laws and policies continue to exist today. However, enforcement of these documents is often left up to local governments. In 1990, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was created and, in 1996, the European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights was held. These regional acts of governance are often more effective at enforcing child labor laws than international policies developed that are removed from the circumstance of regional life.

Analysis:

Child trafficking and labor transcends borders and is a clear global problem as trafficking routes and victims come from all over the world. All 193 member states of the United Nations are affected by child trafficking and labor, and therefore have a moral obligation to incite significant, positive change to tackle the challenge of child trafficking and labor. It needs to be understood by the international community that there is not a clear solution or path to take to end child trafficking or labor. This is because child trafficking and labor is a multifaceted issue; poverty, limited access to quality education, and demand for cheap labor are all factors that need to be considered when addressing child trafficking and labor.

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Regional and national governments hold the largest portion of the burden of responsibility to end child trafficking and labor but the international community also bears this responsibility. UNICEF and national governments must work to enforce and strengthen the application of legal frameworks and regulations for child trafficking and labor. These policies and frameworks need to build social protection floors to prevent families to resorting to child labor when they are economically or socially vulnerable. UNICEF also works with national governments to promote social norms and public attitudes that shed negative light on child labor. On this front, they can only incite social change to an extent because generations of communities across the globe have used child labor as a tool to promote economic livelihood.\(^\text{12}\)

UNICEF is not the only international organization partnering with national governments to incite change; many NGOs, such as the Global Partnership for Education, the Global March Against Child Labor, and the International Initiative to End Child Labor all work in collaboration with national governments to eliminate child labor. These NGOs work to prevent, protect, and help victims of child trafficking and labor but they are often faced with obstacles such as accessing victims with uncooperative governments, victims in remote regions, and having the funds to provide victims with the help and resources they need to break the cycle of child labor. Often NGOs partner with the private sector to address some of these obstacles by asking the private sector to promote corporate responsibility, to prohibit the use of child labor in supply chains, and to promote funding of NGO initiatives.\(^\text{13}\)

The Orphaned Starfish Foundation (OSF) has recently done exceptional work around the world, but especially in Kenya, to break children’s cycle of poverty and abuse that often leads to child trafficking. The Orphaned Starfish Foundation is an NGO that partners with orphanages, schools, and communities to create and fund onsite technology centers that children can utilize to receive technology education and job training. OSF partnered with Many Hopes in Kenya, which is a school that aims to eliminate the causes of poverty in Kenya, by educating orphaned and abandoned children in the Kilifi region. The Orphaned Starfish Foundation built Many Hopes a state-
of-the-art computer lab that included computers, desks, and internet access. OSF also paid for the salary of a tutor to help children learn from and navigate the computer lab. The OSF’s work assists students in becoming better equipped with skills that allow them to be competitive in the global workforce, creating a new generation of adults that break the cycle of poverty and child trafficking.

Proper enforcement of legislation and strengthening social protection floors are not alone going to solve the problem of child labor. This is because one of the most important factors surrounding the issue of child labor is poverty. National governments with international cooperation must emphasize the importance of improving the economic conditions of victims of child labor and their families.

Civil society, especially in more developed and industrialized regions of the world, tends to be complicit in aiding the movement to end child labor. Often global citizens engage in practices that perpetuate child labor, such as buying clothing made using child labor or buying brands of food harvested by agriculture companies that use child labor. Complacency only perpetuates the problem.

Conclusion:

Child trafficking and child labor deny children the opportunity to reach their full potential. It is a debilitating cycle that promotes violence and poverty across generations and communities. Traffickers tend to prey on poverty stricken communities and communities experiencing civil unrest, such as migrants and refugees. The international community has attempted to restrict and reduce the incidence of child labor since the early 1900s, but the problem still persists due to social and economic factors. In order to create new generations of forward thinkers and engaged global citizens, children must be empowered and free to incite change. For all children to have equal access to education and growth opportunities, governments need to prioritize child safety and protection. To effectively and efficiently create this change, governments, governmental organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and societal communities must collaborate to prioritize the protection of children.
Questions:

1. How can UNICEF provide support to victims of child trafficking and child labor in remote regions of the world?
2. How can national governments work to fully enforce legislation regarding child labor and child trafficking?
3. How can UNICEF or the international community incentivize non-cooperative governments to adopt and enforce legislation regarding child trafficking and child labor?
4. What differences in social protections and safeguards from child trafficking and labor might there be in urban versus rural communities?
5. Are children of minorities in the region they live more susceptible to child labor or child trafficking?
I. Child Soldiers and Conflict

Statement of the Issue:

Across the globe, children are recruited into armed conflicts by both government armed forces and rebel armed forces, where they are forced to commit or witness violence. Child soldiers are children under the age of 18 that are forced to join armed conflicts or who are used for military purposes. These children not only act as militants but are also used in war zones as spies, cooks, porters, and messengers. Forcing children into armed conflict where they could be injured or killed neglects the rights of that child. Child soldiers are not only deprived of their rights stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, but they also are exploited and neglected. This can result in severe emotional and physical trauma.

Military organizations find it easier to recruit children into armed conflict because they find that children are more compliant and easier to manipulate. Military organizations manipulate children’s circumstances as a mechanism for recruitment. They entice children by claiming that becoming a soldier is a way out of poverty and domestic abuse and as a path to receive a better education. Children particularly vulnerable to these tactics are children that have lost family members due to the conflict or have family that has been displaced due to armed conflict. In 2017, over 240 million children were living in countries that had been affected by armed conflict. These children are located in regions that span across the globe. There were 203 cases in 2017 alone, where children were used as suicide bombers by Boko Haram in Nigeria and Cameroon. According to the U.N. General Assembly Security Council’s 2017 report on “Children in Armed Conflict,” these are just some of the countries and regions that have been found to be engaged in using children in armed conflicts: Afghanistan, Thailand, Nigeria, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, and the Sudan. The report also cited worrisome trends that have been occurring, such as large scale

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abductions of children and the denial of humanitarian access used by military groups as a tactic of war.\textsuperscript{15}

The Democratic Republic of Congo’s civil war that lasted roughly from 1994-2003 was considered one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. A combination of foreign armies, private enterprise interests, and corrupt governments exploitation of the country’s natural resources fueled the war. The war involved 9 African nations and killed approximately 5 million people. There was an estimated 30,000 children that fought during the war, on all sides.\textsuperscript{16} In 2009 the International Criminal Court filed a case against the Congolese warlord, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, who stood accused of conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 to fight in his militia during the Congolese civil war. Later in 2009, he was found guilty of the war crime of using children in armed conflict.\textsuperscript{17} This is just one example of how the international community’s power to help the issue of child soldiers when they are committed the cause.

UNICEF promotes collaborating with local governments to incite change in the treatment and protection of children in these countries. The U.N. has been, and currently is, continuing to try and get countries to adapt the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, also known as OPAC. OPAC prohibits countries from recruiting children under the age of 18 from participating in armed conflicts and also prohibits voluntary recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.\textsuperscript{18} Presently, 168 countries have ratified OPAC; some of these countries include Afghanistan, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen. Notable countries that have not signed or ratified OPAC include Myanmar, Iran, and Somalia. Although there have been incidents of

success among freeing child soldiers or children recruited in armed conflict, there are still thousands of children across the globe that are suffering from this bondage.

**History:**

Children have been recruited to fight in wars throughout history. Child soldiers are often thought of as only being used in less-developed countries but this is not the case. Recent history has shown the use of child soldiers in armies of developed and powerful countries. In the American civil war a boy aged eleven named Willie Johnston won the Medal of Honor which was awarded to him by Abraham Lincoln. In World War I, around 250,000 children under the age of 19 were recruited to fight overseas when the legal age limit for overseas combat at the time was 19 years of age. The use of underage children as tools of war continued as a tactic in World War II. Both allied and axis powers recruited and used children to strengthen their military. Governments would allow recruitment agencies to go unpunished or unnoticed as they recruited boys as young as 12 years old to fight. Often times, children would not be used by militaries as combat soldiers, but filled roles as porters, messengers, cooks, or for politically motivated propaganda.

In 1999, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers published a report that over 120,000 children under the age of 18 were being used as child soldiers across the continent of Africa. The countries that were most affected by this were Angola, Rwanda, Liberia, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Angola, children were recruited mainly from rural areas as well as suburbs around the capital. There were also reports of Angolan military commanders paying police officers to recruit children into the military. In Uganda, there were instances of children being recruited off the street just to be sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Further, the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been known to abduct children from their communities and schools. Children were punished or killed if they attempted to resist or escape.

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The international community has developed international law to help better protect children from military recruitment and military use. In 1977, the military recruitment and use of child soldiers under the age of 15 was prohibited under the Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. This protocol applied to not only government controlled armed forces but also to non-state armed groups. In 1989, this Protocol was reaffirmed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which also defined a child as any person under the age of 18. It was not until the year 2000 that the international community created more legislation intended to protect children from this issue. In 2000, OPAC or Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict was created. OPAC was the world’s first international treaty that completely focused on ending the exploitation of children by the military. It prohibits the recruitment or use of children under the age of 18 in the military. In 2004, the U.N. Secretary General requested to “devise a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting system” that accurately provides reliable information on the recruitment and use of children in military conflicts.  22

Analysis:

Desmond Tutu, the Nobel prize winner in 1984 and human rights activist in South Africa, said “it is immoral that adults should want children to fight their wars for them…There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children.” The movement to end the use of child soldiers is centered on the basis that children should not be used for or exposed to the violence of war. When children are exposed to war, they become psychologically scarred, are exposed to violence, and lose opportunity. These patterns only hurt the prospect for lasting peace in areas of armed conflict. Unfortunately, the practice of utilizing children as tools of war continues to be upheld around the world, although it is not entirely unabated. The United Nations, international governments, and non-profit organizations have been, and continue to, collaborate in order to create a future generation of children that will never be forced to fight a war.

Child soldiers continue to be involved in armed conflicts today. In 2018, UNICEF helped to secure the release of 200 children that held ranks in the South Sudan National Liberation Movement. UNICEF, United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and local government forces worked together to negotiate the release with the military parties. More children are expected to be released in the future from the South Sudan National Liberation Movement’s army; however a recent upsurge in fighting has slowed this process down. Even with the recent releases of children from the military in South Sudan there is still an estimated 19,000 children serving in the ranks of varied armed forces in South Sudan. In order to support the release and reintegration of 19,000 children, UNICEF South Sudan estimates an amount of $45 million US dollars to be required. In the meantime, UNICEF, governmental agencies, and non-governmental agencies continue to urge all parties in South Sudan to end the recruitment of children for participation in armed military conflicts and to further release the children that are already amongst their ranks. This instance in South Sudan gives insight to only one of the active conflicts that engage child soldiers.

There has been some success in the last few years to stop the use of child soldiers and gains in awareness surrounding the use of child soldiers, but the international community needs to take more serious and effective action. Progress can be made by publicly identifying the responsible contributors and parties, providing resources and financial demobilization and rehabilitation of child soldiers, and by ensuring that violators pay a price if there is a continuation of the recruitment or use of child soldiers.

Conclusion:

The use of children as tools for military success in armed conflicts is a moral abomination. Children are recruited by militaries because they are vulnerable and easily manipulated. A child exposed to the type of violence war provides is left with emotional scars and baggage, making rehabilitation into society extremely hard. This violation of children’s fundamental human rights has been addressed by the international community, but the practice still continues in many countries. Although the United

Nations and the international community has drafted legislation to prohibit the use of child soldiers, the legislation has not actively been put into effect in some of the areas most prone to the recruitment of child soldiers. In order to incite effective change on this issue, the countries who have parties within their borders that use child soldiers must take the lead role in abolishing the practice from their communities. UNICEF, NGOs, and the International community must commit to providing support for these countries.

Questions:
1. How do foreign armies react to fighting child soldiers?
2. What are the steps individual countries can take to implement legislation that prohibits the use of child soldiers?
3. What preventive steps can the international community take to stop recruitment of child soldiers after armed conflict arises?
4. What is the appropriate action against parties that have violated the protocols against the use of child soldiers?
5. How can the international community support this change on a domestic level?